

Understanding The Ideas That Have Shaped Our World View

By Richard Tarnas

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"We may be seeing the beginnings of the reintegration of our culture, a new possibility of the unity of consciousness. If so, it will not be on the basis of any new orthodoxy, either religious or scientific. Such a new integration will be based on the rejection of all univocal understandings of reality, of all identifications of one conception of reality with reality itself. It will recognize the multiplicity of the human spirit, and the necessity to translate constantly between different scientific and imaginative vocabularies. It will recognize the human proclivity to fall comfortably into some single literal interpretation of the world and therefore the necessity to be continuously open to rebirth in a new heaven and a new earth. It will recognize that in both scientific and religious culture all we have finally are symbols, but that there is an enormous difference between the dead letter and the living word. "

Robert Bellah
Beyond Belief



Richard Tarnas, Ph.D., was born in 1950 in Geneva, Switzerland, of American parents. He grew up in Michigan, where he studied Greek, Latin, and the classics under the Jesuits. In 1968 he entered Harvard, where he studied Western intellectual and cultural history and depth psychology, graduating with an A.B. cum laude in 1972. For ten years he lived and worked at Esalen Institute in Big Sur, California, studying with Joseph Campbell, Gregory Bateson, Huston Smith, James Hillman, and Stanislav Grof, and later served as director of programs and education. He received his Ph.D. from Saybrook Institute in 1976. From 1980 to 1990, he wrote *The Passion of the Western Mind*, a narrative history of Western thought which became a best seller and continues to be a widely used text in universities throughout the world. He is the founding director of the graduate program in Philosophy, Cosmology, and Consciousness at the California Institute of Integral Studies in San Francisco, where he currently teaches. He gives many public lectures and workshops in the U.S. and abroad.

Epilogue

In these final pages, I would like to present an interdisciplinary framework that may help deepen our understanding of the extraordinary history just recounted. I would also like to share with the reader a few concluding reflections on where we, as a culture, may be headed. Let us begin with a brief overview of the background to our present intellectual situation.

The Post-Copernican Double Bind

In a narrow sense, the Copernican revolution can be understood as simply a specific paradigm shift in modern astronomy and cosmology, initiated by Copernicus, established by Kepler and Galileo, and completed by Newton. Yet the Copernican revolution can also be understood in a much wider and more significant sense. For when Copernicus recognized that the Earth was not the absolute fixed center of the universe, and, equally important, when he recognized that the movement of the heavens could be explained in terms of the movement of the observer, he brought forth what was perhaps the pivotal insight of the modern mind. The Copernican shift of perspective can be seen as a fundamental metaphor for the entire modern world view: the profound deconstruction of the naive understanding, the critical recognition that the apparent condition of the objective world was unconsciously determined by the condition of the subject, the consequent liberation from the ancient and medieval cosmic womb, the radical displacement of the human being to a relative and peripheral position in a vast and impersonal universe, the ensuing disenchantment of the natural world. In this broadest sense--as an event that took place not only in astronomy and the sciences but in philosophy and religion and in the collective human psyche--the Copernican revolution can be seen as constituting the epochal shift of the modern age. It was a primordial event, world-destroying and world-constituting.

In philosophy and epistemology, this larger Copernican revolution took place in the dramatic series of intellectual advances that began with Descartes and culminated in Kant. It has been said that Descartes and Kant were both inevitable in the development of the modern mind, and I believe this is correct. For it was Descartes who first fully grasped and articulated the experience of the emerging autonomous modern self as being fundamentally distinct and separate from an objective external world that it seeks to understand and master. Descartes "woke up in a Copernican universe" after Copernicus, humankind was on its own in the universe, its cosmic place irrevocably relativized. Descartes then drew out and expressed in philosophical terms the experiential consequence of that new cosmological context, starting from a

position of fundamental doubt vis-a-vis the world, and ending in the cogito. In doing this, he set into motion a train of philosophical events--leading from Locke to Berkeley and Hume and culminating in Kant--that eventually produced a great epistemological crisis. Descartes was in this sense the crucial midpoint between Copernicus and Kant, between the Copernican revolution in cosmology and the Copernican revolution in epistemology.

For if the human mind was in some sense fundamentally distinct and different from the external world, and if the only reality that the human mind had direct access to was its own experience, then the world apprehended by the mind was ultimately only the mind's interpretation of the world. Human knowledge of reality had to be forever incommensurate with its goal, for there was no guarantee that the human mind could ever accurately mirror a world with which its connection was so indirect and mediated. Instead, everything that this mind could perceive and judge would be to some undefined extent determined by its own character, its own subjective structures. The mind could experience only phenomena, not things-in-themselves; appearances, not an independent reality. In the modern universe, the human mind was on its own.

