MIND OVER MATTER: ALTERED STATES OF CONSCIOUSNESS AND THE NARRATIVE RATIONALIZATION OF ECSTATIC VISIONS IN THE APOCALYPSE OF JOHN.

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ABSTRACT

Mind Over Matter: Altered States of Consciousness and the Narrative Rationalization of Ecstatic Visions in the Apocalypse of John.

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This thesis postulates John's apocalypse is the author's attempt to create a rational narrative from a series of ecstatic trance visions which he experienced in an altered state of consciousness. These involved: (1) a feeling of being "influenced" or possessed by the Spirit of God, and (2) a subsequent sensation where his "spirit" was separated from his body and able to move freely in the spirit world. I propose that taking these experiences provisionally at face value is a crucial hermeneutical key to understanding the meaning of this text, as it was perceived by John and the early proto-Christian community he was addressing. Tackling John's religious experiences phenomenologically opens up a line of inquiry that has thus far been handled poorly by strictly literary epistemological paradigms. Little of substance has been said about the psychological function and cognitive causality behind John's text and apocalyptic literature generally. What little research that has been published in this regard has approached the question comfortably within the confines of source and genre criticism. This thesis systematically breaks down the interpretive issues surrounding the double occurrence of the phrase ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι ("I was in the spirit") in Rev 1:10 and 4:2, to achieve a degree of clarity in regards to this critical experiential aspect of John's text. From that foundation, I proceed to provide an alternative philological hypothesis taking into account the polysemic quality of John's symbolic language in an effort to resolve the interpretive tension between the separate (but nonetheless complimentary) meanings of the phrase as it occurs in Rev 1:10 and 4:2. From there, I have a

sustained look at the neurobiological aspects of altered states of consciousness (ASCs), and the mind-body problems associated with ecstatic trance and out-of-body experiences (OBEs). To better qualify these experiences on an experiential and physical level, I adopt an interdisciplinary approach that combines philology with anthropology and neurobiology. Here, I place John's experiences on a diachronic trajectory that begins with the Jewish prophets (with an emphasis on Ezekiel) and ends by comparing and contrasting the physical and neurotheological linguistic elements of John's experience with another New Testament ecstatic named Paul. I conclude the thesis by exploring a broad anthropological paradigm for ecstatic experiences called the shamanic complex and establish that John's experiences strongly correlate with that model.

KEY WORDS: New Testament, Apocalypse, Apocalypse of John, Apocalyptic Literature, Revelation, John of Patmos, Altered States of Consciousness (ASCs), Out-of-body Experiences (OBEs), Ecstatic Trance, Spirit, Neurotheology, Phenomenology, Genre Criticism, Source Criticism, Rhetorical Criticism, Shamanism, Shamanic Complex, Prophet, Prophecy, Religious Experience, Symbols, Symbolic Language, Brain Hemisphere Specialization, Rational, Narrative.

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DEDICATION

In honor of my grandfather Alvin A. Raddatz: A preacher who called fire down from the sky; a prophet who prophesized against many peoples, nations and kings; a poor travelling salesman... a stranger in a strange land.

For my sons Jonah Jonathan Raddatz and Noah Edward Raddatz. Treat others the way you want to be treated. Love one another. This is the sum of the law.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BibInt	*Biblical Interpretation*
BTB	*Biblical Theology Bulletin*
HTR	*Harvard Theological Review*
HTS	*Hervormde Teologiese Studies*
ICC	International Critical Commentary
IJPR	*International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*
JAAR	*Journal of the American Academy of Religion*
JCC	*Journal of Cognition and Culture*
JR	*Journal of Religion*
JTC	*Journal for Theology and the Church*
MWaM	*Milla WaMilla*
NTS	*New Testament Studies*
RelS	*Religious Studies*
SocA	*Social Analysis*
SocR	*Social Research*
Semeia	*Semeia*
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary

Chapter 1: Prolegomena

1. Statement of the Question

I do not reject the things which I do not comprehend, but rather I marvel that I have not understood them.

—DIONYSIUS OF ALEXANDRIA

Nearly two thousand years ago, a man who called himself John[1] described a series of elaborate visions that – by his own account – occurred in an altered state of consciousness on a remote island off the coast of Asia Minor named Patmos. It is not clear whether he traveled to this location voluntarily or was sent there in exile by the Roman authorities "on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus" (Rev 1:9). Far more significant for our purposes is what he described happened to him there.

In the first chapter of his treatise documenting these ecstatic experiences, he tells us how on one occasion he "came to be in the spirit on the Lord's day"[2] and "heard a loud voice, like the sound of a trumpet"[3] coming from behind him. When he turned around to investigate the source of the voice, he goes on to tell us:

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[1] While most apocalypses where written pseudonymously, John is most likely using his real name. However, as Adela Yarbro-Collins points out, the name was not uncommon among Jews and followers of Jesus and so we must not simply assume that this John is John the son of Zebedee, one of the twelve apostles to whom the Gospel of John has also been attributed by Christian tradition; see, A. YARBRO-COLLINS, "The Book of Revelation" in *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism, vol. 1: The Origins of Apocalypticism in Judaism and Christianity*, J. J. COLLINS, ed., (New York: Continuum, 1998), 384. Be that as it may, based on internal textual evidence, we may safely conclude that John was a Palestinian Jew. In the first instance, he is intimately familiar with Hebrew Scripture. Indeed, there are more than a hundred direct references to the OT in his text. In the second instance, the literary genre called "apocalypse" was at home in early Palestinian Judaism. Thirdly, John is familiar with the Jewish temple and cult in Jerusalem (Rev 8:3-4; 11:1-2, 19), and arguably with the pre-70 CE topographic lay-out of Jerusalem proper (Rev 11:8). Moreover, Armageddon - a real geographic location in Palestine - is mentioned in Rev 16:16; see, D. E. AUNE, *Revelation 1-5, WBC 52A*. (Waco: Word Books, 1997), xlix-l. Finally, John's Greek shows evidence that his native language was Aramaic (or possibly Hebrew); also, G . MUSSIES. *The Morphology of Koine Greek as Used in the Apocalypse of John: A Study in Bilingualism*. (Leiden: Brill, 1971), 352-53. All of this suggests that John was a Palestinian Jew, most likely a refugee who fled Palestine as a direct result of the Roman response to the first Jewish revolt (66-73 CE).

[2] Rev 1:10. Unless otherwise indicated, all textual references to the Book of Revelation are my own translations of the *Nestle-Aland Novum Testamentum Graece: Standard Edition,* (27th ed.; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1993).

[3] Rev 1:10

> [I saw] one like a son of man having clothed himself with a long robe reaching to his feet and having girded himself around the chest with a belt made of gold. And his head and hair where bright white, like wool as white as snow, and his eyes were like a flame of fire, and his feet were like an exceptionally fine type of metal after having been refined in a furnace, and his voice as the sound of many waters. And he holds seven stars in his right hand and a sharp, double-edged sword proceeds from his mouth, and his countenance shines bright as the sun in its power.[4]

John then describes the emotional impact this vision had on him, while telling us a little more about the other-worldly humanoid being he "saw" and what it allegedly said to him:

> And when I saw him, I collapsed at his feet, as if dead, and he placed his right hand upon me saying: "Fear not – I am the first and the last and the Living One, and I was dead and behold, I am alive for all eternity and I hold the keys to death and the underworld. Now write all that you saw, and all the things that are, and all that is destined to occur after these things.[5]

Later, John describes another incident where he sees a door or portal of some kind appear in the sky above him, and the same voice he heard in the encounter described above instructs him to "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this."[6] He then describes how he was once again "in the spirit"[7] and transported into the cosmic realm to stand before a heavenly being seated upon a throne.

From this point on, the reader is presented with a series of bizarre visions that compare, contrast and ultimately conflate the cosmic space/time continuum with earthly space/time. These visions culminate in an ontological crisis for humanity where supernatural entities from above and below seek to engage in a full scale cosmic battle on the terrestrial plane ultimately resulting in a foregone victory for the forces of good personified by God, Jesus, various angels and a select group of humans John refers to alternately as 'the saints', 'the elect' 'servants' (or slaves) of God/Jesus.

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[4] Rev 1:13
[5] Rev 1:17
[6] Rev 4:1
[7] Rev 4:2

John states confidently that God's victory in this conflict is a foregone conclusion because God created space and time as a sort of containment vessel to restrict the machinations of Satan. Being the creator of the space/time continuum, God functions outside of it and has the ability to view history holistically as a singular event and thus can easily predict what will happen at any given moment within this construct. John goes on to state in the final chapters of his treatise that God's ultimate plan (as revealed to him) is to obliterate the restrictive space/time containment vessel that defines this planet's notion of reality once his foe is defeated. The obliteration of this space/time construct will then ultimately give way to a new universe where space is radically redefined and time has altogether ceased to exist:

> And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more… and the one seated on the throne said, "See, I am making all things new." Then he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end."[8]

Specific passages in John's Apocalypse (Rev 1:10; 4:1; 17:3; and 21:10) provide the reader with both a narrative and ontological framework that describes a situation where John is in a state of ecstatic transcendence. This altered state of consciousness involves a sensation that his "spirit" has left his physical body in order to embark on a odyssey that takes him outside the space/time continuum that we normally experience it in our flesh and blood earthly bodies.

While the most casual reader can appreciate that John's apocalypse is framed around what Bruce J. Malina and John J. Pilch refer to as his "sky journeys"[9] consisting of visions and auditions, most modern scholarship has dedicated itself to drumming up all sorts of ways to avoid taking John's altered state of consciousness at face value, thus avoiding any serious investigation of that particular phenomenon informing his text. This refusal to inquire into the

[8] Rev 21:1, 5-6

[9] B. J. MALINA and J. J. PILCH, *Social-Science Commentary on the Book of Revelation*. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), vii.

possible phenomenological causes and effects of John's self-described religious experience is unfortunate, as it is founded upon a restrictive epistemological framework that actively eschews an objective investigation of the phenomenon of ecstatic transcendence as a possible actual occurrence experienced by the author. This in turn restricts any discussion pertaining to John's "otherworldy journeys" to the extent that this motif conforms and contributes to John J. Collins' definition of the apocalypse as a literary genre.[10]

What is lacking in the post *Semeia 14* scholarship addressing John's apocalypse (or any other ancient apocalypse for that matter) is a clear understanding of what ecstatic transcendence is on a phenomenological plane. This line of inquiry can only be meaningfully explored if we move the discussion outside the boundaries of the textual critical paradigms so cherished by biblical scholarship.

In other words, while genre, source, socio-historical, rhetorical and narrative criticism of John's Apocalypse have allowed us to rationalize his text on *our* terms, they have not meaningfully addressed the cognitive framework that he argues informs the content of his literary effort. That is an odd and most unsatisfactory lacuna in modern scholarship.

It is profoundly ironic that other fields of human knowledge such as neurobiology, neuropathology, psychology, anthropology and sociology have actively sought to qualify and investigate what is commonly referred to as Altered States of Consciousness (ASCs), whereas the epistemological attitude towards ASCs in biblical scholarship is markedly different. Truth be told, the overwhelming majority of modern biblical scholars dealing with texts that describe ASCs are more comfortable qualifying such experiences as literary devices used by the author to convince an impressionable audience of the veracity of a text that the author composed with a

[10] An in-depth discussion and description of J. J. Collins' definition and master paradigm of the literary genre"Apocalypse" can be found in section 1.2: *Status Quaestionis*.

fully rational and conscious effort to lie to his audience in a convincing manner by tapping into numinous, seductively symbolic imagery that ultimately serves whatever alleged socio-political agenda John is said to be peddling by any given scholar.[11]

Aside from demonstrating a general aversion to inter-disciplinary integration in the service of a more dynamic and relevant Biblical exegesis, ignoring the author's perception of a self-described out-of-body religious experience is to forfeit understanding how such a phenomenon may work. Is such an experience the result of some sort of neuropathological condition like schizophrenia? Is it evidence of a different physiological lay out of the brain in humans as little as two thousand years ago described by Julian Jaynes as the bicameral mind?[12] Is it even accurate to describe this type of ecstatic experience strictly in neuropathological terms? On what basis do we articulate this sort of phenomena as manifesting a disease of the mind when we know so little about what exactly constitutes human consciousness and how it works?

To ignore John's perception and subsequent description of his own altered state of consciousness prevents us from better understanding his own view of space and time as a dynamic integrated teleological system. If the exegete wilfully ignores or otherwise dismisses these foundational phenomenological components, how can he/she state with confidence that any subsequent textual analysis is in any way plausible or even relevant to the author's reality and motivations for composing such a text? Considering that ecstatic transcendence (itself a type of altered state of consciousness) is a particularly pronounced phenomenon in ancient Jewish and

[11] This observation is substantiated by specific examples which can be found in section 1.2: *Status Quaestionis*.

[12] Jaynes postulates that the Bicameral mind literally means to be of two minds and refers specifically to how humans processed awareness and consciousness in antiquity. He further argues that humans used to experience consciousness as one part of the mind (the internalized divine entity or ancestor) instructing the other (the individual hearing the internalized divine entity or ancestor) on what course of action to take, how to undertake it and the meaning of said action when reflected upon in hindsight. See, J. JAYNES, *The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976).

early Christian apocalypses, it is surprising to what degree scholars specializing in this type of literature continue to avoid this question.

The desire for academic credibility funnels most biblical scholars into familiar textual critical epistemological paradigms. These paradigms are ill equipped to address experiential phenomena and so the tendency is to dismiss these experiences as critically inaccessible. The end result is that an overwhelming majority of modern scholars dealing with John's Apocalypse begin their monographs with an extensive introduction that functions both as a disclaimer and an apologetic essay which tacitly acknowledges that yes, there are many ways to interpret this text, but ultimately, whatever epistemological method the scholar is using is really the best one.[13]

In these introductory remarks, the scholar takes the opportunity to reassure the reader not to be alarmed by the appearance of non-existent places populated by fantastical characters or by allusions to the imminent destruction of the world. These features, we are often told, are undoubtedly literary devices used in a rhetorical manner to prop up the author's socio-political agenda, or otherwise reflect his temporal concerns which are mired in the familiar happenstance of his socio-political historical context. Similarly, any discussion of religious experiences (real or imagined) is safely confined to literary genre criticism. That is to say, the phenomenon is catalogued as one of many formal features of a literary genre we can confidently qualify as an apocalypse.

The overarching goal of the introductory disclaimer in many a modern scholarly work that tackles John's apocalypse is to place as much distance as possible between the rational scholar and the uninterrupted line of naïve, superstitious, sectarian literalists who have continued to actualize John's text throughout history. But this distance paradoxically leads the scholar away

[13] To be fair, I am not a heroic exception to this rule. Later in this chapter I will be preaching the virtues of a phenomenological epistemological framework. To re-enforce my arguments, I will highlight the weaknesses of various textual-critical approaches.

from overwhelming internal evidence from John's text that he himself was just such a superstitious sectarian literalist.

While we may scratch our heads as to what John actually means 90% of the time, he seems confident that his audience knows exactly what he is talking about. He and his activated audience are on the same page. It is us modern exegetes who have been cast out of the hermeneutic circle. And no wonder! We fail to wrap our minds around the text's most basic premise: John believes that he had a religious ecstatic experience. We prefer to assume that he is both inventive and Machiavellian. It makes all our other presuppositions about apocalyptic or otherwise revelatory literature suddenly so much more palatable.

All of this points to a post-modern academic fear of the supra-rational but no less foundational features of John's text. This problem is identified and discussed extensively by Michael E. Stone in his provocative essay entitled "A Reconsideration of Apocalyptic Visions."[14] Here, Stone unequivocally states that:

> It has long been a prevalent opinion of scholarship that pseudepigraphic apocalypses are in some sense forgeries and that they present completely fictitious narratives about their claimed authors, with no roots in reality. The actual course of historical happenings might be presented in a symbolic vision, often culminating in prediction, but the framework, the seer, and his doings or feelings are fictional.[15]

[14] See: M. E. STONE, "A Reconsideration of Apocalyptic Visions." *HTR*, 98/2 (2003), 167-180. Stone began publishing his views that behind the religious experiences of apocalyptic seers, "there lay a kernel of actual visionary activity or analogous religious experience" as early as 1974; see, M. E. STONE, "Apocalyptic, Vision, or Hallucination?" *Milla WaMilla* 14 (1974), 47-56.

[15] M. E. STONE, "A Reconsideration of Apocalyptic Visions," 167. Note that Stone is particularly concerned with pseudepigraphy due to his specific interest in Second Temple Jewish apocalypses, which are all composed by authors claiming to be a more established, authoritative figure such as Enoch, Abraham, Moses or Ezra. John's Apocalypse is most likely *not* pseudonymous, making it an exception to the rule. It is also worth noting that Stone extends the observation cited above to prophetic literature as well. He states: "When faced with the book of Ezekiel's reports of visionary phenomena, for example, scholars are uncomfortable at the idea that the prophet is reporting something he believed had directly happened to him while in an alternate state of consciousness"; see page 168. The reference to Ezekiel bears directly on any discussion of John's remarkably similar experience. The many references to Ezekiel in his text suggest that John relied on Ezekiel to anchor his own religious experience in the Jewish prophetic tradition. This need not suggest that John's text was an inventive elaboration of Ezekiel (or a conflation of OT prophetic writings) but rather that he strongly identified with the OT prophets on an experiential plane. That is to say, John saw himself as a prophet. This argument is supported by the many textual references to the OT prophets in his text, most particularly how he models his divine commission (Rev 1:9 and 10:1-11) on Ezek 2:8-3:3, all of which are functionally analogous both to prophetic call narratives (Jer 1:4-10; Isa 6:1-13, 40:1-11;

He goes on to note that:

> As a result of such attitudes, scholars studying these writings deal with their composition, date, and coherence by basing themselves on the "more objective" criteria of literary form and tradition criticism; on historical grammar (if applicable); on translation characteristics; on the extent of the *vaticinium ex eventu* [i.e. dressing up history as prophecy by foretelling the event after it has occurred] in historical overviews; on insights yielded by other, more recent methodologies; and so forth. In these studies, the religious life and experience ascribed to the authors are rarely taken into account.

The situation described by Stone results is an exegetical analysis that is anchored in the pseudo-rational paradigms of a modern epistemology that is often both artificial and irrelevant to the wider ontological concerns of the text. The problem is that this does not constitute exegesis, but rather eisegesis cleverly dressed up as its more objective counterpart. Real exegesis requires that we try our best to be neutral and objective about every feature of the text, no matter how vexing, difficult or otherwise incongruent to our own often narrow ideas about what is real and possible.

The question then is: how do we achieve a neutral, objective exegesis of an inherently subjective, provocative text that seems to demand a similar response when we approach it on its own terms? One solution – the prevalent one in our day and age – is to either ignore or radically neutralize that crucial experiential component of the text that speaks of ecstatic transcendence. But as we have already noted, taking that approach means that we are no longer engaging the text on its own terms. It also means that we can no longer meaningfully weigh in on the author's vision of reality because we have replaced it with our own.

Ezek 1:1-3:11) as well as early Jewish apocalypses (1Enoch 14:8-25). Moreover, John qualifies his book as a "prophecy" (Rev 1:3) and a "prophetic book" (Rev 22:7, 10, 18, 19), while referring on numerous occasions to "prophets" as an identifiable group; see, D. E. AUNE, *Revelation 1-5*, liii-liv. See also, CHAPTER 3 (3.1 "John the Prophet").

The latter – our vision of the reality of John's text – while more prosaic in its limited ontological scope, is actually, in many respects, less plausible. It is an academic construct where all religious authors see things the way the biblical academician does. That is to say in rational, linear, clearly defined terms where ideas are expressed in what we collectively perceive to be a sane manner. In this construct of reality, all human activity – including religious experience – is governed mainly by socio-political concerns anchored in tangible events occurring on a temporal plane. The problem with this model is that most humans do not adhere to it. Outside of the corridors of modern academia, it is functionally useless. Mystics, prophets, poets, philosophers and all manner of seekers still run to and fro over the face of the Earth with their gaze turned simultaneously inward and outward: above and below. Life is stranger than fiction.

One needs only to pick up a novel by Philip K. Dick to appreciate this fact. Dick's work is presented as fiction, but as he himself points out, the brilliant, emotionally compelling, yet totally insane novel entitled *Valis* (an acronym standing for Vast Active Intelligent System) is largely autobiographical. In it, Dick suffers from some sort of schizophrenic psychosis which results in the creation of an alter ego called Horselover Fat whom he knows to be himself and yet perceives and experiences as a completely separate person. None of this is made up. In *Valis*, Dick is relating intimate autobiographical details from his life. He is insane and he knows it. Moreover, he is able to chronicle his insanity with a poignant degree of lucidity. Because Dick is so intimately aware of his madness, he reasonably surmises that his psychosis must serve some larger ontological purpose. To not understand this is to not understand the novel. I maintain that the same observation applies to John's sky journeys. Failure to understand that this is all very real to him merely highlights one's inability to momentarily suspend disbelief in order to understand the material.

1.2 Status Quaestionis

If every inspiration that comes to one with such commanding urgency that it is heard as a voice is to be condemned out of hand by the learned qualification of a morbid symptom… who would not rather stand with Joan of Arc and Socrates on the side of the mad than with the faculty of the Sorbonne on that of the sane?

—JOHAN HUIZINGA, "Bernard Shaw's Saint"

Life is the art of being well-deceived; and in order that the deception may succeed, it must be habitual and uninterrupted.

—WILLIAM HAZLITT, "On Pedantry," *The Round Table, 1817*

We can call an experience framed in the context of religious belief by many names, but men as apparently divergent in their thinking as John the Seer and Socrates nonetheless shared a common quest for who we are, where we come from and where we are going. Both these men, each in their own way and directly informed by their respective time, place and cultural heritage, took that quest to the inner and outer limits of human consciousness. Both had an audience deeply interested in what they had to say about their cognitive experiences. Both heard voices nobody else could hear.

In order to understand what John or any other religious thinker from antiquity has to say, we must be prepared to undertake their ontological journey. The quest of the prophet, the mystic, the poet, the seer or the philosopher must be – at least momentarily - our quest. If we lose sight of their wider ontological reality we will invariably fall short of the exegete's central mandate: understanding and articulating what these texts are actually about as opposed to what *we* want them to be about. That is the first challenge for the next generation of biblical scholars.

The second challenge for the emerging scholar wishing to dive into the field of apocalyptic literature lies not in coping with a scarcity of material, but rather in having to navigate in an overwhelming surplus of it. Indeed, there is an impressive corpus of scholarship that actively engages a wide range of topical concerns specifically related to the book of Revelation.

It was not always so. With a few notable exceptions, biblical scholarship in the 19th and 20th centuries generally eschewed John's apocalypse. This situation would change radically in the 1980s, and it was due in large part to an important paradigmatic shift in the epistemological approach to Judeo-Christian apocalyptic literature that began in the 1960s, but was only fully articulated in 1979.

That shift would open up the flood gates of academic enquiry into the book of Revelation, resulting in a staggering amount of scholarly output in a relatively short period of time. Be that as it may, there is a peculiar feature of modern scholarship engaging this text that is striking. Despite the sheer amount of material involved, one cannot but notice a troubling paucity of research dedicated to a focused investigation of John's religious life, let alone the narrative elements of his text describing a religious experience involving ecstatic cosmic journeys.

In order to understand why this is so, it is important to have a working knowledge of the history of scholarship addressing apocalyptic literature over the last two centuries. The Enlightenment, which reached its apogee in the late 18th century and was followed promptly by the era of industrialization in the 19th century, was not exactly receptive to the mystical, otherworldly and admonitory "doom and gloom" language of apocalypses of a by-gone era.

The onset of the modern age in human history is marked by a definite departure from the apocalyptic component of Christian theology – a component that had thus far underscored the

basic tenets of Christianity. For roughly 1600 years, inhabitants of the Christianized nations of the world took for granted that Christ died, resurrected back to life and ascended to heaven to sit on the right hand of his heavenly Father. They took it for granted that one day he would return to earth much the same way he left. They were taught generation after generation that Christ was coming back to defeat the Devil, judge the living and the dead, and usher in an eternal age of bliss for those who professed a belief in Christ's salvific role for humanity, and an eternal age of torment and anguish for those who would reject this idea.

This is the story told in pictures in most cathedrals erected across Europe and Asia Minor during this time frame. It is laid out in precisely the same way in each cathedral, where the pious Christian, upon entering the sanctuary, is greeted by Christ on the cross hovering above the altar. Upon exiting the church to go about his earthly business, a vivid scene of the judgement day was seared into his mind.

It is hard to counter-argue that all of Jesus' talk of the Kingdom of God, the realized eschatology we read about in the gospel of John, Paul's allusions to journeys to the third heaven and his eschatological expectations, not to mention John's full blown apocalyptic redux of Christ's return, all clearly support Ernst Käsemann's dictum that "apocalyptic was the mother of all Christian theology"[16]

But with the onset of the modern era, attitudes began to rapidly change. These changes were initially reflected in a new kind of self-consciously rational theology that was informed by biblical scholarship that sought out empirical data supplied by archaeological data and the discovery of exciting new manuscripts, all of which needed to be catalogued and collated. All of this was a prelude to the heady era of source and redaction criticism in biblical scholarship. Julius Wellhausen and Emil Schürer, those great pillars of 19th century biblical scholarship,

[16] E. KÄSEMANN, "The Beginnings of Christian Theology," *JTC* 6 (1969), 40.

devalued apocalyptic literature, considering it to be a product of "Late Judaism" and thus greatly inferior to the prophets – an attitude that is still widespread today.[17]

1.2.1 John J. Collins: Genre Criticism - the "Master Paradigm"

Scholarly attitudes towards apocalyptic material and the theology it espoused did not improve for most of the 20th century. Klaus Koch would aptly point out in 1970 that scholars were both embarrassed and perplexed by apocalyptic.[18] J. J Collins, who would go on to become a key player in revitalizing biblical scholarship of apocalyptic texts, explains why:

> The word "apocalyptic" is popularly associated with fanatical millenarian expectation, and indeed the canonical apocalypses of Daniel and especially John have very often been used by millenarian groups. Theologians of a more rational bent are often reluctant to admit that such material played a formative role in early Christianity. There is consequently a prejudice against the apocalyptic literature which is deeply ingrained in biblical scholarship.[19]

Collins goes on to explain that compounding this deep antagonism towards apocalyptic literature was a degree of "semantic confusion engendered by the use of the word "apocalyptic" as a noun."[20] Used in this manner, the word implies "a worldview or a theology which is only vaguely defined, but which has often been treated as an entity independent of specific texts."[21] In other words, Collins felt there was an acute need to disambiguate apocalyptic literature from the murkier, less appealing notion of an apocalyptic worldview.

It is with these two problems in mind that Collins set out on a sort of *mission civilisatrice* to restore apocalyptic literature's ill repute among scholars and re-establish the Judeo-Christian apocalyptic corpus to its proper place in biblical studies. We should pause here

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[17] J. J. COLLINS, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature*, 2nd ed., (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 1.
[18] J. J. COLLINS, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 1. See also: K. KOCH, *Ratlos vor der Apokalyptik* (Gütersloh: Mohn, 1970); English trans., *The Rediscovery of Apocalyptic* (Naperville: Allenson, 1972).
[19] J. J. COLLINS, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 1
[20] J. J. COLLINS, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 2.
[21] J. J. COLLINS, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 12.

and re-iterate what Collins perceived to be the problem articulated by Koch. We will recall Koch's statement that scholars were both embarrassed and perplexed by apocalyptic. Collins picked up on this and would go on to come up with an innovative way to deal with both these problems.

