

ISSN: 2278-9529



**GALAXY**

International Multidisciplinary Research Journal

July 2015 Vol. 4. Issue IV

[www.galaxyimrj.com](http://www.galaxyimrj.com)

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**(Ex)Changing Campuses: A Study of British and American Academia in  
David Lodge's *Changing Places: A Tale of Two Campuses***

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**Abstract:**

The paper discusses how *Changing Places: A Tale of Two Campuses*, the first novel in Lodge's celebrated campus trilogy, explores the inveterate gap between the high ideals of academic institutions and the human flaws and follies characterizing its members by dramatizing the occasion of a transatlantic faculty-exchange programme between the University of Rummidge and the State University of Euphoria in the backdrop of the political, social and sexual revolution of the restive 1960s. The two designated exchangeees, typical of their respective national and professional environments, are Philip Swallow, a conventional, unsophisticated and amiable lecturer at Rummidge University and Morris Zapp, a hard working, highly ambitious and hedonistic professor at Euphoric State. In the course of the story, the two academics exchange not only their jobs but also their wives and some of their character traits as well (Phillip gains experience and Morris tolerance and humanity). The riveting contrasts between American and British academic life and educational systems, depicted with noncommittal honesty, introduce a relativistic note into the contrapuntal narratives of Swallow and Zapp.

**Keywords:** faculty-exchange, Philip Swallow, Morris Zapp, Rummidge University, Euphoric State, American and British academic life, educational systems.

David Lodge's fifth novel *Changing Places*, published in 1975, is the first novel in his celebrated campus trilogy. Recognized as the most experimental novel in terms of narrative techniques, the novel renders a dramatic account of the events in a transatlantic faculty-exchange programme between two fictional universities – the University of Rummidge (a provincial British university) and the State University of Euphoria (an American university). This exchange brings to the fore the riveting contrasts between the educational systems and the attendant academic cultures of England and America.

The University of Rummidge and the Euphoric State University (often referred to as Rummidge University and Euphoric State University, respectively, in the novel) collaborate on an exchange scheme for a period of six months to celebrate the two institutions' fortuitous architectural resemblance. Each university has an imposing replica of the Tower of Pisa; the only difference between the replicas being in their awe-inspiring sizes and the eclectic materials deployed for their construction: "built of white stone and twice the original size at Euphoric State and of red brick and to scale at Rummidge, but restored to the perpendicular in both the instances" (Lodge, *Changing Places* 13). The two participants in the faculty-exchange scheme for the year 1969 (the year in which the novel is set) are Philip Swallow and Morris Zapp, the representatives of Rummidge University and the Euphoric State University respectively. They are both forty years old and have been university teachers for approximately the same length of

time. The novel's use of twin *foci* (Swallow and Zapp) and twin *loci* (Rummidge and Euphoria) gives rise to an enormously complex system of intercut scenes, fertile with simple yet ironic parallels, contrasts, and other witty relationships.

Lodge portrays Philip Swallow as “a mimetic man: unconfident, eager to please, infinitely suggestible” (Lodge, *Changing Places* 10). Apprehensive and irresolute, he is famous for his inquisitive bent of mind and his genuine love of literature: “in odd moments when nobler examples of written word were not to hand he read attentively the backs of cornflakes packets, the small print on railway tickets and the advertising matter in books of stamps” (17). But this “undiscriminating enthusiasm” doesn't particularly enable him to specialize in a certain field:

He had done his initial research on Jane Austen, but since then had his attention to topics as various as medieval sermons, Elizabethan sonnet sequences, Restoration heroic tragedy, eighteenth century broadsides, the novels of William Godwin, the poetry of Elizabeth Barrett Browning and premonitions of the Theatre of the Absurd in the plays of George Bernard Shaw. None of these projects had been completed. (17)

Elaine Showalter perceives Swallow as “a survivor of the British examination system, a man who excels at taking exams and at giving them, and his ideal critical work would be ‘a concise, comprehensive survey of English literature consisting entirely of questions’ (Showalter quotes from *Changing Places* [13])” (63).