Thus Kant, building on his empiricist predecessors, drew out the epistemological consequences of the Cartesian cogito. Of course Kant himself set forth cognitive principles, subjective structures, that he thought were absolute--the a priori forms and categories--on the basis of the apparent certainties of Newtonian physics. As time passed, however, what endured from Kant was not the specifics of his solution but rather the profound problem he articulated. For Kant had drawn attention to the crucial fact that all human knowledge is interpretive. The human mind can claim no direct mirror like knowledge of the objective world, for the object it experiences has already been structured by the subject's own internal organization. The human being knows not the world-in-itself but rather the world-as-rendered-by-the-human-mind. Thus Descartes's ontological schism was both made more absolute and superseded by Kant's epistemological schism. The gap between subject and object could not be certifiably bridged. From the Cartesian premise came the Kantian result.

In the subsequent evolution of the modern mind, each of these fundamental shifts, which I am associating here symbolically with the figures of Copernicus, Descartes, and Kant, has been sustained, extended, and pressed to its extreme. Thus Copernicus's radical displacement of the human being from the cosmic center was emphatically reinforced and intensified by Darwin's relativization of the human being in the flux of evolution--no longer divinely ordained, no longer absolute and secure, no longer the crown of creation, the favored child of the universe, but rather just one

more ephemeral species. Placed in the vastly expanded cosmos of modern astronomy, the human being now spins adrift, once the noble center of the cosmos, now an insignificant inhabitant of a tiny planet revolving around an undistinguished star--the familiar litany--at the edge of one galaxy among billions, in an indifferent and ultimately hostile universe.

In the same way, Descartes's schism between the personal and conscious human subject and the impersonal and unconscious material universe was systematically ratified and augmented by the long procession of subsequent scientific developments, from Newtonian physics all the way to contemporary big-bang cosmology, black holes, quarks, W and Z particles, and grand unified super force theories. The world revealed by modern science has been a world devoid of spiritual purpose, opaque, ruled by chance and necessity, without intrinsic meaning. The human soul has not felt at home in the modern cosmos: the soul can hold dear its poetry and its music, its private metaphysics and religion, but these find no certain foundation in the empirical universe.

And so too with the third of this trinity of modern alienation, the great schism established by Kant--and here we see the pivot of the shift from the modern to the postmodern. For Kant's recognition of the human mind's subjective ordering of reality, and thus, finally, the relative and unrooted nature of human knowledge, has been extended and deepened by a host of subsequent developments, from anthropology, linguistics, sociology of knowledge, and quantum physics to cognitive psychology, neurophysiology, semiotics, and philosophy of science; from Marx, Nietzsche, Weber, and Freud to Heisenberg, Wittgenstein, Kuhn, and Foucault. The consensus is decisive: The world is in some essential sense a construct. Human knowledge is radically interpretive. There are no perspective-independent facts. Every act of perception and cognition is contingent, mediated, situated, contextual, theory-soaked. Human language cannot establish its ground in an independent reality. Meaning is rendered by the mind and cannot be assumed to inhere in the object, in the world beyond the mind, for that world can never be contacted without having already been saturated by the mind's own nature. That world cannot even be justifiably postulated. Radical uncertainty prevails, for in the end what one knows and experiences is to an indeterminate extent a projection.

Thus the cosmological estrangement of modern consciousness initiated by Copernicus and the ontological estrangement initiated by Descartes were completed by the epistemological estrangement initiated by Kant: a threefold mutually enforced prison of modern alienation.

I would like to point out here the striking resemblance between this state of affairs and the condition that Gregory Bateson famously described as the "double bind": the impossibly problematic situation in which mutually contradictory demands eventually lead a person to become schizophrenic. In Bateson's formulation, there were four basic premises necessary to constitute a double bind situation between a child and a "schizophrenogenic" mother: (1) The child's relationship to the mother is one of vital dependency, thereby making it critical for the child to assess communications from the mother accurately. (2) The child receives contradictory or incompatible information from the mother at different levels, whereby, for example, her explicit verbal communication is fundamentally denied by the "meta communication," the nonverbal context in which the explicit message is conveyed (thus the mother who says to her child with hostile eyes and a rigid body, "Darling, you know I love you so much"). The two sets of signals cannot be understood as coherent. (3) The child is not given any opportunity to ask questions of the mother that would clarify the communication or resolve the contradiction. And (4) the child cannot leave the field, i.e., the relationship. In such circumstances, Bateson found, the child is forced to distort his or her perception of both outer and inner realities, with serious psychopathological consequences.

Now if we substitute in these four premises world for mother, and human being for child, we have the modern double bind in a nutshell: (1) The human being's relationship to the world is one of vital dependency, thereby making it critical for the human being to assess the nature of that world accurately. (2) The human mind receives contradictory or incompatible information about its situation with respect to the world, whereby its inner psychological and spiritual sense of things is incoherent with the scientific meta communication. (3) Epistemologically, the human mind cannot achieve direct communication with the world. 4) Existentially the human being cannot leave the field.