First, in order to deal with the "embarrassment" issue, it was necessary to define the apocalyptic literary genre in such a way that, when convenient, it could be discussed quite separately from sectarian millenarian movements espousing an apocalyptic worldview. Resolving this issue dovetailed nicely with the second problem pertaining to semantic confusion between the literary genre and the ideological outlook both referred to as "apocalyptic". Under Collins' able leadership, both concerns would be resolved by shifting the focus of academic inquiry (or lack thereof) from the embarrassing worldview espoused within certain Judaic sects including proto-Christianity, to the more respectable task of hammering out a comprehensive taxonomy of the formal literary features constituting apocalyptic literature as a literary genre.

To sufficiently disambiguate apocalyptic literature from the worldview, it would be necessary to establish a broad typology for the literary genre that identified formal features of which eschatology was only one of many. It would be equally necessary to refine the definition of the apocalyptic worldview in precise terms that would prevent a cross-contamination between genre and ideology.

The need to counter distinguish the literary genre from the ideological outlook would motivate Collins to invent a new ideological "ism" for the apocalyptic worldview which he would come to refer to as "apocalypticism" — a term that enjoys wide usage among scholars today. Moreover, his desire to symbiotically link the term "apocalypse" with a specific literary

genre reverse engineered by him and his colleagues[22] prompted Collins to significantly redefine a term whose usage in antiquity was more generic on the one hand but also, as far as the canonical texts of the New Testament are concerned, specifically oriented towards eschatology.

The term "apocalypse" (a transliteration of ἀποκάλυψις borrowed directly from the incipit of John's apocalypse) was understood in antiquity simply as "uncovering" (as in: uncovering one's head), but the authors of New Testament literature apply a transcendent meaning to the term signifying "making fully known, revelation, or disclosure."

In New Testament literature, the word appears in the gospel of Luke[23], the Pauline and deutero-Pauline Epistles[24], the Petrine Epistles[25] and in John's apocalypse[26] which we also refer to as the book of Revelation in an attempt to convey the transcendent meaning of ἀποκάλυψις in English. While Paul sometimes uses the term in its broader transcendent meaning, he often deploys it in a specifically eschatological sense. The author of the Petrine Epistles and John the Seer use the term specifically to refer to "the disclosure of secrets belonging to the last days."[27]

But in the hands of Collins, the term has come to be accepted in biblical scholarship as referring specifically to a literary genre. Collins' baseline definition of "apocalypse" as understood in critical biblical scholarship was established by the Apocalypse Group[28] (chaired by himself) and working under the auspices of the Society of Biblical Literature Genres Project:

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[22] See note 31
[23] Lk 2:32
[24] Ro 8:19; 16:25; 1 Cor 1:7; 2:4; 14:6, 26; 2 Cor 12:1, 7; Gal 1:12; 2:2; Eph 1:17; 3:3 Gal 1:12; 2:2; 2 Th 1:7
[25] 1 Pt 1:7, 13; 4:13
[26] Rev 1:1
[27] See, BDAG, 3rd ed., 112.
[28] The Apocalypse Group was of a panel of six scholars including Collins. Each member was responsible for the analysis of material that fell loosely within his/her area of expertise. Thus, J. J. Collins oversaw Second Temple Judaic material, his wife Adela Yarbro Collins was assigned the Christian material, F.T Fallon the Gnostic material, H. W. Attridge the Greco-Roman material, and A. J. Saldarini the rabbinic material; see, J. J. COLLINS, ed., "Apocalypse: Morphology of a Genre," *Semeia* 14 (1979), 5 (note 12).

> An apocalypse is a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial insofar as it involves another, supernatural world.[29]

Collins would go on to point out the tension at work between the temporal and spatial dimensions within any given apocalypse. In his words: "the emphasis is distributed differently in different works while the activity of supernatural beings is essential to all apocalypses."[30]

Within the common framework of the apocalypse, he identifies two distinct types. The first is the historical (type I). It is characterized by visions and an interest in temporal history (i.e. symbolic visions alluding to the rise and fall of empires as temporal markers leading to the end of time). The second is the otherworldy journey (type II). It is characterized by cosmological speculations based on ecstatic transcendence.[31] Collins tells us that it is possible to differentiate three distinct subtypes within each category identifiable by their eschatological scenarios: (a) those with a review of history, (b) those containing some form of public, cosmic, or political eschatology, and (c) those concerned only with the judgment of the dead.[32]

To anyone familiar with Judeo-Christian apocalypses, it will become immediately clear that none of these categories are mutually exclusive. The best example of this is non-other than

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[29] J. J. COLLINS, ed., "Apocalypse: Morphology of a Genre", 9.

[30] J. J. COLLINS, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 6. According to the Collins' genre paradigm, 1Enoch is a largely spatial apocalypse, with a narrative framework that focuses on Enoch's cosmological journeys through space and time. Daniel 7-12 is largely a temporally driven apocalypse whose narrative framework focuses on historical periodization on an earthly plane. While many would argue that John's apocalypse is a conflation of the two types insofar as it encapsulates both cosmic journeys through space and time and temporal historical periodization within its narrative structure, the notion that John's Apocalypse engages in historical periodization similar to what we see in Daniel has been contested. Paradoxically, there can be no doubt that John is quite interested in temporal history insofar as the history of the world is the focal point of a larger cosmological struggle. As Paul Ricœur has pointed out in his preface to A. Lacocque's *The Book of Daniel*, there is an over propensity to confuse apocalyptic symbols with unequivocal signs. Better to "allow several concurrent identifications *play"* so that the text can achieve its effect precisely through the fullness of its symbolic ambiguity; see, P. RICOEUR, preface to A. LACOCQUE, *The Book of Daniel*, (Atlanta: John Knox, 1979), xxii-xxiii.

[31] Phenomenological terms like "ecstatic transcendence" or "Altered States of Consciousness" are not used, of course. These phenomenological and cognitive terms are described merely as "otherworldly journeys" (understood strictly as a literary device rather than an actual phenomenon).

[32] J. J. COLLINS, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*,7.

John's apocalypse. It has many features from the historical type, but its framework and point of view is of the otherworldy journey type. Moreover, all three of the eschatological scenarios described above are present in John's text.[33]

As for the terms "apocalyptic" and "apocalypticism", they refer to the specific worldview, or theology, animating many (but not all) apocalypses. The term "apocalyptic" is an adjective functioning as a noun and is synonymous with the noun apocalypticism, both of which are a transliteration of the Greek adjective ἀποκαλύπτικος meaning "revelatory".[34] It refers explicitly to:

> A narrative theology centering on the belief that (1) the present world order, regarded as both evil and oppressive, is under temporary control of Satan and his human accomplices, and (2) that this present evil world order will shortly be destroyed by God and replaced by a new and perfect order corresponding to Eden before the fall […] the outcome is never in question, for the enemies of God are predestined for defeat and destruction.[35]

The reader may question why I have included this protracted discussion of the meaning of "apocalypse", "apocalyptic" and "apocalypticism" tackled through the lens of genre criticism. How is this relevant to the *status quaestionis* of the question of cognitive religious experience in John's apocalypse? The answer lies in the introduction of in D.E. Aune's three volume commentary on the book of Revelation.[36] Here, Aune repeatedly qualifies Collins' genre

[33] Considering the rather porous quality of certain apocalypses, one wonders how useful these categories are on a pragmatic level. While I can appreciate that this type of classification can help to distinguish certain formal features of 1Enoch from Revelation, I am not convinced that this accomplishment in any way bridges the gap between how these texts where conceived and interpreted in antiquity and how they are conceived and interpreted by modern scholarship. Genre criticism is a post modern construct that facilitates the task of post-modern scholars to meaningfully discuss types of texts defined according to content and form in an era of specialization where a particular area of expertise will engender its own language and lexicon. In such an environment, it important to establish a degree of internal coherency, but in so doing, it is easy to lose sight of the fact that these constructs are not as reflective of the *topos* of antiquity as we would like to think. This fact is attestable by the porous quality of the material contributing to the genre and its inherent resistance to unequivocal typological categorization.

[34] D. E. AUNE, "Understanding Jewish and Christian Apocalyptic," *Word and World* 25/ 3, (2005), 234.

[35] D. E. AUNE, "Understanding Jewish and Christian Apocalyptic," 236.

[36] Aune's massive three-volume *WBC* is indispensable to any biblical scholar delving into this text. His commentary provides an extensive, in-depth analysis of literary genre, history of traditions, history of redaction, history of manuscripts, not to mention being a tremendous bibliographic resource. While Aune's *magnus opus* is an

definition and detailed typology as together constituting a "master paradigm"[37] or "generic framework"[38] necessary for the modern scholar to grasp on a conceptual level what an apocalypse is:

> Perhaps the most influential definition of the apocalypse genre is proposed by J.J. Collins... This definition, describing the core elements of the genre, is related to a master paradigm Collins has proposed, which contains a lengthy list of the constituent features of ancient apocalypse [...]. This definition of the apocalypse genre is one of the more complete and systematic attempts to define the genre at a pragmatic level.[39]

Regardless of the scholar's favoured method of critical analysis (be it rhetorical, narrative, source/redaction or form criticism), if John's religious experience is discussed at all, post-*Semeia* 14 scholars – whether they do so consciously or through osmosis – will nearly always enter this discussion through the gate of genre criticism conceived by Collins *et al*. We cannot deny that the Apocalypse Group's morphology project achieved a rare accomplishment in the academic world when we consider that the apocalypse typological template, not to mention the definition of both "apocalypse" and "apocalypticism", enjoy vast usage and overwhelming consensus among scholars.[40] To be sure, this was Collins' goal from the onset:

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exceptional resource, it is not without its problems. He does provide a thorough philological analysis of the text, but his final analysis of the Greek is entirely open to debate in many instances. As for his treatment of John's ecstatic journeys, I will unpack this in more detail in CHAPTER 2: "*ἐν πνεύματι*: A Philological Analysis of Ecstatic Transcendence and ASCs in John's Apocalypse." Be that as it may, it must be acknowledged that it remains the authoritative commentary for contemporary scholarship on John's apocalypse. Taking this into account, whatever endorsement Aune articulates regarding Collins' typological genre project carries a considerable degree of clout, as any serious biblical scholar engaging this text will have consulted this commentary.

[37] See, D. E. AUNE, *Revelation 1-5*, lxxviii-lxxix. If there is any doubt about the impact of the Apocalypse Group's impact on post-*Semeia* 14 scholarship of apocalypses, consider that Aune – despite some minor quips supplied for the sake of a balanced overview of the question (see pages lxxvii-lxxviii) and his own epistemological framework being anchored in source/redaction criticism – nonetheless methodically takes the time to conform Revelation to Collin's master paradigm: "Using J. J. Collins' master paradigm given in complete form above, I propose to provide an inventory of those aspects of Revelation that fit the categories proposed in the paradigm to highlight the extent to which Revelation resembles other apocalypses." (lxxxii).

[38] See, J. J. COLLINS, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 8.

[39] See, D. E. AUNE, *Revelation 1-5*, lxxviii-lxxix.

[40] It is a useful exercise to compare and contrast this consensus with the typological issues that continue to beset that area of biblical scholarship that addresses so-called Gnostic literature where terms like "Gnostic" and "Gnosticism" mean very different things to different scholars. Comparing these two areas of study, we can appreciate that

> The objective [of the SBL genre group project] was simply to try to get agreement on what should be called an apocalypse, and produce a definition that might serve as a starting point for further discussions of this literature from literary or sociological perspectives.[41]

While a systematic review of the secondary literature responding to John's apocalypse generated in the last thirty years would be a daunting task that thankfully lies beyond the scope of this thesis, it is worth honing in on Collins' hopes for further discussions of apocalypses from a literary or sociological perspective[42] as a point of departure in studying apocalypse literature. What has that hope yielded? Not surprisingly, most scholarship dealing with Revelation is of the literary type.

So we end up with a rather large pile of monographs looking at the book of Revelation through the lens of various literary paradigms interacting on some level with Collins' master genre paradigm. Next to this pile is a smaller stack of monographs looking at Revelation from a sociological perspective. For the sake of brevity I will discuss a small sample from both perspectives and restrict my comments to how each author addresses questions pertaining to John's ecstatic transcendental journeys as well as his auditory and visual hallucinations experienced in an altered state of consciousness.

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establishing a little order to typological chaos has a degree of utility. But it is necessary to keep a short leash on this enterprise and understand its inherent limitations. Genre criticism should be limited to the modest goal of lining up texts commonly regarded as sharing certain characteristics and sorting out what they have in common and where they differ in regards to form and content. We should bear in mind that such an enterprise can only serve as a limited reference point in order to achieve a degree of linguistic clarity when we utilize these terms. As Collins himself points out, the goal should not be "a quest for an objective entity that ever existed in a pure state." See, J. J. COLLINS, "Prophecy, Apocalypse and Eschatology: Reflections on the Proposals of Lester Grabbe," LESTER L. GRABBE and ROBERT D. HAAK, eds., *Knowing the End from the Beginning: The Prophetic, the Apocalyptic and their Relationships*, (London/New York: T&T Clark International, 2004), 45. Problems arise when we turn to typological templates for anything beyond textual forms and formal motifs. In other words, any phenomenological feature of the text that require an existential view rather than a strictly semantic one will be ill-served by genre criticism.

[41] J. J. COLLINS, "Prophecy, Apocalypse and Eschatology: Reflections on the Proposals of Lester Grabbe", 45.

[42] The reader is invited to take note that whatever inter-disciplinary approach Collins envisions to be built upon the foundation of his genre project is rather limited in its scope. Beyond the literary perspectives that already completely dominate biblical scholarship, he is prepared to endorse sociological perspectives as well.

1.2.2 Literary and Social Rhetorical Criticism: David A. deSilva and Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza

David A. deSilva's book entitled *Seeing Things John's Way: The Rhetoric of the Book of Revelation* exemplifies some of the epistemological problems underlying much of the recent academic literature oriented towards interpreting John's Apocalypse. As the subtitle points out, deSilva's monograph assesses John's use of rhetoric as a device to get the reader on board with his (i.e. John's) ontological notion of reality.

From a phenomenological point of view, the main problem with deSilva's argument is that it is built upon the fundamental presupposition that John's notion of reality is a carefully crafted, deliberate fabrication. That is to say, a rhetorical analysis assumes that the narrative structure of Revelation is entirely fictitious: John never experienced any auditory or visual hallucinations. He never had a cognitive experience perceived as a separation of mind and body. He never undertook a sky journey transcending temporal space and time. None of these things occurred because all of these things are impossible.

Like the overwhelming majority of contemporary historical exegetes, deSilva operates with the underlying principle that all human experiences — regardless of the space and time in which they occurred — are analogous to how reality is perceived by a narrow segment of the world's general population in the post-modern era. In other words, modern Western biblical scholars qualify the reality of, say, a Judeo-Christian mystic writing in Asia Minor in *circa* 90 CE as completely analogous to how *they* perceive *their* reality. One can only marvel at the level of self-deception required to maintain this illusion. Where exactly does the reality of John of Patmos intersect with the reality of the scholar happily accessing ancient manuscripts from

around the world online, whilst listening to an eclectic playlist ranging from Gregorian chants to the Rolling Stones from an mp3 player discretely playing in the background?

Be that as it may, this false perception "serves as an overriding guide for evaluating evidence and interpreting the past."[43] This overriding guide in biblical scholarship generally assumes that there is no such thing as cognitive religious experience and so scholars like deSilva look for "more reasonable"[44] explanations to sustain a modern Western academic perception of reality.

So it is assumed that whatever *really* happened nearly two thousand years ago when John sat down to write, involved a wilful, calculated rhetorical decision to frame his text as an apocalypse because it was the most convincing way to address John's immediate temporal concerns towards his target audience – seven specific congregations among the larger body of churches in Asia Minor. deSilva spends a great deal of time unpacking the idea that John's highly descriptive, dualist apocalyptic cosmological construct is itself a rhetorical device used by John to achieve two specific goals, namely: (1) to acquire and maintain spiritual power over his audience, and (2) to exhort his audience to "overcome" the challenges of Christian discipleship by gaining critical distance from the dominating socio-political system of the Roman empire.[45]

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[43] J. M. MILLER, "Reading the Bible Historically: The Historian's Approach," S. L. McKENZIE and S.R. HAYNES eds., *To Each its Own Meaning: Biblical Criticisms and their Applications*, (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Know Press, 1999), 18.

[44] J. M. MILLER, "Reading the Bible Historically: The Historian's Approach," 18.

[45] Under the sub-header "John Wants Power", deSilva puts forth a currently fashionable argument among rhetorical critics that postulates that John is concerned that the success of Jezebel and the Nicolaitans are compromising his own authority and that an important motive behind his text is John's venal desire to demonize his opponents in order to prop up his own authority. While deSilva cites Robert Royalty extensively and presents his work in a positive light, his own position is presented in less cynical terms in that he concedes that John is probably more concerned with loyalty to the "commandments of God and the testimony of Jesus" (Rev 12:17) than his own personal authority; see, D.A. deSILVA, *Seeing Things John's Way: The Rhetoric of the Book of Revelation*, (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 66-72; see also, R. ROYALTY, "Don't Touch *This* Book! Revelation 22:18-19 and the Rhetoric of Reading (in) the Apocalypse of John," *Biblical Interpretation* 12 (2004), 282-99, and *The Street of Heaven: The Ideology of Wealth in the Apocalypse of John*, (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1998).

He substantiates this assertion by presenting an exposé of John's use of deliberative, epideictic and forensic discourse within the rather narrow scope of his letters to the churches in Asia Minor.[46] From there deSilva examines the rhetorical utility of John's deliberate decision to express his concerns as an apocalypse, utilizing Collins' genre master paradigm as a point of departure.[47]

Being a committed literary rhetorical critic, deSilva works hard to present John as a highly rational author that is extremely well versed in the finer points of Aristotelian rhetoric. A reader less committed to his epistemological framework will be quick to note that we are dealing here not with one level of rhetorical argumentation (John's), but two (namely: deSilva's rhetorical argumentation of John's rhetoric). Moreover, the latter author's rhetorical analysis obscures the first author's narrative ethos. In other words, deSilva's contemporary historical epistemological paradigm utterly eclipses the possibility that John may have experienced a hitherto under-examined cognitive phenomenon.

This last point becomes eminently clear in a brief excursus that ponders the question: "did John really see things?"[48] In just shy of four pages, deSilva tackles some of the central questions of this thesis. He begins by asking whether or not any of what John narrates is for real:

> Did John *really* converse with the glorified Christ — or at least, did John *believe* that he had such conversations? Does Revelation have its origins in an ecstatic experience, or in John's terms, being "in a spirit" (ἐν πνεύματι, Rev 1:10), in some alternate state of consciousness? Or does Revelation originate in John's quite conscious and self-guided process of literary composition, crafting narratives of visions that he did not actually "see", but that he could approximate, for example, by reading other literary reports of visionary encounters such as

[46] deSilva de-emphasizes the use of forensic discourse in Revelation, objecting to Schüssler Fiorenza's qualification of John's rhetoric as such. In his view, epidemic and deliberative discourse are cleverly interwoven and coordinated together in John's text, with the former portraying the ideal, and the latter steering the audience in the direction of the right path leading to the ideal; see D.A. deSILVA, *Seeing Things John's Way*, 70-90.

[47] deSilva opens chapter 4 ("What Is and What Will Be Hereafter: The Cosmos According to John") by re-iterating, for the second time, Collins' genre definition of "Apocalypse" which I have also supplied in section 1.2.1. See, D.A. deSILVA, *Seeing Things John's Way*, 13, 93-95.

[48] D.A. deSILVA, *Seeing Things John's Way*, 121-124.

> Ezekiel 1-2 and Daniel 10? Is the seeing, hearing, conversing with otherworldy beings, and so forth, merely part of the generic trappings of apocalyptic literature (or less kindly, part of an elaborate attempt to deceive)?[49]

It is interesting to witness how deSilva tackles these questions (however briefly). In the spirit of presenting us with a balanced view, he puts forth a small sample of scholarly opinions arguing for or against the phenomenological legitimacy of the visionary framework in Revelation. Ultimately, however, he cautiously abstains from taking a definite position on the issue stating that "it does justice neither to the complexity of Revelation nor to the insights of scholars on both sides to persist in an either/or approach."[50]

deSilva cites two fellow rhetorical critics (Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza and Robert Royalty) to argue against the legitimacy of John's visions. Considering her extensive coverage of John's apocalypse over the years and her generally respected reputation in the *milieu*, I will focus on Schüssler Fiorenza's arguments *contra* a "real" visionary experience.

Schüssler Fiorenza has written extensively on the book of Revelation.[51] While deSilva's brand of rhetorical criticism involves a more or less literary approach towards reconstituting the socio-historical context of John's text, Schüssler Fiorenza puts rhetorical criticism to work in the service of broader sociological concerns anchored in the desire to make the text relevant to post-modern women. In that vein, her biblical exegesis is oriented towards the post-modern concerns of feminist theology. Perhaps because her mandate as a biblical scholar is firmly entrenched in the socio-political ideologies espoused by liberation theology, there is little room in her outlook for mystical cosmic ascent journeys. For Schüssler Fiorenza, whatever cosmic conflict we read

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[49] D.A. deSILVA, *Seeing Things John's Way*, 122.
[50] Ibid, 123.
[51] See (non exhaustively), E. SCHÜSSLER FIORENZA, *Priester für Gott: Studien zum Herrschafs- und Priestermotiv in der Apokalypse*, (Münster: Aschendorff, 1972); *The Book of Revelation: Justice and Judgment*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985); *Revelation: Vision of a Just World,* Proclamation Commentaries, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991); *The Power of the Word: Scripture and the Rhetoric of Empire*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007).

about in Revelation speaks of inter-human socio-political power plays that are firmly earth bound.

For her there is no doubt that John's ecstatic visions are to be viewed strictly as a literary construct. Her supporting argument for this, however, can only be described as ineffectual:

> A careful look at the inaugural vision demonstrates why one is justified in calling Revelation a "literary vision." It is impossible to pictorialize or draw this vision, since Revelation is full of image associations which cannot be depicted.[52]

This is a little like saying that dark matter, sub-atomic particles or the core of stars and planets do not exist because we cannot see, and hence draw them.

At any rate, seeing as all things that can be imagined can be depicted graphically, this is an inaccurate statement. Some would argue that pictorial depiction is actually a better vehicle for mediating a mystical experience than words, in that such mediation is not restricted by the contours of language.

But what are we to make of her use of the term "literary vision"? It is ultimately the mind that generates the "literary vision", the same mind that spontaneously generates dreams. Every time we sleep, we enter into another kind of altered state of consciousness where we dream of fantastic landscapes that defy the laws of physics where we are presented with otherworldly environments, incongruous non-linear scenarios, interactions with non-temporal

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[52] See, E. SCHÜSSLER FIORENZA, *Revelation: Vision of a Just World,* Proclamation Commentaries, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 51. The assertion that John's visions are a literary invention because they cannot be painted is both remarkable and puzzling. There is a rich tradition of painting scenes from John's apocalypse that spans nearly two thousand years. This substantial and incredibly diversified body of physical evidence effectively negates this problematic argument; see, N. GRUBB, *Revelations: Art of the Apocalypse,* (New York/London/Paris: Abbeville Press, 1997); M. R. JAMES, *The Apocalypse in Art*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1931); F. van der MEER, *Apocalypse: Visions from the Book of Revelation in Western Art*, (London: Thames & Hudson, 1978); M. D. PALEY, *The Apocalyptic Sublime*, (New Haven, CT/London: Yale University Press, 1986); K. A. STRAND, *Woodcuts to the Apocalypse in Dürer's Time*, (Ann Arbor, MI: Ann Arbor Publishers, 1968); R. M. WRIGHT, *Art and AntiChrist in Medieval Europe*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995).

beings, and so on. These nocturnal journeys of the mind have provided artists with raw inspirational content for their work at least since an inspired pre-historic *Homo Sapien Sapien* decorated the interior walls of the Chauvet cave in France, some 32 000 years ago. And who can ignore the surrealist paintings of Ernst, Miró and Dalì? Even DeSilva is quick to point out that:

> Whether or not John's images can be pictorially represented (a factor of the imagination and skill of the artist) is hardly proof that he did not, in some sense, "see" something before formulating his written descriptions of those images.[53]

While not weighing in on the question directly, we are left with a vague sense that deSilva is at least open to the idea that John may have "seen" something. Far more clear is the degree to which his paradigmatic framework is ill equipped to meaningfully address this line of enquiry. There are important questions that fail to be addressed here: how do we distil or otherwise parse that vision from the text? What are the different ways that we can study the visionary component of the text as a stand-alone phenomenon? To what degree does the textual narrative accurately reflect the raw cognitive experience? What, for that matter, does deSilva mean in the above citation, when he tacitly supports the view that John may have seen something "in some sense"? In what sense does he mean? Or does he mean that not only does he not know in what sense, but that he does not even know how to broach the question?

Even if DeSilva makes an honest attempt to tip his hat in the direction of the possibility of some sort of cognitive experience behind John's apocalypse, the bottom line is that rhetorical criticism functions solely on a textual level (specifically, on the rhetorical or argumentative aspects of the text). As I have already pointed out, this epistemological framework presupposes a carefully crafted rhetorical argumentation utilizing the apocalypse genre to serve that function.

[53] D.A. deSILVA, *Seeing Things John's Way*, 123.

I can appreciate that John is making a strong, passionately articulated appeal to a broad audience to believe and partake in his vision of a fully integrated universe, and that he is utilizing rhetorical argumentation to win his audience over. But I think it is important to recognize that religious texts reflect the full depth of the inherent intricacy of human nature: the motives behind our words are complexly layered; reflecting goals that range from being relatively transparent to mysterious and obscure (even to ourselves). Language makes multiple appeals. Some of these appeals are pragmatic and make use of rhetoric, while some are entirely existentially transcendent and make use of symbolic imagery geared towards ritual action. The latter type of appeal cannot adequately be dealt with within the narrow focus of rhetorical criticism.

1.2.3 Source Criticism: David E. Aune

Source criticism (initially called "literary criticism") was developed by scholars of classic literature interested in peeling back the redaction layers of Homer's epics to identify pre-Homeric sources to the material. The method was "borrowed" by biblical scholars who "wanted to delve beneath the surface of the text to uncover information regarding authorship, date, provenance, and intent."[54] It is one of the first contemporary-historical epistemological models in modern biblical scholarship. It thus has a long, illustrious history going back to Julius Wellhausen and continuing on to the present day.

Without a doubt, David E. Aune has demarcated himself as a pre-eminent biblical source critic that has rigorously applied the method to the Apocalypse of John. Indeed, his three

[54] P. A. VIVIANO, "Source Criticism," S. L. McKENZIE and S.R. HAYNES eds., *To Each its Own Meaning: Biblical Criticisms and their Applications*, (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Know Press, 1999), 37.

volume commentary[55] of Revelation is the most important English commentary of John's Apocalypse to be published since R. H. Charles' two volume effort published in 1920.[56]

While Aune's commentary is a valuable resource to that area of biblical scholarship dedicated to John's Apocalypse, it is not without its problems and these stem largely from how Aune's grounding in the source critical method shape his attitude and approach to the question of ecstatic transcendence and ASCs.[57] While I will defer much of what Aune has to say about specific passages[58] where John relates being "in the spirit" to the second chapter of this thesis[59], I would like to take this opportunity to highlight some of Aune's more general remarks pertaining to my topical concerns through the lens of source criticism.

