

# SPONTANEOUS REMISSION

An Annotated Bibliography

*Brendan O'Regan and Caryle Hirshberg*

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# For Brendan

(July 28, 1945–August 16, 1992)

Creative force, Remarkable mind  
The vision behind the words inside.

Firey spirit,  
Sparkling eyes,  
Irish poet,  
Dear, dear friend of mine.

—Caryle Hirshberg

## CREDITS

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# ABOUT THE INSTITUTE OF NOETIC SCIENCES

## OVERVIEW

The oldest and largest organization of its kind, the Institute of Noetic Sciences (IONS), founded in 1973, is a research foundation, an educational institution and a membership organization with 30,000 members worldwide.

The word noetic is derived from the Greek word *nous*, for mind, intelligence and transcendental knowing. The “noetic sciences” bring the full range of diverse modes of knowing to the interdisciplinary study of consciousness, the mind and human potential. Research topics at the Institute range from mind-body health and healing, meditation, and exceptional human abilities, to emerging paradigms in science, business, and society. The Institute does not conduct research internally, but provides seed grants for leading-edge scientific and scholarly research by others, organizes lectures, sponsors conferences and publishes books, a quarterly journal, research reports and monographs by leading scientists, philosophers and scholars.

It also publishes a quarterly newsletter and a periodic annotated catalog of books and tapes, and supports a variety of networking opportunities, member research projects and local member group activities.

## THE CENTRAL ROLE OF RESEARCH

Research informs the Institute’s work. As a foundation, the Institute makes seed grants which establish fruitful relationships with key researchers. Those relationships build and sustain connections to key organizations that are also doing work in the field of consciousness studies. A stimulating cross-fertilization of ideas results from all of these working partnerships, enlivening the entire organization not only with scientific rigor and scholarly integrity, but also with the creativity, vision, and hope that inevitably accompanies the exploration of new ideas. Finally, research provides balance and legitimacy to a field that otherwise can too easily be reduced to misunderstood superficial beliefs and popular “self-help prescriptions.” Tremendous energy is unleashed from the seeds of such research efforts.

The research strategy is to support carefully selected ideas and individuals who are judged to be both at the forefront and particularly significant to the understanding of consciousness. The strategy includes these key elements:

- Identifying these ideas and individuals
- Providing them with modest seed grants
- Linking them to other researchers
- Creating for them a safe forum for wide-ranging discussions
- Offering them recognition and legitimacy by publishing their work
- Providing them opportunities to speak
- Assisting them with their language so that their work can be understood by the informed public.

The research focus is threefold: emerging worldviews, applied research derived from an unfolding understanding of consciousness, and more fundamental research regarding the nature of consciousness.

### Emerging Worldviews

It seems almost trite today to say that society is undergoing a profound transition. The Institute has been addressing this transformation for two decades, and today it continues to occupy a central place in research efforts. Unlike almost any other institution in our society, the Institute is addressing social change at the level of worldview, beliefs and values. It is inquiring into the process of transformation at the individual level, for organizations, and for key sectors of society (business and science). The Institute’s work is based on a belief that this transformation is fundamentally about how science and spirit can be integrated, leading to worldviews that include integrative concepts such as “sustainable development” and “deep ecology.”

## Applied Research Areas

A second major focus is in selected applied research areas that are particularly relevant to emerging world-views and an understanding of consciousness. Foremost among these has been work in health and healing. IONS has funded research in imagery, biofeedback, psychoneuroimmunology (the role of the mind, emotions, beliefs and personality in physical health), the role of spirit, the importance of “connection” (family, community, and, today, support groups), and a recognition of a broader conceptual understanding of health. Documenting and attempting to understand spontaneous remissions has been an area of intense focus.

Altruism has been a research interest both because it appears to be a natural outcome of personal transformation and because research in healing suggests that altruism positively affects health. The role of consciousness in human performance of all kinds has been another subject of inquiry since the Institute’s inception. These explorations have included peak performance in athletics and the work place, remote viewing, psychokinesis, and channeling.

The Institute also has maintained a long-standing research program into different states of consciousness. Consciousness has been altered by various means in nearly every culture known to us for purposes ranging from healing, gaining access to knowledge not available in a normal state, guidance in making life decisions in harmony with a source other than ego, to escape from our dominant reality. Meditation is one of the Institute’s current research areas. A redefinition of health and healing also involves a redefinition of death; the role of spirit in our lives, and the question of survival of spirit after death of the physical body, are long-standing and current research interests of IONS.