The differences between Bateson's psychiatric double bind and the modern existential condition are more in degree than in kind: the modern condition is an extraordinarily encompassing and fundamental double bind, made less immediately conspicuous simply because it is so universal. We have the post-Copernican dilemma of being a peripheral and insignificant inhabitant of a vast cosmos, and the post-Cartesian dilemma of being a conscious, purposeful, and personal subject confronting an unconscious, purposeless, and impersonal universe, with these compounded by the post-Kantian dilemma of there being no possible means by which the human subject can know the universe in its essence. We are evolved from, embedded in, and defined by a reality that is radically alien to our own, and moreover cannot ever be directly contacted in cognition.

This double bind of modern consciousness has been recognized in one form or another since at least Pascal: "I am terrified by the eternal silence of these infinite spaces." Our psychological and spiritual predispositions are absurdly at variance with the world revealed by our scientific method. We seem to receive two messages from our existential situation: on the one hand, strive, give oneself to the quest for meaning and spiritual fulfillment; but on the other hand, know that the universe, of whose substance we are derived, is entirely indifferent to that quest, soulless in character, and nullifying in its effects. We are at once aroused and crushed. For inexplicably, absurdly, the cosmos is inhuman, yet we are not. The situation is profoundly unintelligible.

If we follow Bateson's diagnosis and apply it to the larger modern condition, it should not be surprising what kinds of response the modern psyche has made to this situation as it attempts to escape the double bind's inherent contradictions. Either inner or outer realities tend to be distorted: inner feelings are repressed and denied, as in apathy and psychic numbing, or they are inflated in compensation, as in narcissism and egocentrism; or the outer world is slavishly submitted to as the only reality, or it is aggressively objectified and exploited. There is also the strategy of flight, through various forms of escapism: compulsive economic consumption, absorption in the mass media, faddism, cults, ideologies, nationalistic fervor, alcoholism, drug addiction. When avoidance mechanisms cannot be sustained, there is anxiety, paranoia, chronic hostility, a feeling of helpless victimization, a tendency to suspect all meanings, an impulse toward self-negation, a sense of purposelessness and absurdity, a feeling of irresolvable inner contradiction, a fragmenting of consciousness. And at the extreme, there are the full-blown psychopathological reactions of the schizophrenic: self-destructive violence, delusional states, massive amnesia, catatonia, automatism, mania, nihilism. The modern world knows each of these reactions in various combinations and compromise formations, and its social and political life is notoriously so determined.

Nor should it be surprising that twentieth-century philosophy finds itself in the condition we now see. Of course modern philosophy has brought forth some courageous intellectual responses to the post-Copernican situation, but by and large the philosophy that has dominated our century and our universities resembles nothing so much as a severe obsessive-compulsive sitting on his bed repeatedly tying and untying his shoes because he never quite gets it right--while in the meantime Socrates and Hegel and Aquinas are already high up the mountain on their hike, breathing the bracing alpine air, seeing new and unexpected vistas.

But there is one crucial way in which the modern situation is not identical to the psychiatric double bind, and this is the fact that the modern human being has not simply been a helpless child, but has actively engaged the world and pursued a specific strategy and mode of activity— a Promethean project of freeing itself from and controlling nature. The modern mind has demanded a specific type of interpretation of the world: its scientific method has required explanations of phenomena that are concretely predictive, and therefore impersonal, mechanistic, structural. To fulfill their purposes, these explanations of the universe have been systematically "cleansed" of all spiritual and human qualities. Of course we cannot be certain that the world is in fact what these explanations suggest. We can be certain only that the world is to an indeterminate extent susceptible to this way of interpretation. Kant's insight is a sword that cuts two ways. Although on the one hand it appears to place the world beyond the grasp of the human mind, on the other hand it recognizes that the impersonal and soulless world of modern scientific cognition is not necessarily the whole story. Rather, that world is the only kind of story that for the past three centuries the Western mind has considered intellectually justifiable. In Ernest Gellner's words, "It was Kant's merit to see that this compulsion [for mechanistic impersonal explanations] is in us, not in things." And "it was Weber's to see that it is historically a specific kind of mind, not human mind as such, that is subject to this compulsion."

Hence one crucial part of the modern double bind is not airtight. In the case of Bateson's schizophrenogenic mother and child, the mother more or less holds all the cards, for she unilaterally controls the communication. But the lesson of Kant is that the locus of the communication problem—i.e., the problem of human knowledge of the world—must first be viewed as centering in the human mind, not in the world as such. Therefore it is theoretically possible that the human mind has more cards than it has been playing. The pivot of the modern predicament is epistemological, and it is here that we should look for an opening.