Before laying down his hypothesis in regards to the text's composition and literary process, Aune isolates approximately twelve textual units in Revelation which he argues "have little or nothing to do with their immediate contexts or indeed with the macronarrative of Revelation"[60], which he lists as follows: (1) the sealing of the 144 000 (Rev 7:1-17; (2) the Angel with the Little Scroll (Rev 10:1-11); (3) the two Witnesses (Rev 11:1-13); (4) the Woman, the Child, and the Dragon (Rev 12:1-18); (5) the Beasts from the Sea and the Earth (Rev 13:1-18); (6) a conglomeration of several visions and auditions (Rev14:1-20), these being: the Lamb and

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[55] See, D. E. AUNE, *Revelation 1-5,* WBC 52A*; Revelation 6-16,* WBC 52B*; Revelation 17-22,* WBC 52C, (Waco: Word Books, 1997).

[56] See, R.H. CHARLES, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John, vol. 1*, (Edinburg: T & T Clark, 1920); ——, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John, vol. 2*, (Edinburg: T & T Clark, 1920).

[57] This is not to suggest that Aune's source critical concerns (specifically, the history of the composition of Revelation or "diachronic composition criticism") are not valid. They are, in fact, entirely relevant and necessary questions pertaining to John's motives for composing this text. Aune articulates his concerns thusly: "[diachronic composition criticism] suggests the significance of two important foci in the study of Revelation: (1) the problem of understanding the *composition* of Revelation as the end product of (2) a literary *process*, which took place during a relatively extended period of time... My ultimate concern is not to atomize Revelation into a plethora of discrete textual units... but rather to try to understand how and why a single author, John of Patmos, brought Revelation into being." See, D. E. AUNE, *Revelation 1-5*, cxviii.

[58] Namely Rev 1:10-19; 4:1-2 and auxiliary to these passages Rev 17:3; Rev 21:10.

[59] See CHAPTER 2: "*ἐν πνεύματι*: A Philological Analysis of Ecstatic Transcendence and ASCs in John's Apocalypse"

[60] D. E. AUNE, *Revelation 1-5*, cxix.

the 144 000 (vv 1-5), three angelic revelations (vv 6-12), a paranetic audition (v 13), and the angelic harvest of the earth's grain and vintage (vv 14-20); (7) the Whore of Babylon (Rev 17:1-18); the Fall of Babylon (Rev 18: 1-24); (9) the Rider on the White Horse (Rev 19:11-16); (10) the final defeat of Satan (Rev 20:1-10); (11) the judgment of the dead (Rev 20:11-15); (12) the vision of a New Jerusalem (Rev 21:9 -22:5).[61]

Aune asserts that the extreme diversity of this material provides sufficient evidence that they where formulated over an extended period of time, for a wide variety of mutually exclusive purposes, and with different *Sitz im Leben* (i.e "life settings" or "sociological settings", thus implying widely divergent source material from different social settings). He goes on to point out that there is no continuity between these units[62] and that their respective genres and literary styles are far too diverse, suggesting to him that each of these texts where written for their own specific purpose.[63] Lastly, he maintains that the strong Jewish character of several of the units suggest that they are fragments of older Jewish apocalypses. To counter this point, it is useful to remember that Christianity was still very much a Jewish sect in the first century that had yet to

[61] D. E. AUNE, *Revelation 1-5,*cxix.

[62] Aune cites a singular exception in that the figure of the dragon links 11:19-12:17 with 13:1-18. I would argue that other correlations exists between units, based, for example (but not exclusively) on temporal markers as we see with the temporal marker ἡμέρας χιλίας διακοσίας ἑξήκοντα (1260 days) where in Rev 11:3, the two witnesses prophecy for 1260 days clothed in sackcloth can be compared and contrasted to Rev 12:6 where the woman flees to a place in the wilderness and is nourished for 1260 days. There is also an obvious connection between the Sealing of the 144 000 in Rev 7:1-17 and the Lamb and the 144 000 in Rev 14:1-5. We can also argue that "Babylon" as a common symbolic motif in Rev 17:1-18 (the Whore of Babylon) and Rev 18:1-24 (the Fall of Babylon) that connects these two allegedly discontinuous visions. Perhaps the problem here stems from Aune's understanding of the term "continuity", which to him seems to mean a linear, temporal continuity, as opposed to the vertical continuity or interconnectivity between "above" and "below" that John seems to be striving to articulate. While Aune acknowledges some of the literary links between these units (like the obvious correlation between the 144 000 sealed and the later episode featuring the same 144 000 and the lamb), these strike him as secondary expansions intended to unify the macrostructure of Revelation. But if that is a real concern to John, why does he not apply himself to it more rigorously? See: D. E. AUNE, *Revelation 1-5*, cxix-cxx.

[63] D. E. AUNE, *Revelation 1-5,*cxx. Can we not argue that the rigid delineation of genres born out of historical-critical methodologies fails to take into account the more fluid and elastic approach to genre that writers in antiquity demonstrate? Just how ironclad are genre definitions supposed to be when the lines drawn "could have been drawn in different places to include a wider range of literature (say, all of post-exilic prophecy) or a narrower one (say, only heavenly ascents)"? See, J. J. COLLINS, "Prophecy, Apocalypse and Eschatology: Reflections on the Proposals of Lester Grabbe", 45.

fully emerge as a distinct system of belief separate from Judaism. Thus, as Aune himself points out later on in his source critical expose, Revelation may exhibit both Jewish and Christian characteristics due to the fluidity of the line demarcating the two, combined with the author's move from Judaism to Christianity at some point in his career.[64]

Aune's hypothesis proposes that John's Apocalypse reached its present literary form in two major stages, which he refers to as the "First Edition" and "Second Edition. He identifies the First Edition as consisting approximately of Rev 1:7-12a and 4:1-22:5, which he qualifies as having a thoroughly apocalyptic orientation. He speculates that it may have been anonymous, perhaps even pseudonymous but fails to provide any kind of argument to substantiate this. He then posits that while redacting the Second Edition, John of Patmos added Rev 1:1-3 (the title), 1:4-6 (the epistolary introduction and doxology), 1:12b-3:22 (the vision commissioning vision of the exalted Christ and the proclamations to the seven churches), and 22:6-21 (concluding epilogue and epistolary conclusion).

Working within the parameters of his own astute re-iteration of *lex parsimoniae* where he states that "the more complex the theory, the less convincing it will be, and the less credible it will ultimately appear," a simpler, more convincing theory would be that John had a series of ecstatic experiences[65] occurring over an indeterminate period of time (perhaps years). Immediately after each visionary episode, he wrote down what he saw and eventually compiled these raw experiences into a text largely resembling the one we have before us today. It is entirely possible — even likely — that when organizing this material into a unified whole, he

[64] D. E. AUNE, *Revelation 1-5,* cxxi.

[65] Exactly how many independent ecstatic episodes the text alludes to is a nuanced question entirely open to debate. One's conclusions in this regard would largely be dictated by how one identifies the literary structure of the book – an interpretive problem that has yet to achieve consensus in critical scholarship. See, CHAPTER 2: "*ἐν πνεύματι*: A Philological Analysis of Ecstatic Transcendence and ASCs in John's Apocalypse".

consciously formulated and edited his experiences along both the Jewish apocalyptic literary and prophetic traditions he clearly alludes and relates to as the baseline of his spiritual outlook.

1.2.4 *Status Quaestionis*: Concluding Remarks

The book of Revelation, due to its fantastic imagery, complex symbolic lexicon and narrative structure, not to mention its bleak sense of impending doom and "us versus them" oppositional dualism, has been a controversial text at least since the 2nd century CE. Early Christian patristic commentators speculated, in their own particular critical manner, on whether or not Revelation was to be read literally[66] (i.e. as a temporal historical narrative extending into the future on a horizontal plane) or spiritually[67] (i.e. as a cosmic vertical narrative of ascent and descent spatially linking the temporal plane to the heavenly and infernal planes of existence). The main lesson to retain from these so called "pre-critical" debates is that for good or ill, early Christian commentaries on the book of Revelation directly engaged the actual text at face value in order to elicit its meaning. Whether inclined to take the text literally like Irenaeus and Tertullian, or more symbolically like Tyconius and Augustine, all were in hermeneutic agreement on one point: that John's Apocalypse related a religious experience.

It would seem that there is a fear among contemporary biblical scholars that to travel down that road would imply (1) a loss of objectivity, which in turn would imply (2) that we have joined the long line of crack-pots holding up placards held up high on street corners warning people that the end is nigh.

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[66] A. Y.COLLINS, "The Book of Revelation", 409. Literalists include: Papias, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, and Tertullian.

[67] A. Y.COLLINS, "The Book of Revelation", 409. Spiritualists include: Origen, Tyconius and Augustine. Of course, then as now, the meaning of the terms "literal" and "spiritual" did not enjoy universal consensus, nor where they mutually exclusive.

In regards to (1), I maintain that there never was any objectivity to begin with. Regardless of the exegetical method deployed or the paradigm subscribed to, the human tendency is to bring our own psychological baggage into the text. We then proceed to bend the author's words to prop up our emotional response to what we are reading, which has been predetermined by a wide range of interconnected factors ranging from religious outlook, cultural influences, upbringing, education, and the broader *Zeitgeist* in which we live. As long as we are human, we will not be able to avoid this trap, as reading is not, nor will it ever be, a scientifically objective enterprise. Perhaps we should embrace this fact instead of pretending that it is not so.

In regards to (2), only a pedantic mind is overly concerned about asking the conventionally "acceptable" kinds of questions as opposed to the "relevant" kind, like: What is the psychological function of apocalyptic literature? Why is there a verse from John's Apocalypse on the crack pot's sign? Why has apocalyptic fears gone viral in our own post-modern age? Did John suffer some kind psychotic breakdown? Did his visions result from extended fasting? The ingestion of psychotropic substances? If he had a genuine religious experience, how do we qualify that? Is there a way to measure such a thing as a neurobiological process?

These are all meaningful questions and they can only be answered if we take John at face value when he tells us about being in the spirit. Our task, then, is to do as Jim Morrison says and "break on through to the other side", by collecting the fossilized neurological phenomena of his cognitive experience now embedded in his text and come back with something rational to say about the irrational.

1.3 Epistemology

In my opinion science would go very wrong to designate as "hallucinations" all such phenomena that lack objective reality, and to throw them into the lumber room of things that do not exist.

—DANIEL PAUL SCHREBER

If one's goal is oriented towards understanding the relationship between a phenomenon and the text in which it is articulated, one must step outside historical-critical epistemological frameworks and adopt a phenomenological approach to the problem, that, while utilizing historical-critical exegetical methods, is not confined to them. This involves the conscious decision to approach both the text and the phenomena under investigation at face value. Thus, our first step is to provisionally adopt John's[68] motivations and intentions in such a way that the phenomena described in his apocalypse are approached in the neutral mode of "as if".[69] This is done in order to better understand and sympathetically re-enact the foundational cognitive element upon which the rest of his text is built: ecstatic transcendence (itself a phenomenon experienced in an altered state of consciousness).

In other words, we must neutrally consider the possibility of an ecstatic phenomenon transcending a temporal reality and ultimately involving crossing over "the threshold dividing

[68] In an attempt to flesh John out as much as possible to better understand the author behind the text, we can confidently surmise that: as stated in note (1), internal textual evidence tells us that his name is John. He describes himself as belonging to a prophetic tradition spanning back to the OT prophets (see chapter three for a more protracted discussion on John's connection to the OT prophetic corpus). He was most likely a Palestinian Jew who was forced to flee Palestine during the first Jewish rebellion. It is possible that he witnessed the destruction of the temple by the Romans first hand in 70CE. He was obviously a follower of Jesus. In this, the Christology found in the book of Revelation is consistent with the Christology we find in the Gospel of John. Jesus is presented as a fully cosmic saviour intimately related to God. As the letters to the seven churches firmly attest, John - like Paul before him - is involved in missionary work with the Gentile population in Asia Minor. There can be no doubt that he was a pious, religious man that was deeply familiar with the ancient Jewish practice of undergoing a mystical trance that was understood as a spiritual ascent into the heavenly realm. Finally, most likely due to his missionary work with the gentile population of Asia Minor as well as his own experiences and observations within the broader cultural reality of the Roman Empire, he displays a high degree of familiarity with Greco-Roman myths and cultic imagery. For example, careful analysis of the archetypal Combat Myth we encounter in Rev 12 suggests close parallels with the Python-Leto-Apollo myth and the Egyptian Isis-Osiris-Typhon myth; see, A. YARBRO COLLINS, *The Combat Myth in the Book of Revelation*, (Missoula, MT: Scholars, 1976) and W. BOUSSET, *Die Offenbarung Johannis,* (6th ed.; Göttingen: Vanderhoeck & Ruprecht, 1906. Reprinted, 1966).

[69] See, P. RICOEUR, *The Symbolism of Evil*. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967), 19.

normal objective perception from the underlying reality which is not discernible in the sober light of day."[70] While this involves a double assumption in that we must assume that the text is about "a series of religious encounters"[71] experienced by the author and thus conclude that "taking into account this aspect of the text is central to understanding it",[72] these are safer assumptions than positing the hypothesis that these works are conscious fabrications. Why? Because the visionary experience is described in the text, whereas, the idea that the text is a conscious fabrication is not.

In Revelation 4:1-2, which serves to contextualize the entire book from that point on, we note that John's phenomenological point of departure is the description of an ecstatic visionary experience of spiritual ascent. It does not matter if this experience fails to correlate with my notion of what is or is not possible. Any fruitful interpretation of the text must forcibly focus not on what the interpreter believes to be true, but on what the author of the text believes to be true. The question then becomes: How can we do this and still preserve a degree of objective neutrality in order to expound the meaning of the text in a responsible manner?

The most suitable means to achieve this is by adopting an open-ended, phenomenological epistemological framework. In broad terms, phenomenology is a philosophical method of inquiry involving the systematic objective study of subjective subject matter. When the method is applied to studying a phenomenon expressed in a text, we call this hermeneutic phenomenology.

Phenomenology may, at its inception, be seen to stand in the long tradition of Continental European philosophy primarily concerned with questions pertaining to the thinking subject's apprehension of the object as phenomenon running at least from Descartes through

[70] M. E. STONE, "A Reconsideration of Apocalyptic Visions", 168.
[71] M. E. STONE, "A Reconsideration of Apocalyptic Visions,"170.
[72] M. E. STONE, "A Reconsideration of Apocalyptic Visions,", 170.

Kant to Hegel, and later Husserl, Heidegger and Ricœur.[73] When we consider the method's objectives and insights more closely, however, we see that this line of Continental thought extends back to Socratic dialectics and is thus born from Greek philosophy of mid-antiquity, which would continue to be fruitfully deployed well into late antiquity. It is thus a method of knowing that has the potential to bridge the time gap from antiquity to the post-modern era.

My phenomenological model is loosely based upon Paul Ricœur's approach outlined in his seminal book entitled *The Symbolism of Evil*, where he combines transcendental and historical phenomenologies. Ricœurian hermeneutic phenomenology involves classifying symbolism according to a three level schema, where sympathetic re-enactment of primary symbols is the first level of analysis. For my purposes, the term "primary symbols" translates directly to recuperating John's ASCs and ecstatic transcendent "sky journeys" from the text: what does he say not about the content of his visions, but rather about how he came to have those visions to begin with. The second level: "the developed language of myth which Ricœur later refers to as first-degree hermeneutics"[74] is to be understood as the analysis of John's text in the broader context of the religious tradition and its historical context. The third level: "the elaborate language of gnosis and counter-gnosis, also called second-degree hermeneutics"[75] effectively describes all subsequent critical incursions into John's text, including my own.

[73] D. IHDE, *Hermeneutic Phenomenology: The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1971), 3.
[74] S.N DUNNING, "History and Phenomenology: Dialectical Structure in Ricœur's *The Symbolism of Evil*," *HTR* 76/3 3 (1983), 345.
[75] S.N DUNNING, "History and Phenomenology," 345.

1.3.1 Methodology/Steps of Inquiry

While recognizing that the phenomena we are investigating occur outside of the text and must be investigated accordingly, our primary concern nevertheless remains how they are understood within the immediate context of John's Apocalypse. That is to say, because we are concerned specifically with *John's* ecstatic religious experiences, we must begin our journey where the forensic evidence is: in his literary composition. Thus, our point of departure involves a synchronic textual analysis of relevant passages in John's Apocalypse in order to elicit a more precise understanding of the phenomena under investigation *as experienced by our author*.

Once a degree of textual coherency has been established, we will move the discussion of revelatory religious experiences and ecstatic transcendence outside of the text. Here we will compare and contrast John's experience with other, similar experiences as well as provide a broader anthropological framework to better understand and articulate these experiences.

Arguing in favour of an inter-disciplinary phenomenological approach to revelatory religious experiences experienced in an altered state of consciousness, I have opted to structure this thesis as a circular hermeneutic equation.

I will argue that understanding the text's inherent function and ultimate meaning requires that we take John's religious experiences at face value. This does not mean that we have to share his perception of the events that he describes, nor even that we accept his experience as objectively real. What we must accept, however, is the subjective reality of his experience as the ultimate motivating factor behind this enigmatic text. But insofar as perceptual reality is concerned, we must contend with the inherent impossibility of an objective human distinction between objective and subjective reality.

This raises a challenging double quandary in regards to religious revelatory experiences in the form of ecstatic journeys, namely, the inherent tension between direct cognition of a larger ontological reality and the temporally oriented contours of language as the only means to relate those experiences into a coherent narrative.[76] It is a double quandary in that both John (the author relating his experience) and the reader must work through the filter of language in an attempt to recuperate something of that original cognitive experience. If we allow that ecstatic transcendence is at least subjectively real to the person experiencing it, we must allow that the meaning of any subsequent narrative attempting to describe that experience is ultimately rooted the perceived reality of that experience. Any attempt by the exegete to replace John's subjective reality with his/her own is to engage in a degree of cognitive estrangement where the exegete is unable to sympathetically re-enact a phenomenological component of the literature because it fails to conform to his/her own notion of what is plausible.

[76] This tension is nicely articulated in Jean Delorme and Isabelle Donegani's commentary. In their discussion of John's response to the appearance of "one like a son of man" in Rev 1:13 they state: « Ce quelqu'un de *« semblable à un fils de l'homme »* dérange totalement l'expérience humaine de la rencontre entres fils d'homme. L'énigme est entretenue jusqu'à la prise de parole du v.17b et les efforts des commentateurs pour trouver un sens à chaque détail de l'apparition risquent fort de priver le texte de son secret et sa tension vers l'inouï et le jamais vu. L'écriture de l'étrange ne manque pas ici de suggérer quelques pistes d'interprétation, mais elle les brouille aussitôt. » See J. DELORME and I. DONEGANI, *L'Apocalypse de Jean: Révélation pour le temps de la violence et du désir. I : Chapitres 1-11* (Paris: Les éditions Cerf, 2010), 62.

CHAPTER 2
"...ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι": A Synchronic and Philological Analysis of Ecstatic Transcendence and ASCs in John's Apocalypse.

As I have outlined in section 1.3.1, a phenomenological analysis of the religious experiences underscoring John's text must begin with what is actually articulated in the text. While recognizing that the phenomenon we are investigating actually occurs outside of the text (i.e. John's text is, itself, an interpretation of his experience), on an exegetical level, our primary concern nevertheless remains how John's religious experiences are to be understood within the immediate context of the text that describes them. That is to say, because we are concerned specifically with *John's* ecstatic religious experiences, we must begin our journey where the forensic evidence of these experiences lay: in his literary composition. Thus, our point of departure involves a synchronic textual analysis of relevant passages in John's Apocalypse in order to elicit a more precise understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

The attentive reader will note that while John dedicates the bulk of his apocalypse to the fantastic imagery he encountered while in a certain state of mind (or being, as the question of John's actual physiological state is entirely open to speculation), very little is dedicated to describing that state and how he arrived at it. This poses a vexing problem to the reader, as John's state of being and how he got there is the foundation upon which the rest of the text is built. Indeed, all of John's visionary experiences present themselves as the product of an ecstatic religious experience summed up in an elusive verbal phrase articulated in the text on two separate occasions:[77] "ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι", which translates generically as "I was in the spirit". But what does that mean, exactly? As we will fully explore in this chapter, while it is

[77] In Revelation 1:10 as a prelude to his vision of a cosmic Christ, and in Revelation 4:2 where he describes being transported through a heavenly portal, after which he witnesses a series of visions that constitute the bulk of the content of his text from Rev 4:2b-22:9.

possible to translate this phrase more precisely, we are nonetheless confronted with many possible variations of a more precise translation of the Greek, each dependent on the translator's subjective interpretation of the phrase as well as its broader context. We should also state emphatically that all the interpretative options discussed in this chapter are, *strictu sensu*, correct. Not a single English translation of ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι discussed in this chapter can be said to be wrong. Each of them can be entirely justified with the common tools utilized by any scholar translating koine Greek into English. Be that as it may, each of these translations articulates subtle but no less important differences of interpretation. There is no clear cut consensus of the meaning of this elusive phrase, regardless of the common tools and body of empirical evidence used to extrapolate its meaning.

This illustrates the subjective reality of exegetical work in that translation and hermeneutics is not a scientific enterprise *per se*.[78] Science is built on the foundations of the scientific method where, in order for the experiment providing the data set to be considered scientifically reliable, it must be able to be duplicable. That is to say, that anybody going through the same methodological process of the original experiment must be able to reproduce the same data. We cannot make this claim for literary interpretation. Give the same text to five different people and each one will interpret it differently and often in wildly divergent ways. Even a seemingly prosaic text like a menu will illustrate this reality.

In the final analysis, literary interpretation involves a person's subjective incursion on another person's equally subjective deployment of language in the form of a textual unit of some kind. On both ends of this most untidy equation, lie a complex matrix of meaning and motives hovering above the text. Scholars and translators are not magically exempt from this numinous

[78] The philosopher of science Karl Popper has written extensively about the problem of qualifying the social sciences as "science". See, K. POPPER, *The philosophy of Karl Popper* (P. A. Schilpp, ed.; LaSalle, Ill: Open Court, 1974).

reality. Raymond Faulkner – arguably the most respected contemporary translator of ancient Egyptian religious texts – explicitly states that once the rules of grammar and the dictionary have been met, significant margins of doubt as to meaning still remain and that ultimately the translator's final choice of words depend upon "an intuitive appreciation of the trend of the ancient writer's mind."[79]

Viewed in this light, we are dealing here not with a science but an art form. Taking this into account, the exegete must abandon the unachievable notion of absolute objective meaning. Such a thing cannot be said to exist even in the mind of the author, considering that his text must first be filtered through his own mind, to say nothing of the minds of his readers in order to mean anything at all. Because the objectivity aimed at by phenomenology is obtained subjectively it is a most suitable epistemological model for inquiring into the nature of subjectively experienced phenomena.

Phenomenology is an epistemological approach utilized in widely divergent fields of knowledge ranging from phenomenological biblical exegesis, to phenomenological philosophical inquiries into the nature of being, to the phenomenology of psychiatric ailments such as schizophrenia, to the phenomenological cosmological models of reality in physics. Divergent as these fields are, those who adopt this epistemological framework share a common purpose: to explore a wide range of possibilities pertaining to any given phenomenon rather than provide narrow explanations that curtail or otherwise obstruct further inquiry. Phenomenology, then, is an open ended enterprise. The phenomenologist's goal is to explore interpretive options by way of constantly holding up one's own subjectivity to the subjectivity of others.

[79] J. ROMER, introduction to *The Egyptian Book of the Dead* (trans. By E. A. Budge; 3rd ed. London: Penguin Books, 2008) xxxv-xxxvi.

This chapter aims to do just that, albeit on a strictly philological plane. My goal is to explore in an open ended manner the various ways we can translate ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι.[80] John makes this assertion twice in the book of Revelation.[81] The broader context in each instance, however, is significantly different. On the one hand, a close look at these two passages suggests a clear phenomenological correlation between these two separate events. On the other hand, the broader context in each instance points to a teleological ritual progression where the phrase's meaning evolves in accordance to the progression of John's trance state as he shift from a meditative ASC to a state of deep trance involving an out-of-body experience. In other words, John seems to be deploying the same phrase with a different meaning in mind that, in each instance, aims to describe the relationship between the state of his mind and in relation to his body. This observation is reflected in each translation discussed in this chapter.

I have structured this chapter according to the table provided below. As the table demonstrates, we are concerned with two specific passages articulating John's religious experience (however briefly and ambiguously), namely Revelation 1:10 and 4:2. The goal is to explore and expound upon four distinct translations provided in the chart.

I will open this discussion with the NRSV's generic translation and progressively work my way across the chart. While I could have selected a wide range of translations, I have opted to focus my attention on R.H Charles and D.E Aune's translations from their respective commentaries. The reasons for this are twofold. First, nearly a century separates both works, providing us with an opportunity to assess how the translator's *Sitz im Leben* affects his outlook towards the text and how this outlook affects his choices *vis-à-vis* his interpretation. Second,

[80] The most generic translation of this phrase (i.e. what one finds in the NRSV) is simply: "I was in the spirit".
[81] See Rev 1:10; 4:2. John makes use of the peculiar ἐν πνεύματι ("in the spirit") construction with different verbs in Rev 17:3 and 21:10. We will discuss these passages in a brief excursus at the end of the chapter. What is noteworthy in Rev 1:10 and 4:2 is the use of the same verb conjugated in an identical manner suggesting a phenomenological continuity between the two points in the narrative.

these two commentaries are indisputably the most extensive English commentaries of the book of Revelation in the history of modern biblical exegesis. I complete the chart with my own translation of the passages in question with the understanding that if my translation is a conscious attempt to achieve a further degree of contextual precision, I am nonetheless sitting on the shoulder of giants.

By virtue of my conscious attempt at a phenomenological sympathetic re-enactment of John's religious experience, I do not pretend that my translation of these passages is objective. The fact of the matter is that any effort to recuperate John's ecstatic transcendental religious experience requires that I keep both John's subjectivity and my own firmly in view. This attitude paradoxically brings a modest, albeit critical degree of otherwise unattainable objectivity into play.

That being said, my philological analysis of the source text is an open ended rational enterprise. As stated above, none of the interpretations discussed here are wrong. The goal of this chapter is not to discredit the work of previous scholars who tackled the complex ambiguity of these passages in favor of my own interpretation. Rather, it is my hope to provide the reader with the necessary hermeneutic thread required to weave all these interpretations together into a rich tapestry of meaning.