## The Nature of Consciousness

The third focus of research is the field of consciousness itself. Work is focused in the detailed inquiries into consciousness of traditions such as the Tibetan, as well as recent Western scientific theories arising from quantum physics, biology and the neurosciences. The Causality Project, a current major program, involves leading Western scientists, including two Nobel laureates, in questioning the metaphysics of Western science based on challenges arising from the Western sciences themselves. Research into consciousness over twenty years points out the inadequacies of our Western scientific paradigm and strongly confirms the need to identify a suitable answer to the question: How is knowledge validated in subjective areas? The Institute believes that the time is opportune to forge alternative assumptions, indeed, a new epistemology that offers the tools currently lacking to strengthen inquiries into consciousness, mind, spirit and related areas.

## THE ROLE OF RESEARCH IN MEMBERSHIP AT THE INSTITUTE

Past progress is proof that research helps legitimate promising new fields of inquiry. For members, it also provides validation and grounding, supporting them as they make vital connections between theories, exciting ideas, and the application of these in daily life. This grounding effect delivers an essential element of practicality for what would otherwise be an extremely esoteric endeavor. As a consequence, the Institute’s efforts are tied to the most fundamental changes as they emerge both in research and in members’ lives.

The advancement of consciousness is an individual matter; we know that our membership is comprised of individuals who are at the forefront of positive social change—committed to their own development and to societal transformation. In partnership with members, the Institute explores both the inner dimensions of human experience and the implications of consciousness research for personal and social change. Strategic partnerships with like-minded organizations and individuals expand educational opportunities, including the use of other communications media such as radio, television, videotape, audiotape and film. The strategic plan for membership education encourages member participation in several ways, through local member groups, computer networking, a membership directory, regional meetings, annual international conferences, member field research, surveys and focus groups, and a travel-study program.

All members receive these publications as a benefit of membership:

- The Noetic Sciences Review, a 48-page quarterly journal that has become the leading periodical of its kind in the consciousness field, and definitely has become one of the leading resources for an informed public, a group at the forefront of societal change.
- The Noetic Sciences Bulletin, a 16-page quarterly newsletter for member-related communications, networking and education.
- An Intelligent Guide to Books, Audiotapes and Videotapes, an annotated, comprehensive mail-order catalog published three times per year.

The Institute of Noetic Sciences welcomes inquiries about any aspect of its activities. Please direct your inquiries to:

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## ABOUT THE INNER MECHANISMS OF THE HEALING RESPONSE RESEARCH PROGRAM

The Remission Project draws heavily on a ten-year research program of the Institute of Noetic Sciences and The Fetzer Institute, The Inner Mechanisms of the Healing Response Program. This program, begun in 1983, was based on the belief that the ability of the physician to promote health and to heal the sick in the future may be as dependent on a deeper understanding of the mind-body relationship as on the development of new technologies.

The Inner Mechanisms of the Healing Response Program assumed the following premises:

1. **THE EVIDENCE:** There is a wide body of evidence suggesting that extraordinary healing, including regression of normally fatal tumors, takes place, with no known scientific explanation.
2. **THE HEALING SYSTEM:** This evidence implies the existence of a healing system which appears to contain at least three components:
  1. A Self-Diagnostic System
  2. A Self-Repair System
  3. A Regenerative System
3. **TRIGGERS:** The evidence suggests that this kind of healing can be triggered by a variety of stimuli, diverse in nature, including signals, suggestions and guidance from the physical, mental and/or spiritual realms of every individual.
4. **RESEARCHABILITY:** This unknown healing system is describable and researchable in a manner similar, but not identical to, the way other well-known control systems in the body became known—e.g. the nervous system and the immune system.

The objective of The Inner Mechanisms of the Healing Response Program was to nurture the development of an expanded concept and science of healing that incorporated the emerging understanding of mind-body connections, to

1. Establish a new conceptual framework to define the field.
2. Identify the new research techniques that will be needed to make measurements in the field.
3. Identify a network of high caliber researchers in established institutions—universities or hospitals.
4. Build momentum for the field.
5. Stimulate funding the field—from small grant seed support to foundation and government funds.

A decade later, these objectives certainly are not fulfilled, and the progress that has been made is by no means the result of this single research program. Nevertheless, the development of psychoneuroimmunology (PNI) into a recognized field of research and medicine, the establishment of a Society of PNI Researchers, the routine use of PNI techniques in clinical settings, and the involvement of both government agencies and major foundations in funding are all rather dramatic.