Knowledge and the Unconscious

When Nietzsche in the nineteenth century said there are no facts, only interpretations, he was both summing up the legacy of eighteenth-century critical philosophy and pointing toward the task and promise of twentieth-century depth psychology. That an unconscious part of the psyche exerts decisive influence over human perception, cognition, and behavior was an idea long developing in Western thought, but it was Freud who effectively brought it into the foreground of modern intellectual concern. Freud played a fascinatingly multiple role in the unfolding of the greater Copernican revolution. On the one hand, as he said in the famous passage at

the end of the eighteenth of his Introductory Lectures, psychoanalysis represented the third wounding blow to man's naive pride and self-love, the first being Copernicus's heliocentric theory, and the second being Darwin's theory of evolution. For psychoanalysis revealed that not only is the Earth not the center of the universe, and not only is man not the privileged focus of creation, but even the human mind and ego, man's most precious sense of being a conscious rational self, is only a recent and precarious development out of the primordial id, and is by no means master of its own house. With his epochal insight into the unconscious determinants of human experience, Freud stood directly in the Copernican lineage of modern thought that progressively relativized the status of the human being. And again, like Copernicus and like Kant but on an altogether new level, Freud brought the fundamental recognition that the apparent reality of the objective world was being unconsciously determined by the condition of the subject.

But Freud's insight too was a sword that cut both ways, and in a significant sense Freud represented the crucial turning point in the modern trajectory. For the discovery of the unconscious collapsed the old boundaries of interpretation. As Descartes and the post-Cartesian British empiricists had noted, the primary datum in human experience is ultimately human experience itself—not the material world, and not sensory transforms of that world; and with psychoanalysis was begun the systematic exploration of the seat of all human experience and cognition, the human psyche. From Descartes to Locke, Berkeley, and Hume, and then to Kant, the progress of modern epistemology had depended on increasingly acute analyses of the role played by the human mind in the act of cognition. With this background, and with the further steps taken by Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, and others, the analytic task established by Freud was in a sense ineluctable. The modern psychological imperative, to recover the unconscious, precisely coincided with the modern epistemological imperative—to discover the root principles of mental organization.

But while it was Freud who penetrated the veil, it was Jung who grasped the critical philosophical consequences of depth psychology's discoveries. Partly this was because Jung was more epistemologically sophisticated than Freud, having been steeped in Kant and critical philosophy from his youth (even in the 1930s Jung was an informed reader of Karl Popper—which comes as a surprise to many Jungians). Partly this was also because by intellectual temperament Jung was less bound than Freud by nineteenth-century scientism. But above all, Jung had the more profound experience to draw upon, and could see the larger context within which depth psychology was operating. As Joseph Campbell used to say, Freud was fishing while sitting on a whale—he didn't realize what he had before him. But of course who of us does, and we all depend on our successors to overleap our own limitations.

Thus it was Jung who recognized that critical philosophy was, as he put it, "the mother of modern psychology." Kant was correct when he saw that human experience was not atomistic, as Hume had thought, but instead was permeated by a priori structures; yet Kant's formulation of those structures, reflecting his complete belief in Newtonian physics, was inevitably too narrow and simplistic. In a sense, just as Freud's understanding of the mind had been limited by his Darwinian presuppositions, so was Kant's understanding limited by his Newtonian presuppositions. Jung, under the impact of far more powerful and extensive experiences of the human psyche, both his own and others, pushed the Kantian and Freudian perspectives all the way until he reached a kind of holy grail of the inner quest: the discovery of the universal archetypes in all their power and rich complexity as the fundamental determining structures of human experience.

Freud had discovered Oedipus and Id and Superego and Eros and Thanatos; he had recognized the instincts in essentially archetypal terms. But at crucial junctures, his reductionist presuppositions drastically restricted his vision. With Jung, however, the full symbolic multivalence of the archetypes was disclosed, and the personal unconscious of Freud, which comprised mainly repressed contents resulting from biographical traumas and the ego's antipathy to the instincts, opened into a vast archetypally patterned collective unconscious which was not so much the result of repression as it was the primordial foundation of the psyche itself. With its progressively unfolding disclosure of the unconscious, depth psychology radically redefined the epistemological riddle that had first been posed by Kant-Freud doing so narrowly and inadvertently as it were, and then Jung doing so on a more comprehensive and self-aware level.

Yet what was the actual nature of these archetypes, what was this collective unconscious, and how did any of this affect the modern scientific world view? Although the Jungian archetypal perspective greatly enriched and deepened the modern understanding of the psyche, in certain ways it too could be seen as merely reinforcing the Kantian epistemological alienation. As Jung repeatedly emphasized for many years in his loyal Kantian way, the discovery of the archetypes was the result of the empirical investigation of psychological phenomena and therefore had no necessary metaphysical implications. The study of the mind rendered knowledge of the mind, not of the world beyond the mind. Archetypes so conceived were psychological, hence in a certain way subjective. Like Kant's a priori forms and categories, they structured human experience without giving the human mind any direct knowledge of reality beyond itself; they were inherited structures or dispositions that preceded human experience and determined its character, but they

could not be said to transcend the human psyche. They were perhaps only the most fundamental of the many distorting lenses that distanced the human mind from genuine knowledge of the world. They were perhaps only the deepest patterns of human projection.