Philip's appearance corresponds to the image of a typical conservative Englishman. He is tall and skinny; his hair is deeply receding at the temples; and he smokes a pipe quite often. When it comes to his university teaching, he is regarded amongst his colleagues and students as quite a punctilious instructor:

There was one respect alone in which Philip was recognized as a man of distinction, though only within the confines of his own Department. He was a superlative examiner of undergraduates: scrupulous, painstaking, stern, yet just. No one could award a delicate mark like B+/B+?+ with such confident aim, or justify it with such cogency and conviction. In the Department meetings that discussed draft question papers he was much feared by his colleagues because of his keen eye for the ambiguous rubric, the repetition of questions from previous years' papers, the careless oversight that would allow candidates to duplicate material in two answers. His own papers were works of art on which he laboured with loving care for many hours, tinkering and polishing, weighing every word. (Lodge, *Changing Places* 17)

Philip is married to Hillary Swallow and the couple has three children. He had never applied for the exchange scheme but when the year's nominee had been offered (and promptly accepted) a chair in Australia, Rummidge University faced difficulties in replacing him. Therefore, Gordon Masters, the head of the English Department at Rummidge, asked Philip if he could cover for this colleague, and Philip accepted it after a protracted deliberation on the proposal. After all, Plotinus, the city where the Euphoric State University is situated, is the place Philip visited with his wife five years earlier for their honeymoon and finally “finished his M.A. thesis, almost effortlessly” (Lodge, *Changing Places* 20). For Philip, Plotinus is divine and

beatific in comparison to the industrial and nebulous atmosphere of Rummidge. For all these reasons, this exchange scheme seems to be a wonderful opportunity for Philip. However, it is not without its downside: Hillary cannot join him in Plotinus for she has to stay back at Rummidge to look after the children's education. But when Hillary recalls how happy and 'free' Philip was during their honeymoon, she lets him avail the exchange scheme.

The strategy behind the year's faculty-exchange programme is not quite so straightforward and uncomplicated as it apparently seems to be. Gordon Masters wants to send Philip to America because he wants to offer a senior lectureship to Robin Dempsey, a young bright linguist with multiple publications, and not to Philip, who is yet to have a single publication and whose sole claim to the post is by being a senior at Rummidge. Masters does not seem to, or want to, act upon his plan when Philip is around; so he broaches the faculty-exchange scheme to Philip who accepts the proposal unequivocally.

Zapp seems to be the absolute antithesis of Swallow. He is a Jewish man with "long, gorilla-like arms" (Lodge, *Changing Places* 12), a renowned academic and a man who got published in PMLA while still a graduate student; a man who, when he had been approached by Euphoria, asked "for twice the going salary, and got it" (15); he had published five books of considerable merit (four of them on Jane Austen) by the time he was thirty and achieved the rank of full professor at the same precocious age. The list of his accomplishments is quite overwhelming. In fact, Lodge quips, "At the age of forty, in short, Morris Zapp could think of nothing he wanted to achieve that he hadn't achieved already, and this depressed him" (44). He is famous for his "stare" and his middle name:

Morris J. Zapp ('Jehovah', he would murmur out of the side of mouth to girls who enquired about his middle name, it never failed; all women longed to be screwed by a god, it was the source of all religion – 'Just look at the myths, Leda and the Swan, Isis and Osiris, Mary and the Holy Ghost' – thus spake Zapp in his graduate seminar, pinning a brace of restive nuns to their seats with the stare). (12)

Elaine Showalter posits an interesting perspective of Zapp:

Morris Zapp, the American, is one of the academic fiction's most hilarious and revolutionary characters – an academic who approaches the university as if it were a corporation, aims for financial and sexual success, loves power, and is not despised or punished for being crass, sexist, competitive, hedonist and horny. (63)

Zapp's area of specialization is the novels of Jane Austen. In fact, he is just *the* Jane Austen scholar with an elaborate plan to conduct extensive research on Jane Austen that will be so expansive in structure and exhaustive in scope that even the most distinguished scholars from other premier universities wouldn't have the gall, or the scope, to improve upon it. Lodge presents this overreaching character as follows:

Some years ago he had embarked on an ambitious critical project: a series of commentaries on Jane Austen which would work through the whole canon, one novel at a time, saying absolutely everything that could possibly be said about them. The idea was to be utterly exhaustive, to examine the novels from every

conceivable angle, historical, biographical, rhetorical, mythical, Freudian, Jungian, existentialist, Marxist, Structuralist, Christian-allegorical, ethical, exponential, linguistic, phenomenological, archetypal, you name it; so that when each commentary were written there would be simply nothing further to say about the novel in question. (Lodge, *Changing Places* 44)