Provide below is the aforementioned table outlining both the structure and content of this chapter:

Table I: Instances of the phrase "ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι" in Revelation					
Verse	**NTG (Nestle-Aland 27th ed.)**	**NRSV**	**R.H Charles**	**D. E Aune**	**J.E Raddatz**
Rev 1:10	**ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι** ἐν τῇ κυριακῇ ἡμέρᾳ καὶ ἤκουσα ὀπίσω μου φωνὴν μεγάλην ὡς σάλπιγγος	**I was in the spirit**[b] on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet [b] Or **in the Spirit**	**I was in the Spirit** on the Lord's day, and I heard a great voice behind me, as of a trumpet, saying:	**I fell into a prophetic trance** on the Lord's day and heard a loud sound behind me (like that of a trumpet)	**I came to be under the Spirit's influence** on the Lord's day, and I heard a loud voice like the sound of a trumpet behind me,
Rev 4:2	Εὐθέως **ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι**, καὶ ἰδοὺ θρόνος ἔκειτο ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, καὶ ἐπὶ τὸν θρόνον καθήμενος,	At once **I was in the spirit**[b], and there in heaven stood a throne, with one seated on the throne! [b] Or **in the Spirit**	Straightway, **I was in the spirit**: And behold a throne was set in heaven, And on the throne (was) one seated;	Immediately, **I was in a prophetic trance**, and behold a throne was situated in heaven, and someone was seated upon the throne.	Immediately, **I was transformed into a spiritual being**, and behold! A throne was set in heaven and one was seated on the throne.

2.1 The NRSV: "I was in the spirit"

While any serious New Testament scholar will be expected to work closely with at least one good commentary of his source text in tandem with his own translation, I have opted to begin this discussion with a brief section addressing the New Revised Standard Edition's (hereby NRSV) English translation of the passages that are the focus of my inquiry. I do this for two reasons. First, the NRSV is invariably the version of the Bible that an English biblical studies student will encounter in an academic setting before having acquired the necessary training in koine Greek to be able to work directly with Nestle-Aland's *Novum Testamentum Graece*.

Second, the NRSV provides us with an excellent example of a solid, albeit generic translation. Solid in that there is technically nothing wrong with it, generic in that the translation is consciously as neutral as possible and thus eschews probing the koine Greek too deeply.

It is useful at this point to outline briefly how the NRSV came about and what the editors hoped to accomplish with this edition. In print since 1989, the NRSV was assembled by a Christian ecumenical organization called the National Council of Churches (NCC). Considering its roots in a large ecumenical body, the NRSV's primary mandate from the onset was to be able to be used by as many Christian denominations as possible. That is to say, it hoped to appeal to various protestant denominations, Anglican, Roman Catholic and Orthodox Christians in the English speaking world. In this vein, the ecumenical NRSV Bible Translating Committee consisting of no less than thirty members was committed to a central rule: "As literal as possible, as free as necessary". And that is precisely what we get with the NRSV: a solid literal translation that has dropped the archaic language of past editions while opening up the text to be more gender inclusive when it is contextually evident that the text is referring to humans in general.[82]

Indeed, we can see the "as literal as possible, as free as necessary" rule very much in action in the NRSV's rendition of Revelation 1:10 and 4:2. In the first instance (i.e. "as literal as possible"), because the phrase "ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι" is exactly identical in both instances, the NRSV's translation of both verses reflects that by translating the phrase identically in both passages. In the second instance (i.e. "as free as necessary") we note that while the translating committee has opted not to capitalize the word "spirit" in either instance, it nonetheless includes a footnote in both instances stating that to capitalize "Spirit" would be an acceptable alternative. Minute as this detail is, it nonetheless highlights at least one important interpretive issue at play here. If John was "in the spirit" this implies (however imprecisely) that he is likely talking about

[82] No author, "FAQs," *NRSV*, 11 March 2013, < http://www.nrsv.net/about/faqs/>

his spirit, suggesting that whatever state of consciousness he is describing is generated internally by him. But if John was "in the Spirit" this implies (again, ambiguously) that he is somehow incorporated into the Spirit of God (or some external force perceived by him as the Spirit of God).

Moreover, with the NRSV's translation, the reader is left wondering if John is articulating the same phenomenon in Revelation 1:10 and 4:2. The phrase may be identical, but the context is significantly different. Conversely, if we *are* dealing with the same phenomenon, one wonders whether or not Revelation 4:2 is articulating a more advanced phase of what was first broached in Revelation 1:10 rather than a second occurrence of a puncticular event. Of course, all of this opens up the text to yet more questions which are addressed more effectively in the commentaries we will be discussing below, but suffice to say that even the NRSV's literal, self-consciously neutral translation articulates confusion on one of the elements in this phrase – namely, who's spirit is John referring to?

The very opaqueness of the NRSV's translation highlights how elusive the meaning of John's text can be, particularly if the translator is overly committed to a generic translation. Having stated as much, once we understand the NCC's entirely laudable ecumenical motives for assembling the NRSV edition, in turn dictating their commitment to an extremely literal translation, it is easy to appreciate the translating committee's choices in regards to Revelation 1:10 and 4:2. It is clear that a decision was made to keep the body of the text as theologically neutral as possible, while including a footnote acknowledging a reading of the text suggesting that John is alluding to the Spirit of God – an important footnote seeing that the footnoted capitalized "Spirit" is a reading promoted in many of the denominational circles the editions was designed to appeal to.

Beyond the politics of the NCC, how does this ambiguity of "Spirit versus spirit" – not to mention the many other ambiguities we will be unpacking momentarily – bear out on a strictly philological plane, where the translator is not overly burdened by church politics? If all we have before us is the NRSV (or any other translation that does not provide a detailed breakdown of the philological interpretive process), we are poorly equipped to delve deeper into the text in order to elicit a clearer idea of what John is articulating. It is with this goal in mind that we move on to the more sophisticated level of philological analysis to be found in the commentaries.

2.2 R.H. Charles: An Ecstatic Trance Induced by the Spirit?

R.H. Charles' extensive two volume commentary on the book of Revelation was published nearly a century ago. No English speaking scholar studying apocalyptic literature can deny the influence Charles has had in this area of biblical studies. Indeed, his textual edition of Revelation, along with his translation and notes to be found therein were standard reference for Anglo-American scholars for most of the twentieth century. But with the advantage of nearly a century of academic hindsight, we cannot help but notice the degree to which Charles was the product of his age. As Collins points out, Charles was active at a time where "the principles of literary/source criticism typified by J. Wellhausen were still dominant in biblical studies."[83] This was the heyday of complex source critical theory, and Charles' commentary very much reflects that trend.[84] In his critique of Charles' approach, Collins goes on to state:

> Charles' lack of empathy with the material is apparent in two characteristics of his work. First, he tended to treat the texts as compendia of information and paid great attention to identifying historical allusions and extracting theological doctrines. In contrast, he gave little attention to such matters as literary structure or mythological symbolism. The second characteristic is related to this. Since he assumed that the

[83] J. J. COLLINS, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 15.
[84] Aune provides a good synopsis of Charles' revision theory; see, D. E. AUNE, *Revelation 1-5*, cxiv-cxv.

> original documents presupposed a doctrinal consistency similar to his own and that the canons of style that governed them were similar to those of his own day, he posited interpolations and proposed emendations rather freely.[85]

Aside from the fact that some of what Collins has to say here is either arbitrary (i.e. Charles' lack of empathy to the material) or could just as well be applied to the epistemological concerns of genre criticism (i.e. an extreme propensity to identifying historical allusions), we cannot deny that he is right to criticize Charles for his dubious theory of interpolations, which is an intensely problematic hypothesis that has failed to withstand the test of time. It is fortuitous that Charles' complex source critical hypothesis does not extend to the passages we are interested in. As far as Charles is concerned, Revelation 1:10 and 4:2 are part of John's original text and are thus spared being incorporated into his doubtful revision hypothesis. In short, in the passages that are of concern to us, we have the good fortune of being able to consult Charles at his best, rather than his worst.

Below is a table providing the Greek text as well as R.H Charles' translation for the reader's convenience:

Table II: R.H Charles' Translation of Revelation 1:10 and 4:2		
Verse	**NTG (Nestle-Aland 27th ed.)**	**R.H Charles**
Rev 1:10	**ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι** ἐν τῇ κυριακῇ ἡμέρᾳ καὶ ἤκουσα ὀπίσω μου φωνὴν μεγάλην ὡς σάλπιγγος	**I was in the Spirit** on the Lord's day, and I heard a great voice behind me, as of a trumpet, saying:
Rev 4:2	Εὐθέως **ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι**, καὶ ἰδοὺ θρόνος ἔκειτο ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, καὶ ἐπὶ τὸν θρόνον καθήμενος,	Straightway, **I was in the spirit**: And behold a throne was set in heaven, And on the throne (was) one seated;

[85] J. J. COLLINS, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 14-15.

The attentive reader will note that Charles' official translation provided in the second volume of his textual edition[86] and commentary is very close to what we have in the NRSV. The difference in Charles' translation lies in his decision to capitalize "Spirit" in Rev 1:10, whereas in Rev 4:2 he does not. This is a subtle signal on Charles' part that he perceives an ontological difference between the phenomenological occurrence in Rev 1:10 and 4:2. But one has to consult his commentary on these passages to fully appreciate the difficult task of teasing out this difference. Charles' initial assessment of ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι in Rev 1:10 is brief, but no less revealing:

> **ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι.** Not merely "I was in," but "I fell into." These words denote the ecstatic condition into which the Seer [John] has fallen […]. We have equivalent phrases in Acts 11:5, *εἶδον ἐν ἐκστάσει,* and 22:17, *γενέσθαι με ἐν ἐκστάσει* […]. In this passage, then, *ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι* denotes nothing more than that the Seer fell into a trance. It was not until he was in this trance that Christ addressed him. But in 4:2 (see note), where this phrase recurs, if the text is right, it must mean something more, since the Seer is already in a trance.[87]

Before following Charles' cue and moving on to his analysis of Rev 4:2, it is necessary to carefully deconstruct what has been cited above. In the first instance, Charles' official translation does not reflect his understanding of the phrase ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι as articulated in his notes for Rev 1:10. While he does not explain why, we note that he interprets the verb ἐγενόμην (indicative aorist middle 1st person singular from γίνομαι) not as "I was" but as "I fell [into]". This is an important clue as to the ambiguity of the verb γίνομαι in Greek. It has a wide range of meanings deriving from the principle of birth or coming into being.[88] But of all the

[86] See, R. H CHARLES, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John*, vol. II, (ICC; T&T Clark: Edingburgh, 1920), 388 (Rev 1:10); 397 (Rev 4:2).
[87] R. H. CHARLES, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John*, vol. I, (T&T Clark: Edingburgh, 1920), 22.
[88] I will discuss the full range of interpretive possibilities of ἐγενόμην in the section dedicated to my own translation and philological analysis. See section 2.3.

possibilities listed in the *BDAG*, "I fell" is not one of them.[89] While it is true that the noun πνεύματι (or πνεῦμα) can — among its many meanings clustered around the concepts of wind, breath and spirit — qualify as a synonym for ἐκστάσει or "trance"[90], said association falls under the broader sub-definition of πνεῦμα as "the Spirit of God as exhibited in the character or activity of God's people or selected agents, *Spirit*, *spirit*".[91] This is probably why Charles ultimately opted for a conservative, more ambiguous translation of Rev 1:10 and 4:2 than what he puts forth in his notes. On the one hand, Charles' interpretation of Rev 1:10 posits that John is telling us that he fell into an ecstatic trance that precipitated an auditory and visual hallucination of the exalted Christ. Indeed, his view is that the ecstatic trance was a prerequisite in order for the vision to occur. On the other hand, given that he capitalizes the noun "Spirit" in Rev 1:10, one must conclude from his final translation that it is the Spirit of God that induces John's ecstatic trance to begin with.

Moreover, if the Spirit of God has induced John's ecstatic state in Rev 1:10, then the appearance of the same phrase in 4:2 must suggest something intimately related to the phenomenon articulated in 1:10 but nonetheless different. The appearance of ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι poses a difficult quandary for Charles which he expressed more fully in his note for Rev 4:2:

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[89] See, F. W. DANKER, ed., "γίνομαί" *BDAG* 196-199.

[90] See, F.W. DANKER, ed., "πνεῦμά" *BDAG*, 6(e): 832-836. Subsection 6(e) allows for various readings of πνεῦμα that relate to ecstatic states and utterances: "One special type of spiritual gift is represented by ecstatic speaking. Of those who 'speak in tongues' that no earthly person can understand: πνεύματι δὲ λαλεῖ μυστήρια *expresses secret things in a spiritual way* **1 Cor 14:2** […]. Of speech that is ecstatic, but expressed in words that can be understood λαλειν ἐν πνεύματι D 11:7, 8; cp. Vs 9 (on the subject matter **1 Cor 12:3**) [...]. Of the state of mind of the seer of the Apocalypse: ἐν πνεύματι **Rev 17:3; Rev 21:10;** γενέσθαι ἐν πὶ **1:10; 4.2** (s. γίνομαι 5(c), evn 4(c) […]." One should note that the emphasis in Rev 17:3 and 21:10 is not on John's "state of mind" but on the displacement to a new location within the broader context of a spiritual journey, moving freely between heaven and earth. It is thus strange that these passages would be cited as the primary examples to support John's state of mind. It seems to me that his actual state of mind is addressed by him in Rev 1:10 and 4:2.

[91] See, F.W. DANKER, ed., "πνεῦμά" *BDAG*, 6: 832-836.

> **Εὐθέως ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι.** These words create a great difficulty in the text. According to 1:10, where the expression has already occurred, the Seer is in a state of spiritual trance. That the Seer is still in the ecstatic state is shown by the introductory words of 4:1. Many scholars (De Wette, Ebrard, Düsterdieck, Hilgenfeld, B. Weiss, Swete) assert that a higher degree of spiritual exaltation is here necessary […]. The Seer is already in the ecstatic state. It was not until he was in that state that Christ addressed him in 1:10. That he is still in this state in 4:1 is proved both by the diction (εἶδον) and the fact that he hears the heavenly voice which addresses him anew. In 1:10 the Seer is not addressed by Christ till he has fallen into a trance, that is, the words *ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι* precede the address of Christ to the Seer, whereas in 4:2, they follow the address of the heavenly voice. The text therefore is peculiar.[92]

In other words, Charles identifies two main problems with John's use of ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι in these two separate instances: (1) If John describes falling into a trance in 1:10, then he is *already* in a trance in 4:2. Indeed, the broader context of the occurrence of ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι in 4:2 suggest this, for in Rev 4:1 we read:

> After this I saw, and behold! A door was opened in heaven, and the voice that I first heard sounding to me like a trumpet said: "Ascend here and I will make known to you what must happen after this."

If John is in a state where he sees a portal open in the sky and hears the very same voice he describes hearing in 1:10 *after* falling into a trance, it is safe to say – taking his narrative at face value – that he is already in an ecstatic trance in 4:2. (2) If this is so and ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι has been previously established to mean "I fell into a trance", then how does that phrase make any sense in 4:2, considering that it is clear that John is *already* in a trance?

There are two interpretive options available to us to resolve this issue. The first is to give credence to what some of the scholars he has cited have argued. That is to say, ἐγενόμην ἐν

[92] R. H. CHARLES, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John*,, vol. I, 110.

πνεύματι as it appears in Rev 4:2 suggests a higher level of spiritual exaltation than the what was described in 1:10.[93] The second option is the one favored by Charles:

> The difficulty can, I think, be adequately explained by the hypothesis that the Seer is here combining visions received on different occasions. The poetical structure of 4:1-8 is broken up by the insertion of certain prose additions in 4:1, 2, 4, 5 […] this fact points to 4:1-8 as recording an independent vision of the Seer, which he connects with an earlier vision (Rev 1-3), by four clauses […] some insertion was necessary; for whereas [chapters] 1-3 imply that the Seer was on earth, [chapters] 4-9 imply that he is in heaven… We therefore regard the words καὶ ἰδοὺ [Rev 4:1] […] ἐν πνεύματι [Rev 4:2] as added here by the Seer in order to connect [chapters] 1-3 and 4-9. It must be confessed that the expression ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι is not what we expect here, since it expresses nothing more than what is already implied in Μετὰ ταῦτα εἶδον, i.e. that the Seer was in an ecstatic state.[94]

There are many problems with what Charles is proposing here. First, the supporting textual evidence presented to sustain his hypothesis is not convincing. It seems to me that the hypothesis put forth by Charles was formulated outside the text and the internal textual evidence subsequently supplied by him merely contribute to an *a priori* argument that John added Rev 4:1-2 as a literary device to link two vision sets. In other words, the text as it stands does not support this view. This critique is substantiated by several factors: (1) Charles' division of John's text between earthly visions (Rev 1-3) and heavenly visions (Rev 4-9) is intensely problematic on many levels. In the first instance, John's epistles to the churches do not fall into the category of visions of any sort. At best, an argument could be made that these letters incorporate prophetic utterances topically connected to the visionary experience narrated in Revelation 1, by virtue of a re-iteration of particular features of the exalted Christ at the beginning of each epistle. If there is a clear instance of linking, a later addition to a pre-existing textual unit it is surely to be found here between the inaugural vision of Rev 1 and the epistolary units of Rev 2-3.

[93] There is a considerable and persuasive body of evidence both within and outside of the text to support this view. I will discuss these more fully in section 2.3 and chapter 3.
[94] R. H. CHARLES, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John*,, vol. I, 110-111.

(2) Qualifying John's religious experience described in Rev 1 as earthly is, in my view, problematic. What do we mean by earthly visions? If we mean instances where John sees events as they occur on earth, we must contend with the fact that these are often conflated with visions of events occurring simultaneously in heaven. In other words, geo-spatial orientation is often conflated in Revelation, and these conflations already occur as early as Revelation 6. It is not always clear where John is located within this conflated narrative. Moreover, so-called heavenly visions extend well beyond Rev 4-9 (i.e. the textual unit that Charles has identified as constituting the heavenly visions portion of John's text). [95]

It is perhaps more useful to distinguish Rev 1:10 from 4:2 according to the geo-location of John's spirit. In 1:10, his spirit is still located inside his body, whereas in 4:2, he describes the process in which his spirit is perceived as leaving the body. Be that as it may, the experience related in Rev 1:10 (where John's spirit is still 'attached' to his body), is not, *strictu sensu*, an earthly vision. In point of fact, the vision is otherworldy in that it describes a supernatural being standing in a supernatural symbolic location holding seven stars in his hands amidst seven lamp stands. Again, the vision conflates supernatural and earthly elements. That much is explained to John by the cosmic Christ figure, who points out that the stars are the angels of the churches (i.e. the heavenly representatives of the churches, or the 'above' component of the above/below equation), whereas the seven lamp stands are the earthly churches (i.e. the 'below' component of the above/below equation).

(3) If Rev 4:1-2 was indeed added to link two textual units we have established to be dubious, why would he duplicate the exact phrase in 4:2 that he first articulated in 1:10 instead of integrating that transition in a more effective manner? Certainly, John's command of Greek leaves no doubt that he has sufficient mastery of the language to do so. It is difficult to entertain

[95] See for instance, Rev 9; 12; 14; 15; 16; 19; 20. As for Rev 21, this is a vision of a reconstituted heaven and earth.

the notion that in a text that is consciously structured as a multi-tiered symbolic puzzle, the author would resort to using the same identical experiential phrase twice as a mere literary device to combine visions. Besides, a more convincing set of identifying literary phrases that together can be used to establish the elusive structure of John's apocalypse have been put forth by R. J. Korner, who posits that these can be broken up into three literary conventions: (1) the "space/time referent (which occurs only once in Rev 1:9, 10: "I, John… was on the island of Patmos… On the Lord's day…"); (2) Μετὰ ταῦτα εἶδον ("after this I saw") [and its variations]; (3) καὶ εἶδον, καὶ ἰδοὺ ("and I saw, and behold!"). According to Korner, these three literary conventions together identify what he calls *vision blocks*. He further argues that ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι in 1:10 occurs at the *initiation* of the vision episode extending from Rev 1:10-20, whereas ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι in 4:2 occurs *within the first individual vision* of *vision block* #2.[96] In other words, ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι does not act as a literary motif to combine visions. That is why Charles is forced to conclude:

> It must be confessed that the expression *ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι* is not what we expect here, since it expresses nothing more than what is already definitely implied in Μετὰ ταῦτα εἶδον i.e. that the Seer was in an ecstatic state.[97]

In other words, if we assume that ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι expresses nothing more than "I was in a trance" in 4:2, then its placement here makes no sense unless it means something that is connected to its meaning in 1:10, but nonetheless different. This is a critical issue that I will address more fully in section 2.3.

[96] R. J. KORNER, "And I Saw... An Apocalyptic Literary Convention for Structural Identification in the Apocalypse," *NovT*, 42/2 (2000), 162; 182. Note that the phrase ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι is not considered as a structural marker by Korner.
[97] R. H. CHARLES, *ICC* (full title), vol. I, 111.

To be fair, Charles identifies the key interpretive issues in Rev 1:10 and 4:2. He even goes so far as identifying a more viable solution than the one he ultimately adopts as being most likely. We can witness him come very close to seizing the opportunity to interpret ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι in 4:2 as the next teleological phase of the mystical ecstatic altered state of consciousness inaugurated in 1:10 when he says: "there is here [in 4:2] an actual translation of the spirit of the Seer […]."[98] The main obstacle for Charles lies in the fact that because the phrase ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι is identical in 1:10 and 4:2, it *must* be interpreted in precisely the same manner: "I was in a trance". But the issue is easily resolved when we allow this trance to have a teleological progression and reflect that progression in our translation.[99]

2.3 D. E. Aune: "I Fell into a Prophetic Trance"

Provided below is a table of the Greek text along with Aune's translation for the reader's convenience:

Table III: D. E. Aune's Translation of Revelation 1:10 and 4:2		
Verse	**NTG (Nestle-Aland 27th ed.)**	**D. E. Aune**
Rev 1:10	**ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι** ἐν τῇ κυριακῇ ἡμέρᾳ καὶ ἤκουσα ὀπίσω μου φωνὴν μεγάλην ὡς σάλπιγγος	**I fell into a prophetic trance** on the Lord's day and heard a loud sound behind me (like that of a trumpet)
Rev 4:2	Εὐθέως **ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι**, καὶ ἰδοὺ θρόνος ἔκειτο ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, καὶ ἐπὶ τὸν θρόνον καθήμενος,	Immediately, **I was in a prophetic trance**, and behold a throne was situated in heaven, and someone was seated upon the throne.

As I have previously highlighted, Aune's commentary is a critical resource to that area of biblical scholarship dedicated to John's Apocalypse. Simply put, it has replaced Charles'

[98] R. H. CHARLES, *ICC* (full title), vol. I, 111.
[99] See section 2.3.

classic commentary as the standard reference for English speaking biblical scholars. Indeed, most critical issues (and there are many) surrounding John's text are discussed to some degree in Aune's impressive three volume commentary. The sheer scope of his effort makes it an indispensable reference tool, and here we must point out that Aune provides an extremely thorough and methodical scholarly analysis of this fascinating text. His eye for detail is unparalleled, as is his critical analysis of the considerable body of academic literature dealing in some way or another with the book of Revelation. While the commentary is generally successful in providing a thorough, well balanced analysis, it must also be pointed out that Aune can, on occasion, be inconsistent and lacking in oversight. We will witness a few examples of this as we unpack his philological analysis of Rev 1:10 and 4:2.

In Aune's preliminary notes to the section of John's text describing his first vision (i.e. the inaugural vision of the exalted Christ narrated in Rev 1:9-20), a short sub-section is dedicated to the setting of the vision. Here he states:

> When John, in 4:1, is invited to "Come up hither," he recognizes the voice as the one that he previously heard speaking to him like a trumpet (1:10). If this voice, which is that of the exalted Jesus, is spoken from heaven, it is probable that the vision of Rev 1:9-20 should be understood as set in the heavenly throne room.[100]

This is a remarkable statement. First, because there is no textual evidence in Rev 1:9-20 that suggests that the geo-spatial location of this vision is in the throne room described in Rev 4. Second, because Aune seems to be applying some arbitrary internal criteria of what is and is not phenomenologically possible in regards to the geo-spatial locality of the voice sounding like a trumpet (which, contrary to what Aune states above, is presented in the text as being quite distinct from the exalted Christ figure who only addresses John in 1:17). In the context of this

[100] D. E. AUNE, *Revelation 1-5,* 71.

discussion, Aune is prepared to accept the reality of this voice, as well as the apparent reality of the apparition of the exalted Jesus. In fact, that which he elsewhere describes as auditory and visual hallucinations experienced in a prophetic trance (i.e. strictly speaking, *not* physically real), are nonetheless real enough to Aune within the context of his preliminary analysis that he cannot understand how it is possible that either the disembodied voice or the exalted Jesus could physically travel so quickly from earth up to the heavens. That this is a significant quandary to Aune is reflected in his commentary on Rev 4:1c (ἀνάβα ὧδε, καὶ δείξω σοι ἃ δεῖ γενέσθαι μετὰ ταῦτα):

> The adverb of place, ὧδε, which indicates a position relatively near the speaker, indicates that the speaker is located in heaven. This makes the redactional identification of the speaker with the exalted Christ in 1:10 problematic, for the vision in 1:9-20 is presented as though it occurred on earth, whereas now the exalted Christ would suddenly and unexpectedly be speaking from heaven.[101]

But, within the context of an ecstatic trance vision, is it reasonable to expect the account of the comings and goings of a supernatural spiritual being (let alone a disembodied voice) to conform to a rational account of mundane reality? Given the overarching context of a vision trance involving a supernatural being appearing to our author in a mystical setting, and then abruptly transferring geo-spatial locations, inviting him to ascend up into heaven to enter through a portal taking him to the throne room of God, it seems rather naive to expect the exalted Jesus figure to be subject to human limitations in regards to physical displacement.

Again, given the overarching context at work here (i.e. a trance vision), a more plausible approach to the problem of the voice's geo-spatial instant relocation is to take the text at face value and accept that a spiritual being is not subject to the same limitations of a corporeal

[101] D. E. AUNE, *Revelation 1-5,* 282.

body in regards to displacement through the space/time continuum. Once the reader has achieved the necessary level of suspension of disbelief required to understand and accept that the text is not at all concerned with adhering to the laws of Newtonian physics, it becomes clear that the voice previously encountered in Rev 1:10 is now in 4:1-2 inviting John to transcend the limitations of human corporeality himself.

One notes from the onset that Aune's analysis of the framework of John's visionary narrative is significantly hampered by his inability to sympathetically re-enact the topography of non-temporal space – a space that is, itself, the product of John's altered state of consciousness. Like Charles before him, Aune is inclined to qualify John's visions as either earthly or heavenly in the hopes to establish a familiar temporal contour to an otherwise surreal text. As we have already discussed, this is a problematic way to schematize John's visions, for these often incorporate a holistic view of both heaven and earth and the inter-relationship of events occurring in either realm. Added to this is the nuanced question of whether or not it is accurate to speak of symbolic visions in strictly temporal geo-spatial terms. That is to say, the environment in John's visions is not so much temporally real (i.e. limited to the realm of the physical universe) as an archetypal template of temporal reality on a supra-cosmic scale (i.e. a fully transcendent vision of a much broader ontological reality governing the physical universe).