But of course Jung's thought was extremely complex, and in the course of his very long intellectually active life his conception of the archetypes went through a significant evolution. The conventional and still most widely known view of Jungian archetypes, just described, was based on Jung's middle-period writings when his thought was still largely governed by Cartesian-Kantian philosophical assumptions concerning the nature of the psyche and its separation from the external world. In his later work, however, and particularly in relation to his study of synchronicities, Jung began to move toward a conception of archetypes as autonomous patterns of meaning that appear to structure and inhere in both psyche and matter, thereby in effect dissolving the modern subject-object dichotomy. Archetypes in this view were more mysterious than a priori categories—more ambiguous in their ontological status, less easily restricted to a specific dimension, more like the original Platonic and Neoplatonic conception of archetypes. Some aspects of this late-Jungian development have been pressed further, brilliantly and controversially, by James Hillman and the school of archetypal psychology, which has developed a "postmodern" Jungian perspective: recognizing the primacy of the psyche and the imagination, and the irreducible psychic reality and potency of the archetypes, but, unlike the late Jung, largely avoiding metaphysical or theological statements in favor of a full embrace of psyche in all its endless and rich ambiguity.

But the most epistemologically significant development in the recent history of depth psychology, and indeed the most important advance in the field as a whole since Freud and Jung themselves, has been the work of Stanislav Grof, which over the past three decades has not only revolutionized psychodynamic theory but also brought forth major implications for many other fields, including philosophy. Many readers will already be familiar with Grof's work, particularly in Europe and California, but for those who are not I will give here a brief summary.⁶ Grof began as a psychoanalytic psychiatrist, and the original background of his ideas was Freudian, not Jungian; yet the unexpected upshot of his work was to ratify Jung's archetypal perspective on a new level, and bring it into coherent synthesis with Freud's biological and biographical perspective, though on a much deeper stratum of the psyche than Freud had recognized.

The basis of Grof's discoveries was his observation of several thousand psychoanalytic sessions, first in Prague and then in Maryland with the National Institute of Mental

Health, in which subjects used extremely potent psychoactive substances, particularly LSD, and then later a variety of powerful non drug therapeutic methods, which served as catalysts of unconscious processes. Grof found that subjects involved in these sessions tended to undergo progressively deeper explorations of the unconscious, in the course of which there consistently emerged a pivotal sequence of experiences of great complexity and intensity. In the initial sessions, subjects typically moved back through earlier and earlier biographical experiences and traumas—the Oedipus complex, toilet training, nursing, early infantile experiences—which were generally intelligible in terms of Freudian psychoanalytic principles and appeared to represent something like laboratory evidence for the basic correctness of Freud's theories. But after reliving and integrating these various memory complexes, subjects regularly tended to move further back into an extremely intense engagement with the process of biological birth.

Although this process was experienced on a biological level in the most explicit and detailed manner, it was informed by, or saturated by, a distinct archetypal sequence of considerable numinous power. Subjects reported that experiences at this level possessed an intensity and universality that far surpassed what they had previously believed was the experiential limit for an individual human being. These experiences occurred in a highly variable order, and overlapped with each other in very complex ways, but abstracting from this complexity Grof found visible a distinct sequence—which moved from an initial condition of undifferentiated unity with the maternal womb, to an experience of sudden fall and separation from that primal organismic unity, to a highly charged life-and-death struggle with the contracting uterus and the birth canal, and culminating in an experience of complete annihilation. This was followed almost immediately by an experience of sudden unexpected global liberation, which was typically perceived not only as physical birth but also as spiritual rebirth, with the two mysteriously intermixed.

I should mention here that I lived for over ten years at Esalen Institute in Big Sur, California, where I was the director of programs, and in the course of those years virtually every conceivable form of therapy and personal transformation, great and small, came through Esalen. In terms of therapeutic effectiveness, Grof's was by far the most powerful; there was no comparison. Yet the price was dear—in a sense the price was absolute: the reliving of one's birth was experienced in a context of profound existential and spiritual crisis, with great physical agony, unbearable constriction and pressure, extreme narrowing of mental horizons, a sense of hopeless alienation and the ultimate meaninglessness of life, a feeling of going irrevocably insane, and finally a shattering experiential encounter with death—with losing everything, physically, psychologically, intellectually, spiritually. Yet after integrating