The Inner Mechanisms of the Healing Response Program was originated and directed by Brendan O'Regan, Vice-President for Research for the Institute of Noetic Sciences from 1974-1992. The program arose from his creative vision, both in terms of interpreting and synthesizing research findings from diverse arenas, and his tireless ability to identify and network leading researchers in these arenas, which largely accounted for the success of the program. For example, Brendan's first major research grant was to Carl Simonton and Stephanie Simonton for their early, unorthodox treatment of cancer through the use of inner imagery. Ten years later the use of imagery as an adjunct therapy has been widely accepted. He anticipated the now widely recognized area of psychoneuroimmunology (PNI). Two national television programs, both to be aired in 1993, have come directly out of this approach to mind-body research. Healing and

the Mind with Bill Moyers, was supported by our research partner, The Fetzer Institute. A second program, The Heart of Healing, a six-hour documentary to air on the Turner Broadcasting System (TBS) in October 1993, is co-produced with TBS by the Institute of Noetic Sciences and InCA, and is based on Brendan's visionary work in this field. He worked closely with David Kennard of InCA to develop the conceptual document and initial treatment for the series.

Brendan O'Regan died in August of 1992, bringing to a close this phase of the Institute's research efforts, though the Institute intends to develop a related program emphasizing remission from chronic and/or life-threatening diseases. The Fetzer Institute continues to address a range of issues in mind-body health.

Brendan O'Regan was assisted by a very able collection of individuals who comprised the Scientific Advisory Board for The Inner Mechanisms of the Healing Response Program. They included: Joel Elkes, MD, Winston Franklin, Michael Lerner, MD, Rachel Naomi Remen, MD, and Lucy Waletzky, MD.

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Caryle Hirshberg, co-author of this book, worked with Brendan during the years of data collection and writing, and when Brendan died, finished the project. Her love and friendship for Brendan, in addition to her vision for the Remission Project, is evident to all of us who have been involved. She, above all others, carried the weight of seeing that this work accurately reflects Brendan's exacting standards and special concerns.

Nola Lewis, Assistant to the Vice-President for Research, has been an invaluable support to the management of The Inner Mechanisms of the Healing Response Program.

Pat Brown, research assistant to The Remission Project, invested thousands of hours in medical libraries searching for the articles referenced in this book. She also maintained files, entered volumes of data in the Project's database, and corresponded with publishers and authors to gain permission to cite the over 1,300 references.

Rachel Naomi Remen, MD, Lucy Waletzky, MD, Michael Lerner, PhD, and Joel Elkes, MD, served as members of the Scientific Advisory Board of The Inner Mechanisms of the Healing Response Program and offered much needed encouragement, support, and wise counsel.

The Institute's Board of Directors believed in this project and urged us forward. Two members in particular helped with the final publication process. Payne Middleton generously gave financial support for the publication of this book, in loving memory of her daughter, Julia Serena di Lapigio, and Sandra Houghton added funds to ensure publication just when it was needed the most. Many individuals and foundations contributed to the funding of this project, and they are recognized in the previous pages.

Carol Guion read and edited the introduction. Alan Burdick and Carol Guion proofread the book. David Johnson digitized the illustrations and managed print production. Barbara McNeill managed the publication. Sam Matthews selected the artwork. Tom Hurley did the very first database search, and provided valuable input throughout the project. Sandra Leicester assisted in writing the front matter for the book.

This is a book Brendan would have been enormously proud of.

Thank you all.

Winston O. Franklin  
Executive Vice-President  
Institute of Noetic Sciences  
May 1993



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The history of The Remission Project and this book is unusual, for this book was created through a unique combination of a personal and professional commitment to ideas, and a life-long friendship. Brendan O'Regan (1945-1992) was not only the Vice-President for Research of the Institute of Noetic Sciences, the director of The Inner Mechanisms of the Healing Response Program and The Remission Project, and the co-author of this book, he was also my best friend, advisor, and confidant. Brendan had the remarkable ability to give a new perspective to old ideas, to draw from the past and extrapolate into the future, and, with his keen intuition and intelligence, to investigate new ideas from his unique perspective. His belief in the inevitable forward evolution of humanity and the existence of a healing system, his vision, his wisdom, his direction and his clarity gave life to this book and will grow as the work he started continues. Thank you, Brendan, words cannot aptly express my gratitude.

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Caryle Hirshberg  
May 1993

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