According to L. DiTommaso, one aspect of the apocalypticism which informs John's text is a central axiom: the existence of an ulterior, yet ultimate reality. This axiom is articulated on a temporal, spatial and existential plane. Temporally, ancient apocalypticism proposes that the created universe was perfect and timeless, but underwent a disruptive event in the distant past, yet will be restored to its initial condition in the future. Spatially, apocalypticism proposes that the historical age is informed by an ontological dualism that utterly pervades other-worldly

spaces (i.e: good/evil, light/dark, angels/demons, God/Satan, and so forth). Existentially, apocalypticism proposes that it is humanity's task to embark upon a quest for esoteric knowledge of the hidden patterns that reveal the true temporal and spatial contours of reality. Note that the temporal plane of this axiom is meta-structural in scope (i.e. the universe's devolution from timeless perfection to a state of dynamic temporal dualism). It stands to reason that those religious authors expressing their concerns in apocalyptic terms would couch their experience (legitimate or otherwise) in equally meta-physical terms. Thus, if we are interested in unpacking the experiential framework that articulates the apocalyptic worldview, it is not particularly useful to apply a narrow temporal constraint to the vision trance, especially in view of the fact that the trance itself functions as a trans-dimensional vehicle transporting both Seer and reader to the central axiom of the apocalyptic universe: an ulterior, yet ultimate reality.[102]

Bringing these meta-structural observations back to the experiential framework of John's visions articulated in Rev 1:10 and 4:2, it is perhaps more fruitful to the cause of a phenomenological analysis of John's ecstatic trance visions to explore the locality of John's spirit in relation to his body rather than identifying the geo-locality of his visions as "earthly" or "heavenly". In other words, we must examine the text for clues about the spatial displacement of John's spirit in relation to his body. By doing so, we are able to free ourselves of a restrictive and anachronistic paradigm: that John's text must somehow adhere to the laws of Newtonian physics as loosely understood and interpreted by the exegete.

Returning to Aune's philological analysis of our key passages, we note that his translation reflects a view articulated by Charles, namely: John "fell into a prophetic trance"

[102] See, L DiTOMMASO, "At the Edge of Tomorrow: Apocalypticism and Science Fiction," in *End of Days: Essays on the Apocalypse from Antiquity to Modernity*, (K. KINANE and M.A. RYAN, eds.; Jefferson NC: Mcfarland, 2009), 221-241.

(Rev 1:10), and later, upon seeing the sky portal and hearing the voice, John relates that he was "immediately in a prophetic trance" (Rev 4:1-2). But, if the two exegetes share the common view that John was in an ecstatic (Charles) or prophetic (Aune) trance, they differ on the ultimate causality of that state.

We will recall that Charles ultimately translates ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι in Rev 1:10 as "I was in the Spirit". In Charles' view then, the dative case in πνεύματι reflects a dative instrumental of agent (the person or entity that causes the effect). We can infer by the capitalized "Spirit" that Charles adheres to the view that the Spirit of God causes John to enter into an ecstatic trance. We have also noted that in Rev 4:2, Charles does not capitalize "spirit" because he is mitigated on the difficulty of translating ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι in the same way as in 1:10. While not quite willing to act upon his suspicion that a different translation is required in 4:2, he nonetheless reflects his private hermeneutic quandary by not capitalizing "spirit".

Aune holds a different view. For him the dative case of πνεύματι reflects, in both passages, a dative locative of sphere indicating an abstract realm: a prophetic trance. This is an interesting proposition, for it implies that a prophetic trance is not a state of being but rather an abstract realm that one goes to. In other words, in Aune's mind, the prophetic trance is not the vehicle transporting John to another realm, but the realm itself. This raises many questions: What is the relationship between the abstract realm called "Prophetic Trance", and the physical universe? How does one get to the place called "Prophetic Trance"? Is "Prophetic Trance" a place that is located on the three dimensional earthly plane or must one somehow transcend this plane of existence to arrive there?

Unfortunately, Aune does not explain how he arrives at this important ontological distinction, nor does he provide a philological breakdown of how John's double use of the phrase

ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι could possibly offer some important clues that could help us to better understand the experiential framework of John's apocalyptic visions.

At least one aspect of these elusive passages is clear to Aune: ἐν πνεύματι refers to the abstract realm called "Prophetic Trance" and not, as many commentators would have it, as the "Spirit of God" transporting John to various locations.[103]

While Aune articulates a high degree of confidence in this assertion, a close examination of his analysis reveals that the question is not actually resolved. To appreciate this fact, it is necessary to quote him at length:

> The phrase ἐν πνεύματι, "in the spirit," occurs four times in Revelation (1:10; 4:2; 17:3; 21:10). Three of these involve responses to an invitation by an angelic being to come (1) *to the heavenly world* (4:1), (2) *to the wilderness* (17:1), and (3) *to a high mountain* (21:9). The term πνεῦμα, "spirit," in these passages is commonly taken to refer to the Spirit of God and so is capitalized in modern English translations (AV [1:10 only]; RSV; NEB; NIV), and is so understood by many commentators (Beckwith, 435; Bearsley-Murray, 112; Sweet, 114; Mounce, 133; Lohse, 19, 37; Lohmeyer, 44-45). Yet in all four of occurrences of the phrase ἐν πνεύματι, "in [the] spirit," the noun is anarthrous, though that reveals little, since the article can be omitted optionally from nouns following a preposition. Of the seven uses of the term πνεῦμα in the singular in Revelation, ten use the articular form τὸ πνεῦμα, and all but 19:10 clearly refer to the Spirit of God (2:8, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22; 14:13; 22:17) [...]. There is, then, no reason for understanding any of these four passages as references to the Spirit of God. The phrase ἐν πνεύματι is an idiom that refers to the fact that John's revelatory experiences took place not "in the body" but rather "in the spirit," i.e. in a vision trance.[104]

[103] If I do not agree with either Aune, who applies the idiomatic translation "prophetic trance" or the commentators cited by him as taking the view that the Spirit of God is to be applied to the four instances where ἐν πνεύματι appears in this form in Revelation, it is not due to some pre-conceived theological fancy, but rather due to the fact that a shift in ontological perspective is discernible in the broader textual context of each occurrence of this phrase, and that this shift should be reflected in the translation. In this vein, I will briefly outline a position I will explore in more detail in section 2.3: I maintain that in Rev. 1:10 John is indeed referring to the Spirit of God as the catalyst of his ecstatic trance (inter-textually, one must look first to the OT prophetic use of the Hebrew term רוּחַ to appreciate John's use of the Greek equivalent πνεύματι). However, considering that the epistles to the seven churches are likely a latter addition to John's text, it is plausible that the second occurrence of ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι in Rev 4:2 occurs in close proximity to its use in Rev 1:10. Taking this into account, the Spirit of God has already functioned as the agent of John's ecstatic trance *and* has been alluded to in Rev 4:1 where the voice that initiated the trance has instantly relocated to the other side of the trans-dimensional portal in the sky, thus making it clear that that the second appearance of this phrase is likely articulating a more advanced phase of the aforementioned ecstatic trance, namely: an out-of-body experience where John perceives his spirit as a distinct entity fully separated from his body and thus able to completely transcend the space/time continuum.

[104] D. E. AUNE, *Revelation 1-5*, 283.

If we read Aune's statement carefully we note that he ignores that the occurrence of ἐν πνεύματι in Rev 1:10 does not involve an invitation by an angelic being to come, and thus cannot be categorized phenomenologically with the three other instances where such an invitation occurs. We should also note that the articular form τὸ πνεῦμα does not occur in 2:8 at all.[105] This is an unfortunate lack of oversight. Be that as it may, a total of six of the *nine* passages using the articular form occur within the epistolary meta-framework of John's text (probably added later than the visionary narrative). In these passages, John is relating "the Spirit's" message to the churches. The context is thus quite different than what we read in Rev 1:10; 4:2; 17:3; 21:10. The epistolary context is such that John is relating a message that, however inspired by a vision trance, he says it is nonetheless related outside of that experiential context. The later occurrences speak of John's experience *within* the overarching context of a vision trance. They are essentially experiential rather than expository. Of the remaining three occurrences of the articular form τὸ πνεῦμα (Rev 14:13; 19:10; 22:17), Rev 14:13 merits closer attention, as this passage actually substantiates the notion that the voice heard in 1:10 and 4:1 is, in fact, the Spirit of God now speaking in 14:13. The translation is my own:

> And I heard a voice from heaven, saying: "Write: 'Blessed are the dead who, from now on, die in the Lord.' Yes indeed!" says the Spirit, "so that they will rest from their toil, for their deeds follow with them." (Rev 14:13)

We have here the re-appearance of the disembodied voice motif (which, here as in 1:10 and 4:1, cannot be firmly linked to an angelic being). It is impossible to ignore the parallels between 14:13, 4:1 and 1:10-11. In each of these instances a voice from heaven instructs John to

[105] Rev 2:8 in the Nestle-Aland[27] reads: Καὶ τῷ ἀγγέλῳ τῆς ἐν Σμύρνῃ ἐκκλησίας γράψον· Τάδε λέγει ὁ πρῶτος καὶ ὁ ἔσχατος, ὃς ἐγένετο νεκρὸς καὶ ἔζησεν·

do something. In two of the three passages cited above, the voice instructs John to write (1:11 and 14:13).

As Aune correctly maintains, the voice in 14:13 clearly refers to the Spirit of God. If that is indeed accurate, the parallelism between this passage and 4:1 strongly infers that the voice inviting John to ascend to heaven and enter the sky portal must also be interpreted as belonging to the Spirit of God. Considering that the voice in 4:1 is identified as being the same voice John heard in 1:10, the body of internal textual evidence is sufficiently convincing to consider that there is, in fact, ample reason to maintain that in John's view, the Spirit of God is the direct agent of his ecstatic trance.

But clarifying this issue still leaves us with the problem of the meaning of ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι in 4:2, for if the Spirit of God as agent referred to in 4:1 is a throwback to 1:10, ἐν πνεύματι in 4:2 cannot be interpreted as a dative instrumental of agent, nor as a dative locative as sphere (as postulated by Aune), but rather must be interpreted as a dative instrumental of manner – that is to say, as a description of *how* John is able to ascend to heaven and travel through the sky portal to what can only be described as the spiritual realm.

Having established that there is ample internal textual evidence to support that John identifies the voice in 1:10-11, 4:1 and 14:3 as belonging to the Spirit of God, we are confronted with two larger problems with Aune's unilateral idiomatic translation of ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι as "I fell into a prophetic trance". In the first instance, two of the three components of this translation are inferential at best. That is to say, that while both the verb γίνομαι and the noun πνεῦμα are highly versatile, it is nonetheless a stretch to translate ἐγενόμην as "I fell" and πνεύματι as "a trance". Aune's insertion of the adjective "prophetic" into his English translation is even more problematic as no such qualification is to be found in the Nestle-Aland's Greek

text.[106] When Aune translates ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι as "I fell into a prophetic trance", he is qualifying his understanding of John's religious experience. While that qualification can certainly be argued from both a diachronic and a synchronic perspective, if we focus exclusively on Rev 4:2, 17:3 and 21:10, interpreting ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι in this way in Rev 1:10 is more problematic because John is here relating a subjective account of the Spirit of God as the agent of his trance. In other words, in 1:10, John is not providing a generic description of his religious experience, but rather is subjectively qualifying the Spirit of God as the inaugural agent of his ecstatic visions. While the trance state is implicit in the actual vision, what is actually being described in 1:10 is the ultimate agent of the vision. Regardless of whether or not John executed a series of ritual actions to trigger this trance state such as prayer, chanting, fasting, particular positioning of the body, or breathing exercises promoting hyper-ventilation (his text does not mention any such ritual actions, but other texts narrating similar experiences do[107]), the important feature in Rev 1:10 is that John ascribes the ultimate agent of his trance vision as the Spirit of God.

In the second instance, the problem of translating ἐν πνεύματι as "in a trance" still remains. Aune is not unaware of this issue:

> The problem in this passage is whether ἐν πνεύματι (1) indicates an ecstatic trance (and is thus analogous to phrases such as ἐν ἐκστάσει, "in a trance," Acts 11:5; 22:17, or ἐγένετο ἐπ' αὐτὸν

[106] While Aune does not explain why he inserts the adjective "prophetic" into his translation, one can surmise that this is due to John referring to his text as "words of prophecy" in his opening beatitude: "Blessed is the one who publicly reads aloud the words of the prophecy, and they that hear and pay attention to the words written therein, for the end time is near." (Rev 1:3). The description of John's text as "words of prophecy" is re-iterated as aMakarism in Rev 22:7. In Rev 10:11 John is told that he must "prophesy again about many peoples and nations and languages and kings."

[107] The author of Daniel mentions fasting and ritual mourning (Dan 10:2). G. Scholem relates Hai ben Sherira's account of the ascetic practices within the framework of Hekhaloth mysticism: "He must fast many days and lay his head between his knees and whisper many hymns and songs whose text are known from tradition […].The typical bodily posture of these ascetics is also that of Elijah in his prayer on mount Carmel. It is an attitude of deep self-oblivion which, to judge from certain ethnological parallels, is favorable to the induction of pre-hypnotic autosuggestion." See, G. SCHOLEM, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, 3rd ed., (New York: Schocken Books, 1995), 49.

> ἔκστασις, "he fell into a trance," Acts 10:10 […], (2) refers to an actual experience of divine inspiration in general apart from ecstatic behavior, or (3) is strictly a literary appropriation of conventional apocalyptic language used to authenticate fabricated vision reports.[108]

Of the three interpretive options outlined above, he identifies the third as the weakest. I agree with Aune on this point, but the argument he puts forth to substantiate this view is problematic. In his view, it is impossible to determine the authenticity of the author's personal religious experience specifically because the phenomenology of revelatory experience narrated in apocalypses conforms to stereotypical behavioral and literary conventions and expectations.[109] This is not a very convincing counter argument against the notion that the authors of apocalypses are using the sky journey as a literary motif. If anything, to state that it is impossible to determine the legitimacy of a genuine religious experience informing the text specifically because all apocalypses are so traditional in their deployment of symbolic literary motifs is to concede that the spiritual ascent of John, or any other apocalypse author, is actually a literary appropriation of conventional apocalyptic language. This would make the third proposition cited above not the weakest of the three, but rather the most plausible. A more convincing argument is thus needed to refute the theory that what we are dealing with here is merely a deliberate use of the familiar literary motifs of apocalypses.

To address the hypothesis of deliberate appropriation of apocalyptic conventions, language, and motifs in the service of fabricated vision reports, we must turn to M.E. Stone's argumentation in favor of a legitimate religious experience at work in another apocalypse (4 Ezra). In his seminal article entitled "A Reconsideration of Apocalyptic Visions", Stone rightly points out that "it is well known that vision or trance experience, in various societies, can be

[108] D. E. AUNE, *Revelation 1-5*, 82.
[109] D. E. AUNE, *Revelation 1-5*, 82. See also, I. M. LEWIS, *Ecstatic Religion: An Anthropological Study of Spirit Possession and Shamanism*, (Baltimore: Penguin, 1971).

transmitted in a fixed, highly traditional form."[110] Yet, in apparent tension with this statement, Stone goes on to point out that the case for genuine experience in 4 Ezra is to be found in its distinct character. This is an important point because it applies not only to 4 Ezra but to other apocalypses as well. While it is true that each apocalypse utilizes a common traditional language and imagery, it is equally true that each apocalypse exhibits its own distinct character. It is by teasing out the distinct character (i.e. variations in a vision's form and in the experience it describes) of each apocalypse that a case can be made for a genuine religious experience informing each text.

For instance, if we compare and contrast John's inaugural vision of the exalted Christ (Rev 1:12-20) and his Heavenly Throne visions (Rev 4:2-11) with the Throne Room vision and appearance of "one like a son of man" narrated in Daniel 7:9-14, we cannot deny that, on the one hand, both authors are articulating their respective experiences within the common framework of the apocalyptic tradition, complete with its formal language and motifs. On the other hand, there are significant idiosyncratic differences between the two texts. Oddly, John's description of the exalted Christ has much in common with Daniel's description of the Ancient of Days seated on his throne, yet John's description of "one seated on the throne" (Rev 4:2) is closer (albeit by no means identical) to Ezekiel's vision of the "likeness of the glory of the Lord" described in Ezekiel 1:26-28. Similarly, John's Son of Man presents himself to John, while Daniel's "one like a son of man" presents himself to the Ancient of Days. The figure that is presented to the one seated on the throne in Revelation is a cosmic sacrificial lamb (Rev 5): a motif that is unique to John's text in the context of a Throne Room vision. Following Stone's argument, because the vision of the cosmic lamb is unusual:

[110] M. E. STONE, "A Reconsideration of Apocalyptic Visions", 178. Specific examples are discussed in CHAPTER 3 of this thesis.

> We do not have to take possible literary influences from earlier writings into consideration as its source. Thus, the question of the description's source becomes acute. Since it resonates clearly with psychological experiences and processes known to occur, it is most plausible to assume that *its source is direct or mediated knowledge of religious experience*. Now, once the door is opened to this factor, even in an unusual work, certain implications inevitably follow. If we accept the idea that religious experience, including alternate states of consciousness, is part, indeed a central part, of what 4 Ezra is about, then we must envisage the possibility that this factor is present also in other works of the time. *They are religious works, by religious people, and we must consider religious experience when we interpret them*. The traditional and stereotypical features of the visionary descriptions in other words do not gainsay this possibility, indeed likelihood." [emphasis added].[111]

For those who would completely deny the reality of religious experiences informing apocalypses in favor of the idea that these vision reports are literary devices to authenticate the author's socio-political agenda, Stone points out that even if the vision form does not necessarily imply an actual vision experience behind each and every description of a vision, said visionary framework is evidence that such visions did take place. In other words, regardless of the fact that the vision form is sometimes used to articulate some fictional vision experience, the form is nonetheless rooted in an experiential concept that enjoyed cross-cultural acceptance in late antiquity.[112]

Moreover, Stone rightly points out that whatever the psychological characterization of a religious experience might be, the one who undergoes such an experience "can only talk about it in the language of his/her culture."[113] Thus, while the psychological mystical experiences of Jews, Christians and Muslim, and other religious groups may be qualified as being phenomenologically similar, when it comes to articulating those experiences, "each of them

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[111] See, M. E. STONE, "A Reconsideration of Apocalyptic Visions", 178.
[112] M. E. STONE, "A Reconsideration of Apocalyptic Visions", 178. Stone is re-iterating an argument initially put forth by D. S. Russell; See, D. S. RUSSELL, *The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic*, (OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1967), 153-73, esp. 164-66. See also, M. HIMMELFARB, *Ascent to Heaven in Jewish and Christian Apocalypses*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 96-114.
[113] M. E. STONE, "A Reconsideration of Apocalyptic Visions", 179.

speaks the symbolic and religious language of his/her culture and tradition."[114] He goes on to ask and subsequently answer a critical question:

> How does this bear on arguments about the literary or experiential character of apocalyptic visions? It shows the antinomy to be false. Apocalyptic writers have to use the cultural language of their day and social context; *there is no other language for them to use*. [emphasis by Stone][115]

It is thus not impossible to plausibly determine the subjective authenticity of the author's personal religious experience. Focusing on the author's personal idiosyncrasies[116] within the more formal apocalyptic framework, as well the presence of distinctly unusual vision narratives[117] are useful points of departure in this enterprise. As to Aune's assertion that it is specifically because revelatory experience narrated in apocalypses conforms to stereotypical behavioral and literary conventions that it is impossible to determine the authenticity of the author's religious experience, Stone convincingly demonstrates that said language merely frames those experiences within the socio-cultural matrix of the author.

This leaves us with two remaining interpretive options for the phrase ἐν πνεύματι on Aune's short list: either the text refers to an ecstatic state, or to a religious experience of divine inspiration *apart* from ecstatic behavior. He has this to say about reading ἐν πνεύματι as an ecstatic state:

> One must take refuge in the comparative study of altered states of consciousness, for all inspired speech or narrations of visionary experiences are based on revelatory trance experiences, usually exhibiting behavior modifications. Contemporary anthropologists distinguish *possession trance*, involving possession by spirits, and *vision trance*, typically involving visions, hallucinations, and out-of-body experiences. By using the

[114] M. E. STONE, "A Reconsideration of Apocalyptic Visions", 179.
[115] M. E. STONE, "A Reconsideration of Apocalyptic Visions", 179.
[116] That is to say, subjective aspects and unique details of the vision narrative that, even if occurring within the formal framework of apocalyptic, differ from one author to another.
[117] That is to say, unusual relative to the formal features of apocalyptic literature.

> phrase ἐν πνεύματι, John claims to have experienced a *vision trance*, for nowhere does he claim to speak through divine inspiration.[118]

One must point out the inherent contradiction at work here: according to Aune's statement, *all* inspired speech or narrations are based on revelatory trance experiences, which he qualifies more precisely as *vision trances* (in contra-distinction to *possession trances*). He then classifies John's experience as belonging to the vision trance category. He thus concludes that John is claiming to have had a vision trance, because nowhere does he claim to speak through divine inspiration. It is unclear why Aune makes a distinction between inspiration in the generic sense of the term and divine inspiration.[119]

If the Delphic Oracle was inspired by Apollo (from Pythia's point of view, this too is divine inspiration), Hesiod by the Heliconian Muses (also a divine inspiration considering that the muses where goddesses), and Socrates by his personal δαιμόνιον (a personal deity?), why should John's inspired visions framed according to his own set of religious beliefs be somehow severed from their perceived source of inspiration?

Does John, in direct contradistinction to Aune's statement, not begin and end his literary effort with statements that claim direct divine inspiration?[120] And how accurate is it to say that all forms of inspiration (whatever that means) are the result of a revelatory trance experience?[121]

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[118] D. E. AUNE, *Revelation 1-5*, 82.

[119] It would be useful for Aune to unpack his understanding of the term "inspiration" as the word is inherently vague. If he is applying the specifically theological sense of the word as referring either to a divine influence directly and immediately exerted upon the mind or soul, or, conversely, as the divine quality of the writings or words of a person so influenced, the question as to why he makes a distinction between "inspiration" and "divine inspiration" still remains unclear.

[120] Consider, for example, John's opening statement: Ἀποκάλυψις Ἰησοῦ Χριστού ("Revelation of Jesus"). If we qualify Ἰησοῦ Χριστου as being an objective genitive, Jesus is the direct object of the revelation (i.e. it is a revelation *about* Jesus). But Ἰησοῦ Χριστου could also function as a subjective genitive: a revelation *from* Jesus. Taking into account John's consistent tendency to use language symbolically (that is to say, in a multivocal, polysemic and multivalent manner), it is likely that we are dealing here with a plenary genitive where the noun can function either as a subjective or objective genitive. Perhaps it is best to understand the noun as functioning objectively and subjectively simultaneously: A revelation *from* Jesus *about* Jesus (i.e. true to the apocalypticist's esoteric worldview, Jesus reveals a previously unknown *hidden* aspect of himself to John). But also note that the

For to qualify all altered states of consciousness as being either a possession or vision trance is actually grossly reductive. The question is far more nuanced. S. Krippner has enumerated no less than twenty states of consciousness: dreaming, sleeping, hypnagogic (drowsiness before sleep), hypnopompic (semi-consciousness preceding waking), hyperalert, lethargic, rapture, hysteric, fragmentation, regressive, meditative, reverie, daydreaming, internal scanning, stupor, coma, stored memory, expanded consciousness, trance and "normal."[122] These states are not discreetly sealed off from each other but rather shade into each other along a continuum with "alert states" at one end and "deep states" or "trance states" at the other. Furthermore, one does not need to be in a deep trance state to experience auditory and visual hallucinations. Such phenomena can occur in a variety of altered states of consciousness including, for example (but not exclusively), dreaming and lucid dreaming (a state between waking and sleeping in which people can control or learn to control their imagery – itself a key aspect of a shaman's technique).[123]

Suffice to say at this point in our inquiry that even in the event that Aune is, broadly speaking, correct in interpreting John's experience as a vision trance, the supporting arguments

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ultimate agent is God (or He who was, is and will be) who reveals himself *through* Jesus. This would make Jesus agential: a genitive of agency. Whichever way we understand the genitive Ἰησοῦ Χριστου, it is hard to read John's opening statement as anything but a direct divine inspiration for the rest of his text. See also the divine commissions for John to write (Rev 1:19; 2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3: 1, 7, 14; 21:5) and divine statements in the epilogue (Rev 22: 12-13, 16, 20).

[121] Drawing from a far more extensive list of possible examples from the biblical tradition, to what degree can Abraham, Moses, Joshua, Gideon, and David be said to be in a *vision trance* in their various communications with Yahweh? As for Paul, while it is clear that he describes having experienced vision trances (see Gal 1:11-24; 1 Cor 9:1; 15:1-8; and esp. 2 Cor 12:1-4), what do we make of the bulk content of his epistles? Clearly, most of what Paul has to say is not anchored specifically to vision trances, but rather to his response to events transpiring in the churches he founded, yet it is safe to say that his letters where considered to be inspired by the congregations who received them as they were read publicly, preserved, copied and ultimately canonized. All of this to say that inspired speech or literature considered to be inspired is not necessarily the direct result of trance visions.

[122] J. J. PILCH, "Paul's Ecstatic Trance Experience Near Damascus in Acts of the Apostles," *HTS* 58/2 (2002), 693. See also, S. KRIPPNER, "Altered States of Consciousness" in *The Highest State of Consciousness*, ed. By J. White, (New York: Doubleday, 1972), 1-5.

[123] J. J. PILCH, "Paul's Ecstatic Trance Experience Near Damascus in Acts of the Apostles,, 693. See also, J. CLOTTES and D. LEWIS-WILLIAMS, *The Shamans of Prehistory: Trance and Magic in the Painted Caves*, (New York: Harry N. Abrams Inc., 1996).

for his translation are not entirely convincing and demonstrate a limited grasp of the complexity of the comparative analysis of altered states of consciousness. From a phenomenological standpoint, Aune's philological analysis of the one phrase that describes the experiential framework of John's visions seems to me to obstruct rather than facilitate the epistemological process[124] he himself concedes is necessary to gain a more complete understanding of John's religious experience. He simply interprets John as being in an abstract realm called "Prophetic Trance" whereas textual evidence supports the hypothesis that John describes his subjective perception of the inductive agent of his trance, and his progression from a state of light trance (i.e. a meditative vision) to a deep trance state (i.e visions occurring as a perceived out-of-body experience with auditory and visual sensory capabilities functioning in a non corporeal sense of self).

2.4 An Alternate Proposal: "I was under the influence of the Spirit" [and subsequently] "I was transformed into a spiritual being."

Before proceeding to my own philological breakdown of the phrase ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι as it appears in Rev 1:10 and 4:2, it is useful to recap the interpretive problems that have thus far come to the fore, as well as briefly summarize how Charles and Aune have respectively tackled these issues.

[124] That is to say, comparative analysis of ASCs. Of course, this requires a firmer grasp than is demonstrated here of what altered states of consciousness are, and how they relate to each other and consciousness generally. These issues are explored more meaningfully in chapter three. While some would argue that such a line of inquiry falls beyond the scope of biblical scholarship, Coleen Schantz has demonstrated that it is, indeed, possible for a biblical scholar to write about religious experience through the lens of biblical scholarship combined with neurobiology without necessarily being a neurobiologist; see, C. SCHANTZ, *Paul in Ecstasy: The Neurobiology of the Apostle's Life and Thought*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009). Schantz' research into Paul's ecstatic experiences is discussed extensively in CHAPTER 3.