this long experiential sequence, subjects regularly reported experiencing a dramatic expansion of horizons, a radical change of perspective as to the nature of reality, a sense of sudden awakening, a feeling of being fundamentally reconnected to the universe, all accompanied by a profound sense of psychological healing and spiritual liberation. Later in these sessions and in subsequent ones, subjects reported having access to memories of prenatal intrauterine existence, which typically emerged in association with archetypal experiences of paradise, mystical union with nature or with the divine or with the Great Mother Goddess, dissolution of the ego in ecstatic unity with the universe, absorption into the transcendent One, and other forms of mystical unitive experience. Freud called the intimations of this level of experience that he had observed the "oceanic feeling," though for Freud this referred only as far back as infant nursing experiences of unity with the mother at the breast—a less profound version of the primal undifferentiated consciousness of the intrauterine condition.

In terms of psychotherapy, Grof found that the deepest source of psychological symptoms and distress reached back far past childhood traumas and biographical events to the experience of birth itself, intimately interwoven with the encounter with death. When successfully resolved, this experience tended to result in a dramatic disappearance of long-standing psychopathological problems, including conditions and symptoms that had proved entirely recalcitrant to previous therapeutic programs. I should emphasize here that this "perinatal" (surrounding birth) sequence of experiences typically took place on several levels at once, but it virtually always had an intense somatic component. The physical catharsis involved in reliving the birth trauma was extremely powerful, and clearly suggested the reason for the relative ineffectiveness of most psychoanalytic forms of therapy, which have been based largely on verbal interaction and by comparison seem scarcely to scratch the surface. The perinatal experiences that emerged in Grof's work were preverbal, cellular, elemental. They took place only when the ego's usual capacity for control had been overcome, either through the use of a catalytic psychoactive substance or therapeutic technique, or through the spontaneous force of the unconscious material.

Yet these experiences were also profoundly archetypal in character. Indeed, the encounter with this perinatal sequence constantly brought home to subjects a sense that nature itself, including the human body, was the repository and vessel of the archetypal, that nature's processes were archetypal processes—an insight that both Freud and Jung had approached but from opposite directions. In a sense Grof's work gave a more explicit biological ground to the Jungian archetypes, while giving a more explicit archetypal ground to the Freudian instincts. The encounter with birth and death in this sequence seemed to represent a kind of transduction point between

dimensions, a pivot that linked the biological and the archetypal, the Freudian and the Jungian, the biographical and the collective, the personal and the transpersonal, body and spirit. In retrospect, the evolution of psychoanalysis can be seen as having gradually pressed the Freudian biographical-biological perspective back to earlier and earlier periods of individual life, until, reaching the encounter with birth itself, that strategy culminated in a decisive negation of orthodox Freudian reductionism, opening the psychoanalytic conception to a radically more complex and expanded ontology of human experience. The result has been an understanding of the psyche that, like the experience of the perinatal sequence itself, is irreducibly multidimensional.

A host of implications from Grof's work could be discussed here—insights concerning the roots of male sexism in the unconscious fear of female birthing bodies; concerning the roots of the Oedipus complex in the far more primal and fundamental struggle against the seemingly punitive uterine contractions and constricting birth canal to regain union with the nourishing maternal womb; concerning the therapeutic importance of the encounter with death; concerning the roots of specific psychopathological conditions such as depression, phobias, obsessive-compulsive neurosis, sexual disorders, sadomasochism, mania, suicide, addiction, various psychotic conditions, as well as collective psychological disorders such as the impulse toward war and totalitarianism. One could discuss the superbly clarifying synthesis Grof's work achieved in psychodynamic theory, bringing together not only Freud and Jung but Reich, Rank, Adler, Ferenczi, Klein, Fairbairn, Winnicott, Erikson, Maslow, Perls, Laing. My concern here, however, is not psychotherapeutic but philosophical, and while this perinatal area constituted the crucial threshold for therapeutic transformation, it also proved to be the pivotal area for major philosophical and intellectual issues. Hence I will limit this discussion to the specific consequences and implications that Grof's work holds for our present epistemological situation.

In this context, certain crucial generalizations from the clinical evidence are relevant:

First, the archetypal sequence that governed the perinatal phenomena from womb through birth canal to birth was experienced above all as a powerful dialectic—moving from an initial state of undifferentiated unity to a problematic state of constriction, conflict, and contradiction, with an accompanying sense of separation, duality, and alienation; and finally moving through a stage of complete annihilation to an unexpected redemptive liberation that both overcame and fulfilled the intervening alienated state—restoring the initial unity but on a new level that preserved the achievement of the whole trajectory.

Second, this archetypal dialectic was often experienced simultaneously on both an individual level and, often more powerfully, a collective level, so that the movement from primordial unity through alienation to liberating resolution was experienced in terms of the evolution of an entire culture, for example, or of humankind as a whole—the birth of Homo sapiens out of nature no less than the birth of the individual child from the mother. Here personal and transpersonal were equally present, inextricably fused, so that ontogeny not only recapitulated phylogeny but in some sense opened out into it.