Unlike Swallow, Zapp is an unwilling participant in the faculty exchange scheme. Zapp has never wanted to go abroad (his motto is “Travel narrows”) and has “neither affection nor respect for the British” (Lodge, *Changing Places* 47). The devious plan that moves Zapp from Euphoria to Rummidge (or “Rubbish” as Desiree would call it, further defining it as “the asshole of England” [81]) has no overt academic concerns, for Morris is too prominent and experienced to fall prey to petty scheming; it pertains to his marriage which stands on the brink of dissolution. Desiree Zapp, his wife and the mother of his twins, Elizabeth and Darcy (Morris is unquestionably *the* Jane Austen scholar), wants to end their marriage and Morris does not. He is not head over heels for Desiree but he hesitates to leave the twins to her custody. Desiree proclaims that she will deign to think over the matter once more if he is willing to leave the house for six months. Morris acquiesces and asks the head of English department to arrange for him a place to spend the upcoming six months. The only feasible alternative appears to be the Rummidge—Euphoria exchange scheme and Morris accepts it immediately. And so, the exchange scheme is put into action.

In terms of seeking eminence, power and distinction, Malcolm Bradbury’s Jewish character Bernard Froelich in *Stepping Westward* falls far short of Lodge’s Jewish academic Zapp. While Froelich is content with contending for the chairmanship of the English department of Benedict Arnold University, Zapp chases daunting plans like making the English departments of prominent universities redundant by analyzing exhaustively the creative works of major English authors in every possible way. Zapp cherishes another towering ambition: to be the highest paid professor of English worldwide. Lodge animatedly notes Morris’ condescending impression of his inept colleagues:

As is perhaps obvious, Morris Zapp had no great esteem for his fellow-labourers in the vine yards of literature. They seem to him vague, fickle, irresponsible creatures, who wallowed in relativism like hippopotami in mud, with their nostrils barely protruding into the air of common-sense. They happily tolerated the existence of opinions contrary to their own – they even, for God’s sake, sometimes changed their minds. Their pathetic attempts at profundity were qualified out of existence and largely interrogative in mode. They like to begin a paper with some formula like, ‘I want to raise some questions about so-and-so’, and it seemed to think they had done their intellectual duty by merely raising them. This manoeuvre drove Morris Zapp insane. Any damn fool, he maintained, could think of questions; it was answers that separated the men from the boys. If you couldn’t answer your own questions it was either you hadn’t worked on them hard enough or because they weren’t real questions. (Lodge, *Changing Places* 45)

If Lodge portrays Philip as a person with an inquisitive bent of mind, Morris, being Philip’s opposite in almost every aspect, appears to be a man capable of providing satisfactory resolutions and reasonable answers to intriguing questions. This could remind one of Bradbury’s binarism in conceiving characters, like Stuart Treece/Louis Bates in *Eating People Is Wrong* and

Bernard Froelich/James Walker in *Stepping Westward*. In the “Introduction” to *Changing Places*, Lodge confesses: “My imagination seems drawn to binary structures which bring contrasting milieux, cultures and characters into contact and conflict” ([“Introduction”] ii).

*Changing Places* is not just a subtle juxtaposition of two countries and two academies as perceived by each other’s representative academic figures. It has a plot which, in a characteristic Lodgean way, is replete with incidents artfully arranged. The first chapter “Flying” opens with both Swallow and Zapp on airplanes flying to their new countries; their thoughts, ruminations and reactions are continually contrasted during the flights, positing a detailed exposition of their habitual dispositions and their circumstances. Each meets a fellow-countryman who later proves important for the development of the narrative. Zapp’s new acquaintance is Mary Makepeace, who is flying to England for an abortion; it turns out that the charter flight is completely occupied, except for Morris, with American women flying to England for abortions). A Roman Catholic, she has got pregnant by a priest, which underscores the sole Catholic element in the novel. Zapp argues vehemently against the abortion. Meanwhile, Swallow has encountered Charles Boon, his former undergraduate student who vexes him by patronizing Swallow and telling him expansively that he, Boon, is a distinguished figure in the media circles and the political arenas of Euphoria.