Simply stated, the central interpretive issue is that ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι appears as an identical phrase on two occasions (Rev 1:10 and 4:2), but with significant contextual disparity between the two that suggests a shift in meaning. We have seen that Charles expresses perplexity on how to interpret this contextual disparity: Does the Spirit [of God] function as an inductive agent of John's initial trance vision? If John is *already* in a vision trance in 4:1, where he sees a portal open in the sky and hears the same voice that spoke to him in 1:10, what is the significance of ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι in 4:2? Charles is clearly mitigated on these issues. As a result, his official translation (contrary to what he articulates in his commentary notes) is quite conservative. That is to say, he keeps his translation very much on a literal plane, signaling his preference for the Spirit as dative instrumental of agent in 1:10 by capitalizing the noun. In 4:2, he does not capitalize the noun "spirit" and thus infers that in this case, John is referring specifically to his state of being. He is, however, troubled by the fact that John is already in an ecstatic trance in 4:1.

Aune also acknowledges these issues, but his interpretive approach to the problem is different. In his view, πνεύματι is a locative dative of place or sphere in both instances. That is to say, he deals with the ambiguity of the phrase by attempting to remove the plausibility of the noun πνεύματι as functioning as a dative instrumental of agent, arguing instead for interpreting πνεύματι in both instances as a dative locative of place or sphere. We have already pointed out some of the problems with this approach.

Directly related to this is the question of idiomatic latitude. To what degree can we plausibly justify interpreting ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι as "I fell into an ecstatic trance" (Charles) or "I fell into a prophetic trance" (Aune)? While the context surrounding both occurrences of this phrase clearly describe John being in an altered state (or states) of consciousness, it is difficult to

justify a translation of this phrase in these precise terms. That is to say, while a considerable flexibility of meaning exists in each component of this phrase, it is nonetheless a stretch to translate ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι either as John falling into an ecstatic or prophetic trance as the adjectives "ecstatic" and "prophetic" are not present in the Greek text.[125] It seems to me that these interpretations are overly general (in that this meaning is applied to both occurrences despite distinct contextual evidence strongly supporting a shift in meaning), and reductive (in that all altered states of consciousness are ubiquitously qualified merely as *trance visions*).

Finally, there is the more numinous, but no less critical issue of capturing the essence of John's symbolic language in this text. This relates directly to the question of allowing immediate narrative context to inform, in this instance, a new dimension of meaning to a previously occurring phrase. That John's text is a symbolic narrative is a commonly accepted fact. It is therefore not only useful but also essential for the exegete to grasp the full implication of what symbols are. Anthropologist M. Womack provides us with an excellent description of a symbol in contra-distinction to a sign:

> Most anthropologists distinguish symbols from signs. Both symbols and signs communicate information through images, words, and behaviors. Signs, however, have only one possible meaning, whereas symbols, by definition, convey multiple levels of meaning *at the same time* [emphasis added]. That is, symbols are multivocal (they speak with multiple voices), polysemic (they have multiple levels of meaning), or multivalent (they make multiple appeals).[126]

This is a crucial guideline for scholars dealing with inherently symbolic narratives. If the goal is to sympathetically re-enact a text of this nature, it is essential to keep this description in the forefront of one's mind. Too often, biblical scholars pay lip service to the notion that a

[125] While it is a well recognized fact that the Nestle-Aland is an eclectic edition of the NT, comprising of thousands of manuscripts, it is worth pointing out that the phrase ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι as it appears in Rev 1:10 and 4:2 has no variants. That is to say, all manuscripts containing these passages are in agreement on this particular phrase.
[126] M. WOMACK, *Symbols and Meaning: A Concise Introduction*, (Walnut Creek CA: Altamira Press, 2005), 1.

religious text like John's Apocalypse is symbolic in character and then proceed to treat the text in a very different light. That is to say, the tendency is to treat symbols as signs by pegging the language down to a single meaning. This can only result in an impoverished understanding of this type of narrative. It is like holding up a single piece of a thousand piece puzzle and stating confidently that what you hold in your hand is all there is. To avoid this trap, I have made a conscious effort to not just acknowledge, but actively apply Womack's description of how a symbol functions to this problem. In other words, I have opened myself up to the possibility that John uses the phrase ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι in a polysemic manner (i.e he is applying multiple levels of meaning to a singular phrase). Having said as much, while we can argue that human thought has no frontiers, the same cannot be said of language. The bottom line is that language, however flexible, consists of words that have a distinct set of possible meanings. Were it not so, any word could mean anything at all. This observation is the limiting principle that demands that we maintain a logical association between a symbolic word and its referent.

In other words, exploring the levels of meaning in a symbolic narrative is not an open invitation to engage in a fickle exercise of random association. We can thus be certain that to translate ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι as "I took into myself a handful of mushrooms and immediately found myself in a parallel universe swimming in a giant bowl of wonton soup" has nothing to do with the actual meaning of the phrase, since that interpretation is not anchored in the semantic contours of the actual words constituting the phrase ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι. While this is an extreme example of stepping out of the boundaries words impose on meaning, the process is not always so obvious. Those of us engaged in linguistic interpretation of an ancient language, which we must then translate into a modern language, must constantly ask ourselves: "How flexible is this word, phrase, sentence, etc? Am I still within the boundaries of plausible meaning if I

ascribed such and such a meaning to this word, phrase, sentence, etc?" So while I am prepared to engage in the business of teasing out multiple levels of meaning in the phrase ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι, I am also extremely aware of the importance of anchoring that enterprise in adherence to the rules of the dictionary and grammar.

2.4.1 Hypothesis: ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι is a Polysemic Statement

The interpretive issues outlined above can easily be resolved by the working hypothesis that ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι is a polysemic statement. I maintain that in Rev 1:10 John is indeed referring to the Spirit of God as the catalyst of his ecstatic trance. However, considering that the epistles to the seven churches are likely a latter addition to John's text, it is plausible that the second occurrence of ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι in Rev 4:2 occurs in close proximity to its use in Rev 1:10. Taking this into account, the Spirit of God has already functioned as the agent of John's ecstatic trance *and* has been alluded to in Rev 4:1 where the voice that initiated the trance has instantly relocated to the other side of the trans-dimensional portal in the sky. Thus, the second appearance of this phrase is likely articulating a more advanced phase of the aforementioned ecstatic trance, namely: an out-of-body experience where John perceives his spirit as a distinct entity separated from his body that is able to ascend and thus fully transcend the space/time continuum.

This hypothesis actively applies the principle that John's narrative is symbolic and thus to be interpreted in a polysemic manner when the textual evidence points the reader in that direction. When we are confronted with the appearance of this exact phrase on two separate occasions, we must take stalk of their respective contexts in order to identify what the two

passages have in common and how they differ in the hopes that this will reveal the common thread that symbolically links the two meanings of ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι:

- In Rev 1:9 John tells us that he was on the isle of Patmos. This provides us with a temporal geo-spatial location for the events that transpire in his narrative. This geo-temporal marker thus applies to the immediate inaugural vision that ensues (1:10-20), but also to John's ascent to and through the sky portal (4:1-2). That is to say, John's point of departure from this world to the trans-dimensional world "above" is Patmos. We can only infer from his text that while his spirit ascends to the heavenly realm, his body is perceived as remaining on Patmos.
- In Rev 1:10, John says he "came to be under the influence of the Spirit on the Lord's day". This can suggest an altered state of consciousness that should properly be qualified as "meditative"[127]. While in this state, he describes hearing a loud voice behind him, sounding like a trumpet and telling him to write down what he is in the process of "seeing" in this meditative state. The Spirit's voice functions here as the inaugural agent of his subsequent vision, with the command to write as the actual catalyst to the vision. We note that the voice comes from behind, forcing John to turn around to identify it. This is significant in many ways. In antiquity, the *temporal* cardinal points where associated with the human body. Travelling through time and space, a person travels moving backwards from east to west, facing the east (i.e. facing the past) and with the west at his/her back (i.e. with the future behind one's back, unseen and unknown). Thus,

[127] D'Aquili and Newberg describe the meditative ASC as: "(1) intermittent emotional discharges involving the subjective sensation of awe, peace, tranquility, or ecstasy, and (2) varying degrees of unitary experience or feelings of oneness, correlating to the emotional discharges just described. Further this second dimension often generates a decreased awareness of the boundaries between the subject and other individuals, between the subject and external inanimate objects, between the subject and any putative supernatural beings, and indeed, at the extreme, the abolition of all boundaries of discrete being leading to brief states of absolute unitary being. See, E. D'AQUILI and A. B. NEWBERG, *The Mystical Mind: Probing the Biology of Religious Experience*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 95.

when John relates that he hears the voice coming from behind him, he would have perceived this as a voice coming from the future. On the other hand, the voice coming from behind (that is to say the west/future) also indicates that John is still functioning on the horizontal axis of the four cardinal points of his body in relation to the earth.[128] The disembodied spirit has thus *descended* to John's terrestrial plane of existence. Conversely, John's meditative ASC is in the process of decreasing his awareness of the boundaries between himself and any putative supernatural beings.[129] He is thus "under the influence of the Spirit".

- In 4:1 (the verse that immediately contextualizes what is described in 4:2), John tells us of a door (or sky portal) opening up in the heavens. He then describes that the voice that addressed him from behind, forcing him to turn around, (i.e. face the future) in 1:10, is talking to him once again, only now it is coming from above, where the portal has opened up in the sky. The voice tells him to "come up here" or "ascend" (i.e. to enter the trans-dimensional sky portal). The voice's relocation to the sky (i.e. "up" or "above") is also revealing, as the vertical axis up and down point to the transcendent and infernal dimensions.[130] Seeing as these dimensions lie outside the spatio-temporal plane, they represent the larger ontological cosmic space informing reality on the earthly plane (i.e. the corporal as opposed to spiritual realm). In 4:1, then, the disembodied voice (the Spirit) has *ascended* up to its proper realm. But there is more. John is still under its influence. That is to say, he is still in a meditative state. In fact, the Spirit's relocation and the opening of the sky portal suggest that John is in the process of transitioning from a

[128] See, N. WYATT, *Space and Time in the Religious Life of the Near East*, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 35-36.
[129] The full quote is provided in note 47; see, D'AQUILI and A. B. NEWBERG, *The Mystical Mind*, 95.
[130] See, N. WYATT, *Space and Time in the Religious Life of the Near East*, 40.

deep meditative state to a full blown deep trance out-of body experience. This progression from a meditative trance to an out-of-body deep trance state is implicit in the Spirit's command in 4:1 to "Come up here!" or "Ascend!" – as in 1:10, the Spirit's voice functions as the inductive agent in this process.

- Finally, in direct response to the Spirit voice's command, John finds himself immediately "transformed into a spiritual being" in 4:2.

In other words, he also ascends up to the transcendent realm. The pattern that immerges is best illustrated in the table provided here:

Table IV: Comparative Analysis of Rev 1:10-11 and Rev 4:1-2	
Rev 1:10-11	**Rev 4:1-2**
John is "under the influence of the Spirit on the Lord's day" (1:10), that is to say, the Spirit *descends* upon John (1st occurrence of the phrase ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι).	John is still (presumably) under the influence of the Spirit when he sees a portal open in the sky. (4:1)
The disembodied voice of the Spirit addresses John from *behind* (i.e. from the horizontal cardinal/corporal axis "West", temporally	The same disembodied voice of the Spirit addresses John from *above* (i.e. from the vertical transcendent axis "Up" which is a

associated with the future). (1:10)	supra-temporal realm (i.e. outside of, but also presiding over earthly space/time). (4:1)
Spirit voice commands John to write what he sees to the seven churches in Asia Minor (1:11). Note the earthly temporal geo-spatial orientation of this command.	Spirit voice commands John to "come up here!" or "Ascend!" (4:1). Note the supra-temporal orientation of this command. Immediately, John is "transformed into a spiritual being", that is to say, he *ascends* to the spirit realm in a spiritual body. (4:2) (2nd occurrence of the phrase ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι).
Leads into inaugural vision of exalted cosmic Christ figure (1:12-20)	Leads into John's vision of the Supreme Deity seated upon a cosmic throne (4:2-11)

The attentive reader will note that when we compare and contrast these two passage, there is obviously a narrative connection between the two instances where the precise phrase ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι occurs. There are two features that tell us that both passages are intimately connected, in that they are relating the experiential framework of John's revelatory religious experience. Nonetheless, they are also expressing different altered states of consciousness within the wider context of this experiential framework.

In 1:10, John is in a meditative state where the Spirit of God *descends* upon him (or, more precisely *behind* him). This is supported by the mention of the specifically corporal, geo-spatial, and temporal horizontal axis (behind = West = the future). In 4:1, John hears the same voice from above issuing a new command ("Ascend!"), signaling the inauguration of a literally higher level of transcendence and hence a much deeper trance state. The new context is thus spiritual (out-of-body = "Up") and transcendent ("Up" = outside the earth space/time continuum, but also presiding over it). John's ascent mirrors the Spirit's descent and his use of the same phrase to convey both the agent of his transformation and the manner of it does so with a remarkable economy of style. When John becomes a spiritual being, he is able to gain a holistic view (or *revelation*) of events on all three planes of existence: the transcendent

(Up/God/Heaven), the earthly (East/Front/Past, West/Behind/Future, North/Left/Dangerous, and South/Right/Security), and the infernal (Down/Satan/the Abyss).

Taking all of this into consideration, we are sufficiently equipped with contextual evidence to argue in favor or reflecting the polysemic meaning of ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι by translating the phrase differently in each occurrence. But compelling as this hypothesis may be, we must substantiate it with a thorough justification of translating the Greek text in this manner.

2.4.2 A Philological Breakdown of ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι

During the course of this chapter, I have pointed out that translating ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι as either "I fell into an ecstatic trance" or "I fell into a prophetic trance" is perhaps pushing the boundaries of the verb γίνομαι and the noun πνεῦμα too far. I hope to justify this criticism in this section. Conversely, I will have to demonstrate the viability of translating the preposition ἐν in 1:10 as "under the influence".

Provided below is a systematic breakdown of my interpretive process of the phrase ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι. I treat each occurrence separately.

2.4.2.1 ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι in Rev 1:10

> **Rev 1:10** (Nestle-Aland 27th ed.) **ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι** ἐν τῇ κυριακῇ ἡμέρᾳ καὶ ἤκουσα ὀπίσω μου φωνὴν μεγάλην ὡς σάλπιγγος
>
> **Rev 1:10** (J.E. Raddatz) **I came to be under the Spirit's influence** on the Lord's day, and I heard a loud voice like the sound of a trumpet behind me,

ἐγενόμην: Verb indicative aorist (II), 1st person singular from **γίνομαι**. All sub-definitions of this word stem from the concept of *coming into being*. Thus, γίνομαι can mean

anything from being born; making or creating an object; performing a ritual; turn out; a temporal development (to arise, come about, develop); to occur as a process or result (to happen, turn out take place); to experience a change in nature or entry into a new condition (to become something); to make; a location in space (to move); to come into a state or possess certain characteristics (to be, prove to be, turn out to be); to be present at a specific time (to be there); to be closely related to someone or something (to belong); and to be in or at a place (to be in, be there).[131]

Each of these sub-definitions can be further broken down into specific terms according to topical context as the verb's grammatical relationship with other elements of a phrase and clause. To make the translator's life marginally easier, a good lexicon like the *BDAG* provides a complete list of source citations, each classified in their proper contextual definitions.

While this is of valuable service to the exegete, the system of annotation in the *BDAG* is not one hundred percent infallible. Occasionally, there are inconsistencies. Following the trail of annotations for Rev 1:10 and 4:2 from verb, to preposition, to noun reveals an example of just such a series of inconsistencies.

We find that Rev 1:10 and 4:2 are cited in section 5(b) of the *BDAG* entry for γίνομαι. Sub-definition (5)[132] defines γίνομαι as "to experience a change in nature and so indicate a new condition, *become something*." Sub-section (c) states: "with [preposition] ἐν of state of being… ἐν πνεύματι *under the Spirit's influence*."[133] Thus, my translation: "I came to be under the Spirit's influence." While this definition works splendidly for 1:10 (if we interpret πνεύματι as a dative instrumental of agent), it no longer works if πνεύματι, by virtue of a different context, no

[131] See, F. W. DANKER, ed., "γίνομαί" *BDAG*, 196-199.
[132] See, F. W. DANKER, ed., "γίνομαί" *BDAG*, 198:196-199.
[133] See, F. W. DANKER, ed., "γίνομαί" *BDAG*, 198:196-199.

longer functions as dative instrumental of agent. As a final note, translating ἐγενόμην as "I came to be" is more in step with "becoming something" than "I fell" (Aune). One must be ever so cautious with idiomatic translations.

ἐν: preposition (dative). In this context, a "marker of close association within a limit", but more specifically, "especially in Pauline or Johannine usage, to designate a close personal relation in which the referent of the ἐν-term is viewed as the controlling influence: *under the control of, under the influence of, in close association with*."[134] But if we continue to work our way down sub-section (4) (c) of the *BDAG*'s entry for ἐν, we find that Rev 1:10 and 4:2 are translated as "ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι *I was in a state of inspiration*"[135] which is not quite the same as the translation suggested for this phrase in the entry for γίνομαι ("I was under the Spirit's influence"). The one speaks of a state of being in very general terms; the other speaks specifically of the agent causing a state of being that is, for the moment, implicit, but not described explicitly. The translator must thus weigh-in on this in a subjective manner. This is where it becomes necessary to pay close attention to the phrase's relationship to the broader textual context (see section 2.3.1).

πνεύματι: Noun, neutral, singular, dative instrumental of *agent*: *Who* did John come to be under the influence of? The Spirit [of God or more precisely, the Lord] as this is happening on "the day of the Lord" (τῇ κυριακῇ ἡμέρα) a prepositional phrase of time modifying the verb ἐγενόμην: *When* did John come to be in under the influence of the spirit? On the Lord's day. In this context, πνεύματι is likely referring to "the Spirit of God as exhibited in the character or activity of God's people or selected agents, *Spirit*, spirit[136][…]. Of the state of mind of the seer

[134] See, F. W. DANKER, ed., "ἐν" *BDAG*, 327:326-330.
[135] See, F. W. DANKER, ed., "ἐν" *BDAG*, 328:326-330.
[136] See, F. W. DANKER, ed., "πνεῦμά" *BDAG*, 835:832-836.

of the Apocalypse: ἐν πνεύματι."[137] It is correct to speak here in the broadest of terms of "the state of mind of the seer of the Apocalypse" because all that is expressed in definitive terms in 1:10 is that John's body and mind are "under the Spirit's influence." Seeing as this is occurring on "the Lord's day" we can plausibly infer that John was engaged in some form of religious ritual action prompting a meditative state of consciousness (for instance prayer and/or fasting). Considering that the Spirit is closely associated with the disembodied voice that speaks to John as a distinct entity,[138] it is hard to conceive that πνεύματι can function as anything but a dative instrumental of agent, yet Aune states emphatically that πνεύματι functions both here and in 4:2 as a dative locative of sphere. In my view, that construction is particularly problematic here in 1:10.

2.4.2.2 ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι in Rev 4:2

> **Revelation 4:2** (Nestle-Aland 27th ed.) Εὐθέως **ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι**, καὶ ἰδοὺ θρόνος ἔκειτο ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, καὶ ἐπὶ τὸν θρόνον καθήμενος,
>
> **Revelation 4:2** (J.E. Raddatz) Immediately, **I was transformed into a spiritual being**, and behold! A throne was set in heaven and one was seated on the throne.

ἐγενόμην: Verb indicative aorist (II), 1st person singular from **γίνομαι**. Because the context of the second occurrence of this phrase makes it quite clear that πνεύματι cannot plausibly function as a dative instrumental of agent, it is no longer accurate to translate this phrase as "I was under the Spirit's influence". It is already emphatically clear in 4:1 that John is under the Spirit's influence as he is still experiencing visions and hearing the Spirit's disembodied voice instructing him to ascend above (i.e. in the transcendent realm). Recalling that polysemic meanings must nonetheless retain a strong degree of inter-coherency, I have

[137] See, F. W. DANKER, ed., "πνεῦμά" *BDAG*, 836:832-836.
[138] Recalling that "one like the Son of Man" addresses John quite separately in 1:17.

chosen here to continue to be guided by the specific meaning of γίνομαι as "to experience a change in nature and so indicate a new condition, *become something*"[139] but without seeking out the definition under this category of meaning explicitly referring to a controlling or influencing agent. Thus, *I came to be* [under the Spirit's influence] is now translated as *I was transformed* [into a spiritual being] where "I was transformed" is synonymous with "I became" while more precisely emphasizing the manner in which John is able to ascend to the transcendent realm.

ἐν: preposition (dative). In this context, ἐν serves as "a marker of extension towards a goal that is understood be within an area or condition, *into* […]."[140] John's goal (in response to the Spirit's command) is to ascend to the transcendent realm. To do so, he must be transformed *into* a spiritual being (i.e. he must leave his body on the earthly plane and ascend to the transcendent realm in the spirit).

πνεύματι: Noun, neutral, singular, dative instrumental of *manner*: *How* does John ascend to the transcendent realm? By being transformed into a spiritual, non corporal being. In this context, the phrase denotes not where John is going (that is already stated in 4:1), nor the agent who is ultimately overseeing this process (that was stated in 1:10), but rather *how* John is able to ascend to the transcendent realm (i.e. by freeing the soul/spirit from the body). That is to say that John is freeing "the immaterial part" of the "human personality"[141] from the body in order to become "an independent non-corporeal being."[142]

Εὐθέως **ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι** functions as an adverbial clause to 4:1[b] (ἀνάβα ὧδε, καὶ δείξω σοι ἃ δεῖ γενέσθαι μετὰ ταῦτα // Ascend here and I will make known to you what must

[139] See, F. W. DANKER, ed., "γίνομαί" *BDAG*, 198:196-199.
[140] See, F. W. DANKER, ed., "ἐν" *BDAG*, 327:326-330.
[141] See, F. W. DANKER, ed., "πνεῦμά" *BDAG*, 833:832-836.
[142] See, F. W. DANKER, ed., "πνεῦμά" *BDAG*, 833:832-836.

happen after this). It answer the adverbial question *How*? Specifically, it is an adverbial comparative clause explaining the manner in which an action is to be done.

2.5 Concluding Remarks

In this chapter I have identified and systematically broken down the interpretive issues surrounding the double occurrence of the phrase ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι in Rev 1:10 and 4:2. I have explored how two important biblical scholars (Charles and Aune) have tackled these interpretive issues while providing a detailed critical analysis of their respective hermeneutical process. Finally, I have provided an alternative philological hypothesis taking into account the polysemic quality of John's symbolic language in an effort to resolve the interpretive tension between the separate (but nonetheless complimentary) meanings of the phrase as it occurs in Rev 1:10 and 4:2.

The philological hypothesis I propose also opens up critical lines of inquiry into the neurobiological aspects of consciousness generally, ASCs, and the mind-body problems associated with ecstatic trance and out-of-body experiences. In order to better qualify these experiences on an experiential and physical level, what is needed at this juncture is a more precise understanding of these terms, a broader diachronic framework of comparative analysis, as well as a basic grasp of the neurological process behind these experiences.

CHAPTER 3
Looking Through the Glass Darkly:
A Comparative Analysis of the Religious Experiences of John, Paul and the Prophets

3.1 John the Prophet

While John never explicitly refers to himself as a prophet, there is a convincing body of internal textual evidence that suggests that that is precisely how he viewed himself. In Rev 1:3 he states:

> Blessed is the one who publicly reads aloud the words of the prophecy, and they that hear and pay attention to the words written therein, for the end time is near.[143]

John is thus signalling his readers that the body of his literary effort is to be considered a "prophecy". Moreover, by using the noun καιρός with a definite article he is providing us with both the eschatological topical thrust and temporal reference point for these prophetic words: they pertain to events signalling ὁ καιρός– "the end time".

Much has been written about the nuanced question of the role of prophecy in apocalyptic literature. But like most lines of inquiry pertaining to apocalypticism, this question has been captured by the immense gravitational pull of literary genre criticism. In light of this fact, it is not surprising that most of what has been said about the inter-relationship between the prophets and the apocalypticists that allegedly followed in their footsteps focuses on the formal features of each type of literature: how they differ, the points of commonality the two (nonetheless distinct) literary genres share, the degree to which certain prophetic literature can – in light of Collins' master paradigm for identifying an apocalypse – be considered "proto-

[143] John re-emphasizes the prophetic quality of his literary effort again in Rev 22: 7, 10, 18, and 19. In Rev 10:11, John is told that he must "prophesy again against many peoples, nations, languages and kings". Finally, in Rev 22:9, an angel urges John to cease worshiping it, going on to say: "I am a fellow slave with you and your brothers, the prophets, and with they who keep the words of this book." Aune argues that John's "brothers the prophets" are likely referenced again in Rev 22:16 and that this suggest (albeit inferentially) that John belonged to a prophetic guild. It is worth pointing out, *contra* Aune, that it is equally, if not more, plausible to interpret this group simply as the Jewish prophets of old, in which case John is merely articulating that he strongly identifies with the great prophets of Jewish scripture. Certainly the many allusions to the prophetic books in John's text support this, while scant internal evidence supports the hypothesis that John belonged to a Christian prophetic guild. More problematically, while we cannot dispute that the Hellenic proto-Christians certainly engaged in prophesy, no convincing external evidence seems to exist to support the idea of an organized prophetic guild in the proto-Christian movement. See, D. E. AUNE, "The Prophetic Circle of John of Patmos and the Exegesis of Revelation 22.16." *JNST* 37 (1989), 103-116. See also, D. HILL, "Prophecy and Prophets in the Revelation of St. John." *NTS* 18 (1971-72) 401-418. Hill lists nine references to "prophets" in Revelation (10:7; 11:10, 18; 16:6; 18:20, 24; 22:6, 9).

apocalyptic", the socio-historical trajectory from pre-exilic, to post exilic prophetic literature, to apocalyptic and so on.[144]

While these questions are no doubt important, I will not be addressing them here for the simple reason that above and beyond the literary genre John selected to frame his cognitive experiences, my concern is specifically with the *experiential* matrix that motivated him to write this text to begin with. Be that as it may, there are three relevant questions pertaining to the relationship between ASCs, prophecy and John's apocalypse that are relevant to this thesis: (1) how do we define the phenomenon called "prophecy"? (2) What is this phenomenon's relationship to ASCs? And finally, (3) What prophetic sources does John use to frame his own cognitive experience and what could that tell us about (a) his state of consciousness during the course of that experience and (b) the cultural prism through which he filters his experience in order to make it intelligible to himself and his readers?

The term "prophecy", like "apocalypse" is a slippery term that means different things to different people at different points in time. The most comprehensive scholarly definition I have encountered belongs to M. Nissinen:

> Prophecy is the human transmission of allegedly divine messages. As a method of revealing the divine will to humans, prophecy is to be seen as another, yet distinctive, branch of the consultation of the divine that is generally called "divination". Among the forms of divination, prophecy clearly belongs to the non-inductive kind. That is to say, prophets – like dreamers and unlike astrologers or haruspices – do not employ methods based on systematic observations and their scholarly interpretations, but act as a direct mouthpiece of gods whose message they communicate.[145]

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[144] See for instance, N. COHN, *Cosmos, Chaos and the World to Come: The Ancient Roots of Apocalyptic Faith,* 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001); J. J. COLLINS, "From Prophecy to Apocalypticism: The Expectation of the End" in *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism, Volume 1: The Origins of Apocalypticism in Judaism and Christianity*, J. J. Collins ed., (New York/London: Continuum Publishing Company, 2000)*;* ——, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature*, 2nd ed., (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997); L. L. GRABBE and R. D. HAAK, eds., *Knowing the End from the Beginning: The Prophetic, the Apocalyptic and their Relationships*, (London/New York: T&T Clark International, 2004); L. I. COOK, *Prophecy and Apocalypticism: The Post-Exilic Setting*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995); P. D. HANSON, *The Dawn of Apocalyptic*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975).