And third, this archetypal dialectic was experienced or registered in several dimensions—physical, psychological, intellectual, spiritual—often more than one of these at a time, and sometimes all simultaneously in complex combination. As Grof has emphasized, the clinical evidence suggests not that this perinatal sequence should be seen as simply reducible to the birth trauma; rather, it appears that the biological process of birth is itself an expression of a larger underlying archetypal process that can manifest in many dimensions. Thus:

In physical terms, the perinatal sequence was experienced as biological gestation and birth, moving from the symbiotic union with the all-encompassing nourishing womb, through a gradual growth of complexity and individuation within that matrix, to an encounter with the contracting uterus, the birth canal, and finally delivery. In psychological terms, the experience was one of movement from an initial condition of undifferentiated pre-egoic consciousness to a state of increasing individuation and separation between self and world, increasing existential alienation, and finally an experience of ego death followed by psychological rebirth; this was often complexly associated with the biographical experience of moving from the womb of childhood through the labor of life and the contraction of aging to the encounter with death.

On the religious level, this experiential sequence took a wide variety of forms, but especially frequent was the Judaeo-Christian symbolic movement from the primordial Garden through the Fall, the exile into separation from divinity, into the world of suffering and mortality, followed by the redemptive crucifixion and resurrection, bringing the reunion of the divine and the human. On an individual level, the experience of this perinatal sequence closely resembled—indeed, it appeared to be essentially identical to—the death-rebirth initiation of the ancient mystery religions.

Finally, on the philosophical level, the experience was comprehensible in what might be called Neoplatonic-Hegelian-Nietzschean terms as a dialectical evolution from an archetypally structured primordial Unity, through an emanation into matter with increasing complexity, multiplicity, and individuation, through a state of absolute

alienation—the death of God in both Hegel's and Nietzsche's senses—followed by a dramatic *Aufhebung*, a synthesis and reunification with self-subsistent Being that both annihilates and fulfills the individual trajectory.

This multileveled experiential sequence holds relevance for an extraordinary range of important issues, but it is the epistemological implications that are especially significant for our contemporary intellectual situation. For from the perspective suggested by this evidence, the fundamental subject-object dichotomy that has governed and defined modern consciousness—that has constituted modern consciousness, that has been generally assumed to be absolute, taken for granted as the basis for any "realistic" perspective and experience of the world—appears to be rooted in a specific archetypal condition associated with the unresolved trauma of human birth, in which an original consciousness of undifferentiated organismic unity with the mother, a participation mystique with nature, has been outgrown, disrupted, and lost. Here, on both the individual and the collective levels, can be seen the source of the profound dualism of the modern mind: between man and nature, between mind and matter, between self and other, between experience and reality—that pervading sense of a separate ego irrevocably divided from the encompassing world. Here is the painful separation from the timeless all-encompassing womb of nature, the development of human self-consciousness, the loss of connection with the matrix of being, the expulsion from the Garden, the entrance into time and history and materiality, the disenchantment of the cosmos, the sense of total immersion in an antithetical world of impersonal forces. Here is the experience of the universe as ultimately indifferent, hostile, inscrutable. Here is the compulsive striving to liberate oneself from nature's power, to control and dominate the forces of nature, even to revenge oneself against nature. Here is the primal fear of losing control and dominance, rooted in the all-consuming awareness and fear of death—the inevitable accompaniment of the individual ego's emergence out of the collective matrix. But above all, here is the profound sense of ontological and epistemological separation between self and world.

This fundamental sense of separation is then structured into the legitimated interpretive principles of the modern mind. It was no accident that the man who first systematically formulated the separate modern rational self, Descartes, was also the man who first systematically formulated the mechanistic cosmos for the Copernican revolution. The basic a priori categories and premises of modern science, with its assumption of an independent external world that must be investigated by an autonomous human reason, with its insistence on impersonal mechanistic explanation, with its rejection of spiritual qualities in the cosmos, its repudiation of any intrinsic meaning or purpose in nature, its demand for a univocal, literal

interpretation of a world of hard facts—all of these ensure the construction of a disenchanted and alienating world view. As Hillman has emphasized: "The evidence we gather in support of a hypothesis and the rhetoric we use to argue it are already part of the archetypal constellation we are in....The 'objective' idea we find in the pattern of data is also the 'subjective' idea by means of which we see the data."