Chapter two, “Settling,” continues the contrapuntal narrative of Swallow’s and Zapp’s acclimatization to their new locations. Swallow is quickly introduced to the free-spirited hippies, easy-going academic manners, and inveterate faculty gossip. Zapp, on the other hand, meets almost no one except his landlord, Dr. O’Shea, and the doctor’s unsophisticated Irish niece, Bernadette. Each man meets the other’s wife. Swallow meets Desiree Zapp at a faculty party; Hillary Swallow comes to the faculty office and encounters Zapp there. Swallow attends a party given by his young neighbours, smokes marijuana, and ends up having a sexual liaison with a girl named Melanie. Both Swallow and Zapp go to a strip joint, and both are consequently surprised by an immediate coincidence. Zapp discovers Mary Makepeace, the girl he met on the plane and at the strip club, working as a stripper. As he emerges from the strip-club, Swallow chances upon Melanie and through her influence Charles Boon soon becomes his room partner.

The next chapter “Corresponding” is epistolary in form. The letters in this chapter reveal that Hilary has come to know about Philip’s infidelity and that Melanie is Morris Zapp’s daughter. The reader is also apprised of the news that just as Charles Boon has moved in with Philip, so Mary Makepeace has visited Morris which results in his installing her as a lodger in the Swallow residence. The numerous coincidences have been a continuing and defining feature of the plot intensity in this chapter. Both Swallow and Zapp’s actions are reported to their respective wives through an anonymous letter. Thus Bernadette writes to Desiree about the “yaller hared whoor” she thinks Zapp is keeping at the Swallow home (Lodge, *Changing Places* 149). The more explicit information about Swallow’s adultery has been furnished by a man named Howard Ringbaum, the unfortunate victim of one of Swallow’s games titled ‘Humiliation.’ In that game, Ringbaum was compelled to admit that he has never read *Hamlet*; this shocking revelation led to his dismissal, for which Swallow was held responsible. Likewise, both Swallow and Zapp’s wives indicate a new awareness and cognisance of Women’s Liberation, which leads to the development, in both cases (particularly Hillary Swallow’s), a more self-reliant and aggressive stance.

Events move at an exhilarating pace in the next section, called “Reading” which comprises of newspaper items, flysheets, student manifestos, news releases and printed handouts. The chapter depicts the progressive heating up of student activism on the two campuses, locally encountered and swiftly managed at Rummidge, more widespread and considerably menacing at Euphoria where Swallow is actually arrested. This chapter reveals that both Swallow and Zapp have been deprived of their lodgings. While in police custody, Swallow learns that a mudslide has wrecked his apartment. Zapp reads about the destruction of the top floor of Dr. O’Shea’s house (and, consequently, his flat) by a block of frozen urine falling from an airliner.

Numerous strands of the plot come to a climax in the chapter “Changing.” Rendered homeless by the mudslide, Philip moves in with Desiree Zapp and eventually they involve themselves in an affair. Meanwhile Zapp moves in with Hilary, and after a long cogitation they begin an affair as well. Philip Swallow becomes an unlikely campus hero; unjustly charged with stealing bricks for the People’s Garden (for the possession of which the students were fighting against the authorities of the Euphoric State), Philip’s arrest proves to be entirely unjustified. He entertains a call from Hilary on the Charles Boon radio call-in show and informs her of his affair on the air. At Rummidge, Zapp becomes a valuable member of the English Department. Upon Gordon Masters’ retirement, Zapp takes the de facto control of the department; and eventually he is offered Professorship at Rummidge University.

The final chapter, appropriately titled “Ending” appears to be the most ingenious part of the novel. It is in the form of a film script. The four principal characters – the Zapps and the Swallows convene in New York to decide the future course of their lives. Their discussions are inconclusive and, following some academic banter between Morris and Philip on the future and scope of the genre of fiction and the important difference between novels and films, the novel simply stops without any apparent, and satisfactory, narrative resolution.