[145] M. NISSINEN, *Prophets and Prophecy in the Ancient Near East*, 1.

While the phenomenon of prophecy has established itself most notably in the religious landscape of Jewish, Christian and Islamic cultures, it is certainly not restricted to these cultural milieus. Indeed, prophecy is a cross-cultural phenomenon that can be observed in various cultural environments throughout human history including the present day. Moreover, this common cultural legacy cannot be traced back to any particular society or place of origin.[146]

The key component of prophecy lies in its transmissive or communicative aspect. That is to say, while it undoubtedly occurs within a broader social, political and cultural context, the aspects that make up that broader context, such as the prophet's religion, the social conditions of his or her activities, the personal qualities of the prophet, the predictive quality, or any other distinctive features of the prophecy including the phenomenological means by which such a prophecy was obtained, are all subordinate to the basic understanding of prophecy as a process of transmission.[147]

This is a useful qualification as it delineates an important phenomenological distinction between ASCs and prophecy proper. While the prophet's raw cognitive experience may occur in one or more altered states of consciousness, these ASCs do not, in themselves, constitute prophecy. Any cognitive experience occurring within the general framework of ASCs must be understood to precede the prophecy that may result from such an experience. In other words, the one is incumbent upon the other: the "prophet" has a powerful neurological experience that is subjectively qualified as a divine message, which is then related back to the community in the form of a prophecy.

[146] M. NISSINEN, *Prophets and Prophecy in the Ancient Near East*, 3-4.
[147] M. NISSINEN, *Prophets and Prophecy in the Ancient Near East*, 1.

This symbiotic relationship is an excellent illustration of how substance (ASCs) and form (prophecy) complement each other while remaining separate phenomena. The prophetic form of the antecedent cognitive experience informing it will invariably draw upon language and imagery that is relevant to the target community's social concerns, geographic and historical context. But prophecy may also draw upon archetypal language that transcends the immediate temporal context and concerns of the target audience. John's apocalypse provides us with a fine example of how a prophecy can dynamically combine temporal and archetypal language to convey both the community's immediate concerns, and the author's decidedly otherwordly ecstatic cognitive experience.

Nissinen goes on to point out that for a written source to be identified as a prophecy, four components should be easily discernible in the text: (1) a divine messenger, (2) the message itself, (3) the human transmitter of the divine message, and (4) the recipients of the message.[148]

If we apply this set of criteria to John's apocalypse, we must conclude that as far as literary genres go, this is a hybrid text. It is an apocalypse, but it is also a prophecy. There are many divine messengers in Revelation: Jesus Christ, God, the Spirit, and various angels. There is a message. A narrow view of the recipients of this message would single out the seven churches, but if we take the statement in Rev 10:11 at face value the entire content of the book applies to many nations, languages, peoples, and kings. Finally, there is a human transmitter of this message: in Rev 1:1-2, John drops his name and tells us that he received God's message and further, bore witness to "everything that he saw".

So we can firmly establish that John's text is both an apocalypse, and an apocalyptic prophecy. Perhaps more relevantly to the purposes of our inquiry, we have learned that prophecy is a separate phenomenon than the cognitive experience that motivates it. Prophecy is about

[148] M. NISSINEN, *Prophets and Prophecy in the Ancient Near East*, 2.

transmitting that experience to a wider audience. But what, exactly, do we mean when we speak of ASCs? E. Bourguignon defines altered states of consciousness (ASCs) as:

> [Neuro-physiological] conditions in which sensations, perceptions, cognition and emotions are altered. They are characterized by changes in sensing, perceiving, thinking and feeling. They modify the relation of the individual to the self, body, sense of identity, and the environment of time, space, or other people.[149]

A person in a trance or any other ASC enters another level or aspect of reality. J. J. Pilch has emphasized a distinction between culturally "normal" or consensual reality and alternate (or non-consensual, or non-ordinary) reality. Together, these two realities comprise the totality of reality. What Pilch calls "consensual" reality is "that aspect of reality that a person is most commonly aware most of the time."[150] Alternate reality (or, "non-consensual" for those who deny that such a plane of reality exists) is where "the deity and spirits reside, which human beings from culturally "normal" reality can sometimes visit in ecstatic trance by taking a journey, and to which people go to when they die."[151]

While I will discuss levels of reality, ecstatic sky journeys and the term "trance" more extensively later in this chapter, what I wish to emphasize in this section is this: while intimately related, ASCs and prophecy represent two distinct sets of phenomena. Even if a prophetic

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[149] E. BOURGUIGNON, "Altered States of Consciousness" in *Psychological Anthropology: An Introduction to Human Nature and Cultural Differences*, (E. Bourguignon, ed.; New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1979), 233-269.

[150] J. J. PILCH, "Paul's Ecstatic Trance Experience Near Damascus in Acts of the Apostles", 692. The reader should be aware, however, that there is no real baseline for consensual reality because there is no universally accepted baseline for what constitutes consciousness, let alone "normal" consciousness. The very word "normal" is an entirely relative mental construct that has no physical basis in the brain. While "normal" is undoubtedly a social construct, it nonetheless falls into the category of *qualia*: the experiential aspect of our lives that can be accessed through introspection. Because every person is unique, a complete understanding of another person's consciousness is not likely. While we can rely on a general agreement on overlapping meaning, even in an environment with commonly shared cultural values, each individual understands *qualia* such as "normal" slightly differently. The situation becomes even more muddled when one steps out of the cultural norms that help define one's sense of normalcy. If we add the passage of time to spatial distance between individuals and their cultural context, "normal" as a concept becomes functionally useless. See, M. BEAUREGARD and D. O'LEARY, *The Spiritual Brain: A Neuroscientist's Case for the Existence of the Soul*, (New York: HarperCollins, 2007), 102.

[151] J. J. PILCH, "Paul's Ecstatic Trance Experience Near Damascus in Acts of the Apostles", 692.

utterance may occur while the subject is experiencing ASCs, such an utterance nonetheless remains a *result* of the ASC, where the subject is channeling information received from a perceived higher power or entity in an alternate reality. Moreover, as a quick survey of the prophetical books of the Hebrew Bible will reveal, prophecy may be the end result of a wide range of ASCs.[152] Similarly, experiencing radical ASCs such as deep trance states does not automatically result in prophetic utterances. An example of such an instance (which we will explore in more detail in a separate section of this chapter) is Paul's heavenly journey (2 Cor 12:1-4).

I have emphatically pointed out that the experiential phenomena informing a prophecy is nonetheless different, since experiencing something is not the same as relating that experience. In other words, experiencing something is about direct cognition of the reality of the moment (however otherworldly that reality may be), while relating that experience to an audience is about creating a rational narrative out of that experience that is both meaningful and relevant to one's self and one's audience. When I use the phrase "rational narrative" I am referring to the process of transferring the raw data of direct cognition into an intelligible framework. Such a framework must forcibly be anchored in the shared reality of the author and his/her community.

This shared reality will inform the language of the narrative as well as the symbolic value and interpretation of the words and imagery the author evokes. These factors may in turn

[152] This question deserves more attention than what is provided here, but a few examples from the Jewish Prophetic corpus will serve to illustrate this point: Isaiah's inaugural vision in the temple (Isa 6) begins in a meditative state and evolves into a vision trance. Ezekiel, whom I will be discussing in more detail in this section, experiences deep trance states involving OBEs (out-of-body-experiences). The authors behind Daniel – a composite collection comprising of mantic stories as well as an apocalypse revolving around a character named Daniel – describe prayer, fasting and ritual mourning as the inductive elements that trigger Daniel to have a waking vision of Gabriel (Dan 9). The same text refers to an oneiric vision (Dan 7) and a reference to waking trance visions that do not mention inductive elements (Dan 10:7, 9). Habakkuk's prophetic text is based upon a conversation with God in a prayer (meditative) state. Finally, Zechariah speaks of experiencing a "vision in the night" which infers an oneiric vision Zech 1:8).

communicate the shared experience of a micro-community like the proto-Christians[153] within the broader context of Hellenic culture. Perhaps a proto-Christian author like John, Paul or Jude will want to use language that anchors the proto-Christian community's reality to the historical reality of ancient Judaism.

These are but a few of the considerations John undoubtedly wrestled with in an effort to contextualize his experience in a matter that made sense to him and his audience. The point is that transmitting one's direct cognition of an alternate reality into an intelligible and relevant textual narrative, while simultaneously working to preserve the reality of that larger ontological experience requires an intricate process of compositional deliberation.

As we have already seen in chapter 2, it is well known that vision or trance experience, in various societies, can be transmitted in a fixed, highly traditional form.[154] Thus, when John frames his OBEs (out-of-body experiences) in the formal contours of the ancient Jewish prophetic and apocalyptic tradition, we are witnessing him anchoring his trance visions to a long and rich religious tradition that helps him organize his cognitive experiences into a recognizable, meaningful pattern. In other words, by affixing his trance experiences to a previously established traditional form that he clearly reveres, John is able to legitimize his experiences both to himself and his audience.

If our goal is to sympathetically re-enact the experiential component of John's text, it is necessary to move beyond a hermeneutic of suspicion. If we cannot move pass that impulse, we

[153] I use the term "proto-Christian" to refer to the early Christian community of the first century CE – a period where said community's social identity is still very much linked to Judaism.
[154] See note 31.

will conclude (most likely incorrectly) that John's text is a patch work of megalomaniacal scribal plagiarism created for the sole purpose of propping up his own religious authority.[155]

What more can we say, then, about John's substantial allusions to the prophetic writings of the HB? As many scholar have noted, John alludes to the prophetic books more than any other biblical or pseudepigraphical source. He constantly alludes to passages in Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel. To a lesser degree, he references Zechariah, Joel, Amos, and Hosea, whereas Zephaniah and Habakkuk are referenced to "a very minor degree".[156] The objective here is not to cross-index and breakdown how John uses the prophetic books in his text. Such an ambitious project far exceeds the modest goals of this thesis.

Be that as it may, if we hone in on the passages we have unpacked philologically in chapter 2 which describe the basic phenomenological framework of consciousness at work in our text, we may ask ourselves: does John in any way compare and contrast his experience with a specific prophet in Rev 1:10 and/or 4:2? If so, what is the common experiential component? If we investigate the matter, we find that John focuses specifically on passages in Ezekiel that describe the Spirit's (רוּחַ) inductive role in the prophet's OBEs, as seen in the table below:

[155] While I do not deny that John expresses his fair share of vitriol against proto-Christian leaders (such as the woman from Thyatira whom he refers to as Jezebel in 1:20), or Christian groups that do not adhere to his views (such as the Nicolaitans mentioned in 2:6 and 15), or again, against "those [from Smyrna] who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan" (1:9 - the same epithet is used again in the message to the church of Philadelphia in 3:9), that vitriol is contained in the epistles to the seven churches. The "us" versus "them" scenario that plays out in the apocalyptic visionary narratives in John's text (i.e. Rev 4-22) has distinctly metaphysical quality that quite transcends internal socio-political power plays. Here it is useful to recall the central axioms of the apocalyptic worldview as described by DiTommaso (see note 25).

[156] R. H. CHARLES, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John*,, vol. I, lxv.

Table V: Comparing and Contrasting Rev 1:10 and 4:2 with Ezekiel 3:12 and 3:14	
Revelation	**Ezekiel (NRSV)**
1:10 I came to be under the Spirit's influence on the Lord's day, and I heard a loud voice like the sound of a trumpet behind me,	**3:12** Then the spirit (רוּחַ) lifted me up and as the glory of the Lord rose from its place, I heard behind me the sound of loud rumbling.
4:2a Immediately, I was transformed into a spiritual being...	**3:14a** The spirit lifted me up and bore me away...

This table above provides us with an opportunity to highlight an important point regarding how John uses antecedent sources. Observe how John *alludes* to his source, but he never engages in direct quotation. E. H. Peterson makes an interesting observation in this regard:

> Interestingly, there is not a single exact quotation from any source [in John's text]. It would have been impossible for anyone to copy so many things with such uniform inaccuracy.[157]

This consistent allusive approach to using other sources highlights problems with the literary-scribal paradigm of composition because the model fails to adequately explain "*both* the similarities *and* the differences between Revelation and its resources."[158] deSilva proposes an interesting hypothesis that John may have recited prophetic texts to himself as an inductive means of entering into ecstatic trance.[159] It is an attractive theory because if these texts functioned as a meditative tool necessary to pass from a meditative ASC to a deep trance state, John's re-contextualization of Ezek 3:12 (itself an incipit to a visionary experience involving an OBE) in Rev. 1:10 suggests (admittedly inferentially) that by meditating upon Ezekiel's text, he

[157] E. H PETERSON, "Apocalypse: The Medium is the Message." *Theology Today* 26 (1969), 135.
[158] D.A. deSILVA, *Seeing Things John's Way*, 124 (note 28).
[159] D.A. deSILVA, *Seeing Things John's Way*, 124 (note 28).

is able to induce a similar experience where he is under the influence of the spirit (Ezek 3:12 // Rev 1:10) and subsequently lifted up and taken away in a spirit body (Ezek 3:14a // Rev 4:2).

But what is interesting is how John uses these passages to create a rational narrative of his own OBE. On the one hand, he establishes an experiential point of commonality between himself and Ezekiel that highlights their respective out-of-body experiences. On the other, in these specific textual references, that is where the point of commonality ends on the experiential plane. Ezekiel's OBE allows him to travel in the spirit to a temporal location (Tel-abib). John's OBE takes him straight through an inter-dimensional portal to an alternate reality.[160] So he de-emphasizes that element of Ezekiel's narrative. In the same vein, Ezekiel associates "the sound of loud rumbling" with the wings of the living creatures (Ezek 3:13), whereas John associates the loud trumpet sound with the Spirit that instructs him to write down what he sees and send the material to the seven churches (Rev 1:10-11). Here again, John wants to emphasize the role of the Spirit as the being ultimately inducing his trance state, so he discards that aspect of Ezekiel's narrative that does not align with his own experience. In the final analysis, we can see how John uses this particular OBE narrative in Ezekiel to highlight a specific point of subjectively perceived commonality: that both he and Ezekiel experienced deep trance OBEs, induced by the Spirit of God.

The many references to the prophetic corpus in John's text, then, serve mainly to anchor his own religious experience in the Jewish prophetic tradition, which he fully identifies with not only in terms of their social role within the broader community (i.e. relating divine messages back to the community), but also spiritually in terms of how they contextualized their ASCs as a direct encounter with God. This need not suggest that John's text is an inventive elaboration or

[160] Of course, John will once again make extensive use of the prophetical corpus to describe this reality, combining elements of Isaiah 6, Ezekiel 1 and Daniel 10 with his own details to paint an elaborate picture of that ethereal place where God resides and what goes on there.

conflation of Hebrew prophetic scripture and pseudepigraphical sources, but rather that he strongly identified with the HB prophets on an experiential plane.

3.2 John and Paul: A Tale of Two Heavenly Journeys

Taking into consideration the many points of commonality shared by Paul and John, it is surprising that so little scholarly attention has been dedicated to exploring the various facets these two New Testament authors share in common in a protracted manner. Both were Jewish proto-Christians devoted to missionary work in the Hellenic world. Both wrote about visions of a fully divine, cosmic Christ that effectively deify the person of Jesus. Being converts to the Jesus movement, both share an eschatological worldview that informs the literature they generated. Both wrote letters to the Proto-Christian communities in Asia Minor. No more than forty years separates their activities within the proto-Christian movement. Both appear to have enjoyed a considerable degree of authority, influence and credibility within the communities they wrote to (which can only mean that their proselytes believed the experiences and visions they described as being legitimate). Both speak of "the revelation (ἀποκάλυψις or ἀποκαλύψεως) of Jesus Christ" (Rev 1:1; Gal 1:12; 1Cor 1:7; 2 Thess 1:7). Finally, both John and Paul write about having undergone heavenly journeys in an altered state of consciousness.

It is this last point of commonality that I wish to focus on here. Specifically, I will be comparing and contrasting the experiential aspects of John's ascent to the heavenly throne (Rev 4:1-2) with Paul's description of his journey to the third heaven described in 2 Cor 12:1-4. Provided below is a table that highlights the two passages that I wish to discuss in this section:

Table VI: Comparing and Contrasting Rev 4:1-2 with 2 Corinthians 12:1-4	
Revelation 4: 1-2	**2 Corinthians 12:1-4**
4:1 After this, I saw – and behold! A door opened in the sky, and the voice that I first heard sounding to me like a trumpet said: "Ascend here and I will make known to you what must happen after this." **2** Immediately, I was transformed into a spiritual being and behold! A throne was set in heaven and one was seated on the throne.	**12:1** It is necessary to boast; nothing is to be gained by it, but I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord. **2** I know a man in Christ who, fourteen years ago, was caught up to the third heaven – whether in the body or out of the body I do not know; God knows. **3** And I know that such a man – whether in the body or out of the body I do not know; God knows – **4** was caught up in Paradise and heard things that are not to be told, that no mortal is permitted to repeat.

It should be noted from the onset that my overarching goal with this exercise is to flesh out the neurological phenomena informing these narratives.[161] This poses difficulties, especially in light of what I have already pointed out: experiencing something directly is not the same thing as reflecting on it at some later date in a different frame of mind. Writing that experience down ads another degree complexity to recuperating that experience, because language has come into play, imposing contours to the author's raw, unmediated experience. We note that Paul has a decidedly hard time putting his experience into words whereas John is incredibly verbose. Indeed, the bulk of his literary effort provides a lurid description of his visions. But the rich complexity of the symbolic language he uses ultimately creates a hermeneutic barrier that makes it difficult to critically access the actual experience behind the content of his sky journeys. So in either case we are left with a certain ineffable quality to these experiences.

[161] Some biblical scholars may feel a degree of disquietude with the prospects of approaching this question from a neurological point of view, as that field of knowledge is traditionally far beyond the epistemological range of biblical scholarship. Others, like Colleen Schantz from St. Michael's College at the University of Toronto, have risen to the challenge. I am thus tremendously indebted to her seminal work in this area as it allows me to cite her directly and subsequently build upon her innovative research in the area of neurotheology – that is to say, unpacking the neurological phenomena informing religious experiences like ecstatic trance and synthesizing these observations with philological analysis of texts relating these experiences.

Be that as it may, as C. Shantz has pointed out in regards to Paul's journey to the third heaven (the remark is equally pertinent to John's journey through a sky portal), "there is confidence about access to the *text*"[162] that describes each author's description of ascent. And here we can compare and contrast how each ecstatic describes his experience.

The first issue to be addressed in this capacity is how each author describes the status of his own body. If my philological hypothesis of the specific meaning of the phrase γενόμην ἐν πνεύματι outlined in chapter two is correct, then John is unequivocal: he ascended through the sky portal as a spiritual being, leaving his body behind on the isle of Patmos. In other words, he had an out-of-body-experience (OBE). Paul, on the other hand, is entirely mitigated regarding the status of his body during his journey to the third heaven. Did he go there in the body or in the spirit? In the words of Shantz, he is "genuinely unsure" and this suggests that "there is something in the character of the experience itself that must precede the repeated uncertainty."[163] Returning briefly to John's explicit description of an OBE, we are still confronted with difficult ontological questions. How does a spirit see without eyes, hear without ears, write without hands and process sensory information, let alone *think* without a physical brain? Taking these question into consideration, is an OBE a subjectively perceived reality or an objective reality?

The second issue in this comparative analysis is Paul's prohibition (or inability) to articulate what he heard in Paradise versus John's extensive communiqué of the things he saw and heard in his various disembodied journeys. Is there a neurological explanation as to why Paul is unwilling or unable to articulate what he experienced, while John provides us with a literal barrage of information?[164] Are Paul's reticence and John's cloaked symbolic language

[162] C. SHANTZ, *Paul in Ecstasy*, 90.
[163] C. SHANTZ, *Paul in Ecstasy*, 91.
[164] However, we must not overlook that as communicative as John is, he nonetheless is restricted from telling us what the seven thunders say in Rev 10:3-4.

motivated "by a prohibition against divulging an esoteric event"[165] in plain language, or does it reflect the inherent ineffability of their respective cognitive experiences?

Let us begin by unpacking the question of the status of the bodies of our two authors during their heavenly journeys. As Shantz rightly points out, "despite the fact that Paul's repeated somatic bewilderment plays a prominent role in these verse [2 Cor 12:1-4], it plays next to no role in most exegesis."[166] She goes on to cite Tabor as an example of the type of exegesis she is referring to, when he states that Paul merely wants to distinguish what he knows – that he was in Paradise and received a secret revelation – from what he does not, just how this actually happened. It is best to quote Shantz's response to Tabor's remarks directly:

> The absurdity of such a situation seems to strike very few people, but what an odd state of affairs that anyone should be certain that they were located precisely in the third heaven but simultaneously have no clear sense of the whereabouts of their own torso. This confusion is replicated when one compares Paul's comments about the body in other passages as well. On the one hand, in some texts, the body is a significant element in Paul's ruminations about the resurrection of the dead (1 Cor 15:35-57; Phil 3:21; Rom 8:23), and in these cases, he seems to expect a bodily transformation. On the other hand, at other points, even within the same letter, he seems to expect not that the body will be transformed but that it will be left behind. (Phil 1:20-24; 2 Cor 5:1-10).[167]

Because John's account of his journey clearly articulates a separation of body and spirit (i.e. an OBE), we are confronted with a similar question pertaining to the body that directly ties into the tension between the body and soul exhibited in Paul's letters. As we have seen, John is emphatic about the nature of his heavenly journey: he went there in a spiritual state. But that spiritual state is strangely corporal: John's spiritual self sees, hears, converses with people and angels, eats heavenly documents, and seems equipped with writing material. Both Paul's confusion about the status of his body and John's spiritual corporality causes us to ask: is there a

[165] C. SHANTZ, *Paul in Ecstasy*, 90.
[166] C. SHANTZ, *Paul in Ecstasy*, 95.
[167] C. SHANTZ, *Paul in Ecstasy*, 96.

neurological explanation for this sense of having a body, while experiencing an out-of-body experience?

Schantz points out that how the body is experienced in ecstatic trance "is most clearly elucidated in contrast to normal bodily consciousness."[168] During normal consciousness, the body maintains a stable sense of itself in different ways:

> We all bear on the surface of our cortices, particularly in the right cerebral hemisphere, a neural depiction of our own bodies. In fact, we bear two – one, a motor depiction in our frontal lobes, and the other, a set of sensory correlates in our parietal lobes. Thus, the bodily coordinates from tongue to toes are plotted out on our brains, and neurologists have deciphered those maps based on numerous records of patients' responses to cortical stimulation and localized brain lesions. The reconfigured whole created by these neural maps is sometimes referred to as the homunculus, the little human we carry around in our heads.[169]

According to A. R. Damasio, these neural maps are responsible for what he calls "as if" experiences "in which the somatosensory cortex repeats the basic activity pattern that was triggered in it when an event was first experienced but also repeats it *in the absence of the equivalent inputs from the body*."[170] [Emphasis added] What this means is that the brain can conjure a strictly mental bodily construct that can project the physical body, complete with its sensorial inputs into a virtual, strictly mental environment. In this new environment of the mind, the virtual body would be similar to a hologram: an elaborate projection of a three dimensional object unto a spatial plane. Damasio goes on to clarify that the "as if" activity pattern – that is to

[168] C. SHANTZ, *Paul in Ecstasy*, 96.
[169] C. SHANTZ, *Paul in Ecstasy*, 96.
[170] C. SHANTZ, *Paul in Ecstasy*, 96. See also, A. R. DAMASIO, *Descartes' Error: Reason and the Human Brain*, (New Yark: Quill, 2000), 184.

say, the simulated sensorial events as applied to the virtual body construct produced *by* the mind and projected *in* the mind – will not be exactly the same as that of a real bodily state.[171]

Due to the fact that a considerable body of data exists that compares and contrasts healthy and impaired neurological functioning, it is possible to locate the experience of trance and such a state's effects on body perception somewhere between these two states.[172] That is not to say that trance states are pathological, but rather that the person in a trance is no longer experiencing the body as a physical reality but more as a mental construct (i.e. virtually, in an equally virtual environment). As Schantz eloquently explains:

> On the one hand, bodily sensation (from both the "homunculus" and body proper) is blocked from consciousness. On the other hand, the efferent activity of the orientation area [of the brain][173] is more intense than usual. The human mind [distinguished here from the brain] is left to interpret this strange combination of neurological silence and noise in an intelligible way. Thus, the body is perceived as present, but its sensations – its weight, boundaries, pain, or voluntary motion – are all absent from consciousness. In an attempt to interpret these phenomena as coherently as possible, ecstatics frequently report the sensation of floating or flying without physical boundaries between themselves and the people and objects of their awareness. Not surprisingly, descriptions of ascent are also common in interpretations of ecstatic experiences.[174]

So while John's trance results in the sensation of experiencing an OBE, and Paul's trance causes him to be confused about the status of his body and spirit, from a neurological standpoint, we can see that both their descriptions actually describe the phenomena associated with a trance state. Both ecstatics describe ascending to heaven. Both describe their body as

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[171] A. R. DAMASIO, *Descartes' Error*, 184. Shantz correlates Damasio's remarks with various neurological disturbances resulting from damage to somatosensory areas of the brain. In some cases, one witnesses a functional paralysis of limbs that are healthy and capable of normal performance (sometimes a person affected by this may even deny that the limb exists and neglect to groom, wash or even dress one whole side of their body). The phenomenon of "phantom limbs" is also associated with the persistence of somatic neural imprinting. Here patients may continue to experience sensations in a limb that no longer exists with all the same force and reality as they would if the limb was still there; see, C. SHANTZ, *Paul in Ecstasy*, 97.

[172] C. SHANTZ, *Paul in Ecstasy*, 98.

[173] As D'Aquili and Newberg point out, "the right orientation area is concerned with generating a sense of space and spatial coordinates in which to orient incoming stimuli." See, E. d'AQUILI and A. B. NEWBERG, *The Mystical Mind*, 112.

[174] C. SHANTZ, *Paul in Ecstasy*, 98.

present and absent simultaneously (Paul via his confusion, and John via his corporal spiritual body and instances of sensorial confusion[175]). And finally, while Paul does not describe sensations of floating or flying, in Rev 17:3 and 21:10 John is carried away to different locations by an angel "in the spirit" (ἐν πνεύματι – these passages are the other instances that this phrase occurs other than in 1:10 and 4:2). In many instances, however, John mysteriously places himself in various locations without indicating how he came to be there. We are often left with the sense that it is the virtual throne room environment that is constantly shifting around him in a kaleidoscopic fashion, rather than any actual spatial displacement on his part.[176] It is almost as if his proximity to the throne of God allows him to partake of the oneness of the universe as it emanates from "The One who is, The One who was, The One who is coming, The Omnipotent One." (Rev 1:8)

Indeed, at the peak of neuropsychological tuning, this existential shift in bodily perception results in "a decreased awareness of the boundaries between the subject and other individuals, between the subject and external inanimate objects, between the subject and any putative supernatural beings, and indeed, at the extreme, the abolition of all boundaries of discrete being leading to brief states of absolute unitary being."[177]

In John's mind, the throne room is that special numinous place from which the fullness of all of reality emanates. To be in the presence of God not only places him at the creative center of all reality, but also by virtue of his proximity to the Godhead, he is permitted to partake of the Godhead's perception of all things at all times. For John, the impetus of this experience is to

[175] For example in Rev 5:11, John *looks* but *hears* the voice of many angels.
[176] Note, for instance, how John's point of view as he describes the progressive imagery of the opening of the seals, the blowing of the trumpets and the bowls of wrath keeps shifting from a holistic view of events on earth, to specific geo-spatial locations, and back again to the heavenly throne room. To pick up on Schantz' description of the neurological process contributing to the trance vision, there is no sense of boundaries in John's narrative – heaven and earth are constantly conflated. Nor is there generally any sense of voluntary geo-spatial motion.
[177] See, E. D'AQUILI and A. B. NEWBERG, *The Mystical Mind*, 95.

write a divine prophecy that addresses the history of the world from the origins of evil, to its ultimate obliteration so that the old world with its physical bodies of flesh and blood that decay and die, can give way to a new, timeless world populated by the immortal spiritual bodies of the elect – that is to say, those who have come out of "the great tribulation" (7:14).