The coruscating plot of *Changing Places* seems to be designed to enable Lodge to achieve several things at once. One is the traditional aim of the academic novel, a comedy of manners, usually sharpened by the presence of an inveterate outsider in the academy – a foreigner (as in Malcolm Bradbury’s *Stepping Westward*), a temperamental alien (Kingsley Amis’s *Lucky Jim*), or a non-academic only temporarily in residence (Randall Jarrell’s *Pictures From an Institution*). In this case Lodge varies the usual pattern, which is to introduce one observer who is the reader’s source of norms for judging the institutions. By using *two* such observers in two different institutions, he not only achieves a “duplex chronicle” but introduces a relativistic note into the satire (Lodge, *Changing Places* 2). America judged by England is strange, but so is England perceived by America. *Changing Places* is the first novel to illustrate an American academic spending time in a British institution.

An unambiguous purpose of the novel is revealed when the significant ramifications of the title of the book reveal multifarious shades and nuances of meaning. Obviously, *Changing Places* denotes exchanging places, which is the main premise of the novel. But, it also means places that induce changes in the people visiting them. The change is most visible and manifest in Swallow who, after six months at the Euphoric State, becomes healthier, physically more attractive, serene, confident, self-assured – a man with an envious wealth of experience. During his stint in America, Swallow the apprehensive and timid recluse is converted into Swallow the assertive and self-possessed man who has had many novel experiences. This new man has smoked dope, driven a Corvair at high speed through the hills and canyons, taken part in a minor

orgy, had liaisons with two attractive women and spent time in jail as well. And he is fully conscious of what has come over him:

Philip felt himself finally converted to expatriation; and he saw himself, too, as a part of a great historical process – a reversal of that cultural Gulf Stream which had in the past swept so many Americans to Europe in search of Experience. Now it was not Europe but the West Coast of America that was the furthest rim of experiment in life and art, to which one made one's pilgrimage in search of liberation and enlightenment. . . . He thought of James's *The Ambassadors* and Strether's injunction to Little Bilham, in the Paris garden, to 'Live . . . live all you can; it's a mistake not to.' . . . (Lodge, *Changing Places* 194-95).

Given this trajectory of innocence blossoming into experience, it is inevitable that Zapp must change less, or at least, less dramatically. He undergoes no spiritual liberation, feels no enlightenment; but he *has* changed. The midlife crisis which had dutifully accompanied his estrangement from Desiree – a troubling suspicion of his own irrelevance, nagging doubts about his prowess in the classroom, an infelicitous loss of sexual appeal- has been assuaged by the months in Rummidge. Though he is initially perturbed by the inescapable cultural and ideological differences, he is able to attune himself quickly to the British society. His almost effortless dominance over the academic life of the university has rehabilitated his self-confidence, and along with it he has become accustomed to the more old-fashioned rhythms of life in England. He even gets used to "the quaint meteorological idioms" of imprecise weather forecasting: "He accepted that, like so many British usage, it was a language of evasion and compromise, designed to take the drama out of the weather" (Lodge, *Changing Places* 200). Before long, happy with Hilary, he even settles down in Rummidge. It is a remarkable change for a man who used to harbour a scathing contempt for the British way of life.

Perhaps most telling, in the multiple connotations of the title *Changing Places*, is the implication that Zapp and Swallow have (ex)changed places and, in a way, changed Rummidge and Euphoria too. Philip has had little academic impression on the euphoric State University, though he is indirectly responsible for the dismissal of Howard Ringbaum and the surprising appointment, in his unexpectedly vacated place, of Karl Kroop, a controversial lecturer originally slated to be fired. He has also lent his support to the rallying cries of the student activists, who were fighting for the People's Garden. Morris Zapp makes a bigger splash at Rummidge. He persuades Mary Makepeace to have his baby and later arranges for her to lodge with Hilary Swallow. He has introduced Hilary to an invaluable knowledge of Women's Liberation which decidedly alters the terms of her marriage to Philip. As the de facto head of the English Department at Rummidge, he makes the crucial recommendation that Philip Swallow be promoted to Senior Lecturer over a probably more qualified colleague. As one finds in *Small World* and *Nice Work*, Philip Swallow's career takes off from this beginning, and he goes on to become the Head of the Department and later the Dean of the Faculty of Arts.

The glaring contrasts between the American and British educational systems is underscored by the fervent competitiveness and the absolute professionalism of the former making the latter seem by comparison humane, considerate but amateurish. This notion is further reinforced by Zapp when he learns of the less-than-rigorous benchmark of the British system of higher education:

Morris had recommended putting Philip down to teach English 99, a routine introduction to the literary genres and critical method for English majors, and English 305, a course in novel writing. . . . As Morris said, 'If he makes a fuck-up of English 305, nobody's going to notice. And any clown with a PhD should be able to teach English 99.'