The second issue that I would like to unpack here concerns Paul and John's use of language to articulate their experiences. We have already seen that Paul's description of his journey to the third heaven is extremely brief. We know nothing of what happened to him there and without the benefit of a neurological framework to explain his trance state, we would be left – like Paul – quite unsure about the status of his body.[178] We have also noted that John – contrary to Paul – composed an elaborate and vivid prophetic apocalypse that, while not exactly a document whose meaning is transparent, is nonetheless highly descriptive. So at a glance, John and Paul's respective use of language is very different. One is at a loss for words, the other uses them to conjure up some rather fantastic visions. The question that I would like to focus on here is: is there a neurological explanation for this disparity? If both men experienced trance visions that in other respects have much in common, why is one either unwilling or unable to describe his experience, while the other is both willing and able to freely describe his experience?

An analysis of the neurology of ecstatic language is intimately connected to brain hemisphere specialization. It is thus necessary to briefly outline this neurological phenomenon. While the brain has many different parts which function together much the way individual

[178] In fact, despite the benefit of such a model, many questions pertaining to the complex relationship between the body, the brain, the mind and individual consciousness still remain. Even if we have some insight into the neurological processes at work during various trance states, the question of the mind's dependence or independence from the physical brain is still entirely open to debate. There are essentially two schools of philosophy dealing with ontology (albeit with many derivatives): materialism versus idealism. Materialism postulates that everything can be reduced to matter, and that inherently insubstantial things like thoughts and ideas are the result of matter acting upon matter. Idealism postulates that everything we know is the result of a mental construct and thus immaterial. As an ontological doctrine, idealism may also go so far as to maintain that all entities are composed of mind or spirit. While I am giving a highly complex debate short shrift here, the importance of these two schools of thought cannot be over stated. Virtually every human being's perception of reality is guided by one of these two models of reality.

instruments do in an orchestra, an important biological feature of the brain is that it has two distinct hemispheres. The right and the left hemispheres of the brain are connected by a dense set of neural fibers called the corpus callosum. In the 1950s, neurosurgeons began to sever the corpus callosa of patients suffering from acute epileptic seizures in order to reduce lateral damage to the brain caused by the severity of their seizures. It quickly became apparent that when the corpus callosum is severed, the two hemispheres of the brain exercise a much higher degree of independent control. That is to say, each hemisphere exhibits its own distinct consciousness quite independently of the other. This led to extensive research into split brain phenomena which paved the way to a comprehensive understanding of brain hemisphere specialization.[179]

In broad terms, brain hemisphere specialization can be broken down thusly: the left hemisphere deals with precise numerical computation (but can also handle estimation), direct fact retrieval, logical correlation, data collection and empirical analysis, and, most significantly for our purposes, aspects of language dealing with speech, grammar, and vocabulary. The right hemisphere deals with the big picture: holistic patterns, approximate calculation, comparison and estimation (with an accent on spatial dimension), spatial cognition and imaginary mental constructs, face recognition, and aspects of language that deal with intonation, tonal implication, the imagery behind stereotypic and patterned utterances but *not* speech (i.e. the right hemisphere understands language but cannot speak it, as speech generation occurs only in the left hemisphere).[180]

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[179] See, C. SHANTZ, *Paul in Ecstasy*, 101-102. See also: J. JAYNES, *The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976.

[180] For more details, see R, SPERRY, "Cerebral Organization and Behavior," *Science* 133 (1961), 1749-1757; and S. P. SPRINGER and G. DEUTSCH, *Left Brain, Right Brain: Perspectives on Cognitive Neuroscience*, 5th ed., Books in Psychology, (New York: Freeman, 1998).

While brain hemisphere specialization is a complex and fascinating subject, we will focus here on how each side of the brain handles language (specifically, the "language" of ecstatic trance visions). As outlined above, the major language center (i.e. speech, grammar, vocabulary) is located in the left hemisphere. The right hemisphere language center "supplements communication by interpreting and generating the emotional nuance of language."[181] When a person is experiencing ASCs, cerebral activity usually handled in the left hemisphere shifts to the right. As Schantz points out:

> This division of labor is especially noteworthy because researchers have observed during ASCs the shift from brain activity dominated by the left hemisphere to right hemisphere activity. Measurements of electrical and metabolic activity of subjects during dream states, drug-induced hallucination, meditation, and glossolalia have all shown the same shift in brain activity. Furthermore, mystics' reports of their experiences bear significant correspondence to some of the specialization of the right brain in normal consciousness.[182]

This presents the ecstatic with an interesting challenge when trying to explain experiences that were focalized in the right hemisphere when he or she has resumed a normal state of consciousness. The left hemisphere, which we will recall deals with speech, must now articulate an experience that it can only "know"[183] second hand via the data transferred from the right hemisphere (which we will recall specializes in imaging[184]) by way of the corpus callosum. But how can the left hemisphere convey – in words – the trance images experienced in the right hemisphere? The answer to this question is that the left hemisphere specializes in tasks that

[181] C. SHANTZ, *Paul in Ecstasy*, 101.
[182] C. SHANTZ, *Paul in Ecstasy*, 101.
[183] Recall that the two hemispheres have their own independent consciousness. There are really two minds in the brain. The corpus callosum merely bridges the two leaving us a sense of unity, but idiomatic expressions that articulate this tension give us insight into the split reality of the brain: we often "change our minds" or try to "think with the head, not with the heart" or are of "two minds" on a given issue.
[184] It is important to note, however, that the even if the right hemisphere cannot speak, it can still communicate and it has its areas of specialization as well. It can, for instance, dance, read Braille, or construct a metaphor, play music by ear, be infuriated, find its way in the dark and be ecstatic; see, C. SHANTZ, *Paul in Ecstasy*, 101 (note 130).

require conscious interpretation of hemisphere-specific knowledge. This has huge ramifications on the compositional process of writing a rational narrative (a task governed by the left hemisphere) of a raw cognitive event experienced in an ASC focalized in the right hemisphere, because the left hemisphere is not necessarily conscious of the full picture. It knows only what has been relayed through the corpus callosum. This may result in a battle of interpretation between the two hemispheres where the person that this is happening to partially perceives two distinct sets of reasoning in the mind which cannot fully subordinate one to the other.[185]

It is important to note that not all knowledge held in one hemisphere and subsequently shared with the other passes through the corpus callosum. As Schantz points out, "emotional knowledge in particular continues to pass through the limbic system, which connects the hemispheres beneath the neocortex and "below" consciousness, but the awareness of the left hemisphere does not necessarily take in the source of the feeling."[186]

In instances of split brain patients, the left hemisphere's attempt to rationalize information received from the right hemisphere through the limbic system, but without knowing where this knowledge is coming from is called confabulation. When an ecstatic enters into an ASC, "a modified confabulation takes place after the fact when intense deafferentation [i.e. the trance state] ends."[187] Upon returning to a "normal" baseline consciousness, "the dominant language processors are called on to describe what they did not experience."[188]

To summarize, there are four phenomena related to brain hemisphere specialization that are particularly significant to the neuropsychology of ecstatic trances interpreted as "religious experiences". First, each hemisphere of the brain has knowledge that the other does not. Second,

[185] C. SHANTZ, *Paul in Ecstasy*, 106.
[186] C. SHANTZ, *Paul in Ecstasy*, 106.
[187] C. SHANTZ, *Paul in Ecstasy*, 106.
[188] C. SHANTZ, *Paul in Ecstasy*, 106.

the right brain hemisphere's main characteristic is its ability to recognize holistic patterns and its inability to separate things into their individual parts. Third, the left brain has mastery over most aspects of language and interpretation, whereas the right brain's contribution to language is complimentary. It deals with the emotional aspects of language: tone, pitch, body language, volume, and so forth. Lastly, sequencing is a left hemisphere activity and so is marking time, whereas the right hemisphere perceives events simultaneously rather than in sequential progression.

So if, on a neurological level, brain activity during ecstatic trances is focalized in the right hemisphere, we are in a position to draw certain conclusions about ecstatic language as reflected in John and Paul's writings. When it comes time to recall and write down these experiences in a normal state of consciousness, how should we expect the left hemisphere to respond? In many instances, people who have had a mystical experience cannot put their experience into words. Paul's comments in 2 Cor 12:1-4 is an excellent example of this. He heard things "that are not to be told, that no mortal is permitted to repeat." Rather than interpret this as an esoteric injunction against sharing secret knowledge, there is a neurological basis to take Paul at face value here: his left hemisphere is unable to articulate in words what his right hemisphere experienced. But that does not stop him (or the modern exegete) from confabulating. Indeed, by interpreting Paul's inability to describe what he witnessed in the third heaven as an esoteric injunction we are merely echoing Paul's own left hemisphere rational confabulation:

> The modifying clause is Paul's effort to interpret his trance experience in cultural terms and, in particular, to make sense of the experience of ineffability. In that effort, Paul interprets the ineffable character of his auditions as being due to the fact that they are not within human capabilities – they are delegated to the celestial. Like the "tongues of angels," they are purely for the benefit of those who experience them.[189]

[189] C. SHANTZ, *Paul in Ecstasy*, 107.

But not all ecstatic trance experiences result in the subject's inability to use language to describe the experience. Some states of ecstasy results in prophetic utterance. The Oracle at Delphi delivered her prophecies in the form of pentameter or hexameter poetry, and we have already touched upon the Jewish prophetic tradition that John so strongly identifies with. In fact, John's text is a strong example of an ecstatic trance experience described in rich linguistic detail. So we must ask ourselves if John's text (and other apocalypses that share many of its formal characteristics) can also be qualified as a type of confabulation. Is John's left hemisphere, instead of not being able to articulate the trance experience, and then proceeding to provide itself with a rational explanation why it cannot perform this task, instead receiving enough data from the right hemisphere (perhaps transferred subconsciously through the limbic system) to be able to confabulate an elaborate linguistic narrative? To my knowledge, this question has yet to be explored.

But I will conclude this section with a few observations that support this hitherto unexplored hypothesis.[190] First, there is the question of the "stereotypical behaviour and literary conventions"[191] of apocalyptic literature generally. Instead of presupposing that the authors of these texts are deliberately composing fiction, can we not consider – based on the neurological evidence described above – that these narratives are based on data transference from the right hemisphere to the left? We will recall that the right hemisphere generates stereotypic (i.e. archetypal) and patterned utterances[192] – two qualifiers that characterize John's text. That is to say, John falls back on the religious language and imagery that reflects his culture and system of belief. Here, Stone's remarks cited in chapter two bear repeating:

[190] While I think it is worthwhile, given the context of this discussion, to postulate this hypothesis, I will not attempt to justify it within the confines of this thesis. My comments here must thus be qualified as entirely speculative.
[191] See, D. E. AUNE, *Revelation 1-5*, 82.
[192] See, C. SHANTZ, *Paul in Ecstasy*, 101 (note 123).

> How does this bear on arguments about the literary or experiential character of apocalyptic visions? It shows the antinomy to be false. Apocalyptic writers have to use the cultural language of their day and social context; *there is no other language for them to use*. [emphasis by Stone][193]

That ecstatic trances are focalized in the right hemisphere, and that the right hemisphere is the center of archetypal motifs and utterance provides a compelling explanation as to why John's left hemisphere narrative confabulation utilizes a stereotypical apocalyptic template that is structured according to intricate holistic patterns: for instance (but not exclusively) groupings of three, four, and above all seven (all numbers that carry with them a complex set of symbolic values).

Moreover, we will recall that the right hemisphere is characterized by simultaneity rather than progression. In other words, the right hemisphere does not mark time like the left. Its view of space and time is entirely holistic. We have also seen that right brain activity is characterized by thinking in images instead of words (which it nonetheless comprehends), and by its non-chronological, emotional, and holistic perception.[194] These characteristics deeply permeate John's text. To date, there is a tremendous ambiguity regarding the narrative progression of his text. Do the seven trumpets and seven bowls recapitulate the opening of the seven seals or are they new events occurring in a chronological sequence? Theories abound in either direction. I would posit that the neurological evidence suggests – like the polysemic, multivalent and multivocal symbolic language utilizes throughout the text – a total obliteration of the boundaries of space and time: simultaneity above and beyond progression, but not ignoring

[193] M. E. STONE, "A Reconsideration of Apocalyptic Visions", 179. (If quoted elsewhere, just provide an abbreviated title. It is only the first reference that is completely given; all subsequent references to an article, book chapter or book, is only to be given in abbreviated form).
[194] C. SHANTZ, *Paul in Ecstasy*, 106.

that "progression" constitutes a feature of an impoverished, temporal reality itching to break the boundaries of space and time.

Finally, John's language is incredibly emotionally charged and oriented towards visual imagery. John feels fear, sadness, awe, anger, indignation, and bliss. The content of his visions (contrary to Schüssler Fiorenza's theory that John's visions cannot be depicted visually) seem more at home on a fresco, bas-relief or canvas than as written words on the page. The content of these visions can be qualified in Jungian psychoanalytical terms as cross-cultural archetypal imagery rooted deep in the collective unconscious. Again, the neurological evidence we have explored in this section supports this as a more plausible explanation than a conscious decision on John's part to compose a little bit of religious propaganda opening with "Revelation from Jesus Christ."

3.3 John the Shaman: Ecstatic Trance and the Shamanic Complex

Seeing as the overall thrust of this thesis is to unpack the phenomenology of John's ecstatic out-of-body trance journeys, and that the nature of phenomenology is such that it is an epistemological framework that actively embraces an inter-disciplinary approach, I would like to conclude this chapter by continuing in that vein. If comparing and contrasting Paul and John's sky journeys has allowed us to explore the neurological phenomena related to these experiences, I would now like assess John's ecstatic experiences in light of an anthropological model that has been gaining traction among biblical scholars called the "shamanic complex."[195]

The term "shamanic complex" is synonymous with the term "shamanism". Shamanism comes from the word "Shaman", itself deriving from the term šaman which originated from the

[195] The principal champion of the shamanic complex model among biblical scholars is Pieter F. Craffert who is currently Chair of the Department of New Testament and Early Christian Studies at the University of South Africa.

Tungus people of Siberia. Craffert qualifies shamanism broadly as "a globally distributed and very ancient pattern of practices based on the human potential for experiencing shamanic states of consciousness (SSCs)."[196] He goes on to say that the shamanic complex can be described as "a family of traditions which, as a regularly occurring pattern in many cultural systems, consists of a configuration of controlled ASC experiences and certain social functions that flow from these experiences and that benefit the community."[197]

In other words, the shamanic complex is a broad, cross-cultural anthropological framework describing a group of practices involving an individual engaging in ecstatic journeys (or SSC) for the benefit of his/her immediate community. This individual is referred to as a "shaman" but Craffert is quick to point out that "many religious specialists who have unique labels in their own cultures belong to this pattern."[198] Thus the terms "prophet", "seer", and even "apostle" can all be considered terms that describe individuals who undergo ecstatic ASC experiences that ultimately benefit their communities in some way.

According to M. Eliade's definition, the most important feature of shamanism is the shamanic soul journey.[199] However, in many local understandings of shamanism, the soul journey is replaced by an emphasis on spirit possession and/or the control of spirits.[200]

Be that as it may, Craffert states that it can be inferred by "numerous studies"[201] that all shamans experience ASCs (more specifically SSCs[202]). He goes on to re-emphasize the validity of Eliade's understanding of shamanism by highlighting that:

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[196] P. F. CRAFFERT, "Shamanism and the Shamanic Complex," *BTB* 44/3 (2011), 151.
[197] P. F. CRAFFERT, "Shamanism and the Shamanic Complex," 152.
[198] P. F. CRAFFERT, "Shamanism and the Shamanic Complex," 152.
[199] See, M. ELIADE, *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992).
[200] See J. REINHARD, "Shamanism and Spirit Possession: The definition problem," in *Spirit Possession in the Nepal Himalayas*, (edited by J. T. Hitchcock and R. L. Jones; Warminster, UK: Aris and Phillips, 1976), 12-20.
[201] Which Craffert unfortunately does not cite. See, P. F. CRAFFERT, "Shamanism and the Shamanic Complex," 152.

> The experience of separation from the body, largely losing awareness of the body and environment and travelling as a free soul or spirit to one of the worlds in the specific shamanic cosmology (the shamanic or soul journey) remains an important feature of many versions of shamanism.[203]

Craffert goes on to list variations of the shamanic journey in different cultures:

> Some [shamans] ascend, some descend, while others take a trip into a river, lake the depths of the sea – thus to an upper, lower, or middle world. Journeys usually have the function of intervening with spirits or gods on behalf of human beings.[204]

Finally, he points out that:

> In addition to journey states, possession states form a major part of SSCs. This is the experience of "being taken over to varying degrees by an ego-alien entity, usually believed to be a spirit."[205] […] The shaman seems to be master of spirits, with the implication that this inspired person incarnates spirits by becoming voluntarily possessed. Visionary experiences in which the shaman obtains knowledge that benefits a community is another common feature of SSCs.[206]

If we consider what Craffert describes above, we can confidently qualify John as a type of shaman, a term which he, given his socio-cultural reference point would properly label as a prophet.[207] First, he is allows himself to be "under the influence of the Spirit" (Rev. 1:10) – a type of voluntary possession (or, at the very least a strong cognitive influence) by the spirit of

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[202] The reader may ask: what is the difference between ASCs (Altered States of Consciousness) and SSCs (Shamanic States of Consciousness)? Because the range of ASCs is quite broad, it would seem that SSCs is a term that attempts to specify ASCs that intimately characterize the shamanic complex. Otherwordly journeys are qualified by Craffert as the most common state of consciousness among shamans, but "SSCs could also include visions, possession experiences of transformation into animal, mediumistic and transformative experiences." See, P. F. CRAFFERT, "Shamanism and the Shamanic Complex," 152.
[203] P. F. CRAFFERT, "Shamanism and the Shamanic Complex," 152.
[204] P. F. CRAFFERT, "Shamanism and the Shamanic Complex," 152-153.
[205] R. WALSH, "Phenomenological Mapping and Comparisons of Shamanic, Buddhist, Yogic, and Schizophrenic Experiences." *JAAR* 56 (1993), 739-769.
[206] P. F. CRAFFERT, "Shamanism and the Shamanic Complex," 153.
[207] Recalling, however, that not all prophets undergo shamanic journeys.

God. Here he receives his divinely appointed commission: to write down what he about to see and share this with his community so that it may benefit from the knowledge he acquired in the spirit world. Second, he ascends to a heavenly spiritual realm as a spiritual being (Rev 4:2). From there he moves about freely in spiritual form between the heavenly realm, the earthly "temporal" realm, and the infernal realm. Finally, the learned cosmology of the planes of existence that John travels through is rooted in the Jewish apocalyptic tradition (all shamans learn the topography of this larger cosmological reality from their respective cultural traditions).

So if John can be qualified as a shaman, how do his shamanic activities benefit his community? Here, we can speak of the shaman's role as an ontological bridge between the spirit world and the temporal world. The shaman's community considers such an individual as a first hand witness that not only does such a reality exists, the entities that populate it exerts a powerful influence over the temporal plane. As Craffert rightly points out:

> In traditional societies not just anyone controls cultural knowledge and not every individual can contribute to the creation of "new" knowledge. As a historian, mythmaker, and storyteller, the shaman not only reflects the culture of his or her people but directs the development of that culture.[208]

The shamanic complex (which we will recall is an anthropological model), enthusiastically embraces the contributions of neuroscientific research to its cause. While the shamanic complex recognizes that SSCs are informed by culture and society, it also recognizes that these experiences are the product of biological and neurological structures. In other words, SSCs are considered by anthropologists as "biopsychological" phenomena that require an inter-disciplinary approach to be adequately understood. That is to say, researchers addressing these phenomena from their respective spheres of knowledge should embrace a holistic approach that

[208] P. F. CRAFFERT, "Shamanism and the Shamanic Complex," 154.

assesses the role of culture in respect to states of consciousness on both a neurobiological and philosophical level.[209]

The Shamanic complex is only now gaining any kind of traction in biblical studies, which is still dominated largely by epistemological frameworks relying primarily on textual critical paradigms. This is surprising considering that "direct references or indirect allusions to ASCs fill the Bible from beginning to end, while the shamanic pattern is visible in the portrayal of some significant figures."[210] John is just such a figure, and by framing his experiences diachronically with a trajectory that begins with the Jewish prophets (with an emphasis on Ezekiel) and ends by comparing and contrasting John's experience with another New Testament ecstatic named Paul, I have attempted to expose the reader to examples of SSCs on a broad spectrum.

In the final analysis, is that it is difficult to ignore the similarities between the culturally approved visionary, ecstatic, possession and out-of-body-experiences in the biblical texts and that of shamanic figures cross-culturally. Therefore, as Craffert points out, the systematic study of the recognizable pattern of shamanism offers insight for understanding not only what the texts are claiming, but also the biopsychological and cultural dynamics behind such reports.[211]

[209] P. F. CRAFFERT, "Shamanism and the Shamanic Complex," 155.
[210] P. F. CRAFFERT, "Shamanism and the Shamanic Complex," 157.
[211] P. F. CRAFFERT, "Shamanism and the Shamanic Complex," 159.

CHAPTER 4
Conclusion

I have established from the onset that the goal of this thesis has been to reclaim John's ecstatic trance sky journeys interpreted by him as a powerful religious experience, as a legitimate phenomenon that deserved to be explored at face value.

If we interpret language on a strictly literal plane, it is tempting to conclude that it is a poor vehicle to relate ecstatic altered states of consciousness, as one could argue that language is anchored to temporal occurrences while ecstatic transcendence by definition transcends physical reality. But, as is so keenly evidenced in John's text, language is not strictly literal, nor is it entirely bound by the contours of temporal reality. Words generated from the left brain are often used to convey ideas, emotions and sensations born from the imagination of the right hemisphere of the brain.

In theory if not in practice, academic research is a rational, linear enterprise that demands precision, empirical evidence and a plausible hypothesis above and beyond abstraction and the articulation of obscure theories tottering on the edge of the abyss of non-meaning and irrelevance. This epistemological credo has been the guiding force of this thesis.

I have attempted to articulate my hypothesis in precise terms, backed up by plausible empirical evidence. I maintain that an apocalypse composed by a man named John describes that the motivating factor for composing this text is intimately linked with a legitimate cognitive phenomenon which occurred in an altered state of consciousness, which involved: (1) a feeling of being "influenced" or possessed by the Spirit of God, and (2) a subsequent sensation where his "spirit" was separated from his body in order to move freely in the spirit world. I propose that

taking these experiences at face value is a crucial hermeneutic key to understanding the meaning of this text as it was meant to be understood by its author.

Tackling John's religious experiences with a phenomenological approach to the problem has allowed us to open up a line of inquiry that has thus far been poorly addressed by strictly literary approaches to John's text, (indeed, apocalyptic literature generally). As we have seen in chapter one, there has been much talk of the form and content of apocalyptic literature, but very little of substance has been said about its function and the cognitive causality behind the text. What little research that has been published in this regard has approached the question comfortably within the confines of source and genre criticism.[212]

In chapter two, I have identified and systematically broken down the interpretive issues surrounding the double occurrence of the phrase ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι in Rev 1:10 and 4:2, with the goal of elucidating a degree of clarity in regards to this critical experiential aspects of John's text. This was done first by constructing an argument based upon how two important biblical scholars (Charles and Aune) have tackled these interpretive issues in which I provided a detailed critical analysis of their respective interpretive process. From that foundation, I proceeded to provided an alternative philological hypothesis taking into account the polysemic quality of John's symbolic language in an effort to resolve the interpretive tension between the separate (but nonetheless complimentary) meanings of the phrase as it occurs in Rev 1:10 and 4:2.

The philological hypothesis proposed in chapter two opened up critical lines of inquiry into the neurobiological aspects of consciousness generally, ASCs, and the mind-body problems

[212] I am referring here to the work of David Hellholm who, while accepting Collins' master typological paradigm of the apocalyptic genre, criticizes Collins for basing his definition of the genre on the literature's form and content but failing to take into account its function. To remedy this — for good or ill, depending on one's understanding of the term "function" — Hellholm added to Collins definition a statement pertaining specifically to the function of apocalyptic: "intended for a group in crisis with the purpose of exhortation and/or consolidation by means of divine authority." See D. HELLHOLM, "The Problem of Apocalyptic Genre and the Apocalypse of John," *Semeia* 36 (1986), 27. To situate Hellholm's addendum to Collins' definition in the broader context of genre criticism, see section 1.2: *Status Quaestionis*.

associated with ecstatic trance and out-of-body experiences. Thus, in order to better qualify these experiences on an experiential and physical level, in chapter three, I provided a broader diachronic and epistemological framework to explore these issues. This was accomplished by framing John's experiences within a diachronic trajectory that began with the Jewish prophets (with an emphasis on Ezekiel) and ended by comparing and contrasting the physical and linguistic elements of John's experience within the broader framework of neurotheology with another New Testament ecstatic named Paul. I concluded the chapter by exploring a broad anthropological framework called the shamanic complex and established that John's experiences strongly correlate with that model.

Of course, a great time gap separates us from John. During this time, we have developed many epistemological frameworks that allow us to explore the numinous corridors of religious experience from different perspectives, be they psychological, physiological, literary, anthropological, historical or sociological. Contemporary Biblical scholarship, however, generally continues to place a tremendous emphasis on literary and historical approaches to a strictly textual interpretation, as opposed to an experiential one. While these approaches certainly have their place in the exegete's toolbox, utilized in isolation, they often fail to provide us with a fuller understanding of both the neurological and anthropological facets of the experiential phenomena underpinning so many of the religious texts from antiquity such as ecstatic transcendence, altered states of consciousness, and revelatory religious experiences.

It is my view that the current task of Biblical and para-Biblical exegesis must orient itself towards synthesizing relevant data from other fields of knowledge investigating the same set of phenomena articulated in so many of these texts. We must combine this interdisciplinary phenomenological data with our own cherished familiar exegetical methods of interpretation in

order to provide the necessary basis for a neurotheological exegesis. Neurotheology should properly be understood as the sympathetic re-enactment of the experiential components of religious texts from antiquity fruitfully combined with post-modern interdisciplinary epistemological approaches to understanding the human mind. Only then can our work be said to remain true to the task of interpreting the meaning of these text that, like the experiences they convey, purport to transcend the geo-temporal point in space/time in which they were composed.

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