'He doesn't have a PhD,' Hogan said.

'What?'

'They have a different system in England, Morris. The PhD isn't so important.'

'You mean the jobs are hereditary?' (Lodge, *Changing Places* 60)

It becomes imperative to hold in subtle contradistinction the vastly differing standards of educational systems encountered by Zapp and Swallow. Zapp writes to Desiree about his exasperation with the British educational system as well as his pathetic classroom experiences at Rummidge:

I swear the system here will be the death of me. Did I say system? A slip of the tongue. There is no system. They have something called tutorials, instead. Three students and me, for an hour at a time. We're supposed to discuss some text I've assigned. This, apparently, can be anything that comes into my head, except that the campus bookshop doesn't have anything that comes into my head. But supposing we manage to agree, me and the students, on some book of which four copies can be scratched together, one of them writes a paper and reads it out to the rest of us. After about three minutes the eyes of the other two glaze over and they begin to sag in their chairs. It's clear they have stopped listening. I'm listening like hell but can't understand a word because of the guy's limey accent. All too soon, he stops. 'Thank you,' I say, flashing him an appreciative smile. He looks at me reproachfully as he blows his nose, then carries from where he paused, in mid-sentence. The other two students wake up briefly, exchange glances and snigger. That's the most animation they ever show. When the guy reading the paper finally winds it up, I ask for comments. Silence. They avoid my eye. I volunteer a comment myself. Silence falls again. It's so quiet that you can hear the guy's beard growing. Desperately I ask one of them a direct question. 'And what did *you* think of the text, Miss Archer?' Miss Archer falls off her chair in a swoon. (Lodge, *Changing Places* 125)

On the other side of the Atlantic Philip, too, is perplexed by his American students of English literature:

I confess I had something of the raw-recruit feeling when I went to meet my classes for the first time this week. The system is so different, and the students are so much more heterogeneous than they are at home. They've read the most outlandish things and not read the most obvious ones. I had a student in my room the other day, obviously very bright, who appeared to have read only two authors, Gurdjieff (is that how you spell him?) and somebody called Asimov, and had never even heard of E. M. Forster. (123-4)

*Changing Places*, like Lodge's other novels, reflects meticulous attention accorded to the elaboration of social and historical detail. The concept of an academic exchange between the two academic societies obviously enhances and enriches the scope for disseminating information and teaching. *Changing Places* could be read as Lodge's way of displaying to his readers the difference between the British and American university cultures. The novel can familiarize British or American readers with what they are unaware about each other's country and academic cultures, through the straightforward (if generally sporadic) narrative commentary, and it can defamiliarize what each takes for granted by showing it through the eyes of an observant foreigner. The novel also dramatically renders the *Zeitgeist* of the restive 1960s – the time of the students' demonstrations at the universities in both the countries. *Changing Places* presents a fictionalised version of the 1969 People's Park episode in Berkley. The sexual revolution of this time (especially in America) affecting Philip's daily life at Euphoria is also illustrated adroitly in the novel:

The sudden eruption of the Sexual Revolution in the midsixties had, it is true, unsettled him a little. The Sunday paper he had taken since first going up to the University, an earnest, closely printed journal bursting with book reviews and excerpts from statement's memoirs, broke out abruptly in a rash of nipples and coloured photographs of après-sex leisurewear, . . . it became uncomfortable to read contemporary novels at home in case one of the children should glance over his shoulder. Films and television conveyed the same message: that other people were having sex more often and more variously than he was. (Lodge, *Changing Places* 26-27)

While the array of 'euphoric' events occurring in the lives of Swallow and Zapp entertain ceaselessly, the narrative also draws the readers deep into multiple sites of political and cultural life of the time – the revolutionary historic moments that marked the transition of Western civilizational mores. Obviously the spicy content and racy style of *Changing Places*, in gently stripping the pillars of the university culture of their overt ascetic dignity, lent huge popular appeal to the novel – both in the academic and non-academic world. Life seen so differently in the novel set the tone and tenor against which the later novels in the trilogy could be measured and experienced.

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