From this perspective, the Cartesian-Kantian philosophical assumptions that have governed the modern mind, and that have informed and impelled the modern scientific achievement, reflect the dominance of a powerful archetypal gestalt, an experiential template that selectively filters and shapes human awareness in such a manner that reality is perceived to be opaque, literal, objective, and alien. The Cartesian-Kantian paradigm both expresses and ratifies a state of consciousness in which experience of the unitive numinous depths of reality has been systematically extinguished, leaving the world disenchanted and the human ego isolated. Such a world view is, as it were, a kind of metaphysical and epistemological box, a hermetically closed system that reflects the contracted enclosure of the archetypal birth process. It is the elaborate articulation of a specific archetypal domain within which human awareness is encompassed and confined as if it existed inside a solipsistic bubble.

The great irony suggested here of course is that it is just when the modern mind believes it has most fully purified itself from any anthropomorphic projections, when it actively construes the world as unconscious, mechanistic, and impersonal, it is just then that the world is most completely a selective construct of the human mind. The human mind has abstracted from the whole all conscious intelligence and purpose and meaning, and claimed these exclusively for itself, and then projected onto the world a machine. As Rupert Sheldrake has pointed out, this is the ultimate anthropomorphic projection: a man-made machine, something not in fact ever found in nature. From this perspective, it is the modern mind's own impersonal soullessness that has been projected from within onto the world—or, to be more precise, that has been projectively elicited from the world.

But it has been the fate and burden of depth psychology, that astonishingly seminal tradition founded by Freud and Jung, to mediate the modern mind's access to archetypal forces and realities that reconnect the individual self with the world, dissolving the dualistic world view. Indeed, in retrospect it would seem that it had to be depth psychology that would bring forth awareness of these realities to the modern mind: if the realm of the archetypal could not be recognized in the philosophy and religion and science of the high culture, then it had to reemerge from the underworld of the psyche. As L.L. Whyte has noted, the idea of the unconscious

first appeared and played an increasing role in Western intellectual history almost immediately from the time of Descartes, beginning its slow ascent to Freud. And when, at the start of the twentieth century, Freud introduced his work to the world in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, he began with that great epigraph from Virgil which said it all: "If I cannot bend the Gods above, then I will move the Infernal regions." The compensation was inevitable—if not above, then from below.

Thus the modern condition begins as a Promethean movement toward human freedom, toward autonomy from the encompassing matrix of nature, toward individuation from the collective, yet gradually and ineluctably the Cartesian-Kantian condition evolves into a Kafka-Beckett-like state of existential isolation and absurdity—an intolerable double bind leading to a kind of deconstructive frenzy. And again, the existential double bind closely mirrors the infant's situation within the birthing mother: having been symbiotically united with the nourishing womb, growing and developing within that matrix, the beloved center of an all-comprehending supportive world, yet now alienated from that world, constricted by that womb, forsaken, crushed, strangled, and expelled in a state of extreme confusion and anxiety—an inexplicably incoherent situation of profound traumatic intensity.

Yet full experience of this double bind, of this dialectic between the primordial unity on the one hand and the birth labor and subject-object dichotomy on the other, unexpectedly brings forth a third condition: a redemptive reunification of the individuated self with the universal matrix. Thus the child is born and embraced by the mother, the liberated hero ascends from the underworld to return home after his far-flung odyssey. The individual and the universal are reconciled. The suffering, alienation, and death are now comprehended as necessary for birth, for the creation of the self: *O Felix Culpa*. A situation that was fundamentally unintelligible is now recognized as a necessary element in a larger context of profound intelligibility. The dialectic is fulfilled, the alienation redeemed. The rupture from Being is healed. The world is rediscovered in its primordial enchantment. The autonomous individual self has been forged and is now reunited with the ground of its being.

The Evolution of World Views

All of this suggests that another, more sophisticated and comprehensive epistemological perspective is called for. Although the Cartesian-Kantian epistemological position has been the dominant paradigm of the modern mind, it has not been the only one, for at almost precisely the same time that the Enlightenment reached its philosophical climax in Kant, a radically different epistemological

perspective began to emerge—first visible in Goethe with his study of natural forms, developed in new directions by Schiller, Schelling, Hegel, Coleridge, and Emerson, and articulated within the past century by Rudolf Steiner. Each of these thinkers gave his own distinct emphasis to the developing perspective, but common to all was a fundamental conviction that the relation of the human mind to the world was ultimately not dualistic but participatory.

In essence this alternative conception did not oppose the Kantian epistemology but rather went beyond it, subsuming it in a larger and subtler understanding of human knowledge. The new conception fully acknowledged the validity of Kant's critical insight, that all human knowledge of the world is in some sense determined by subjective principles; but instead of considering these principles as belonging ultimately to the separate human subject, and therefore not grounded in the world independent of human cognition, this participatory conception held that these subjective principles are in fact an expression of the world's own being, and that the human mind is ultimately the organ of the world's own process of self-revelation. In this view, the essential reality of nature is not separate, self-contained, and complete in itself, so that the human mind can examine it "objectively" and register it from without. Rather, nature's unfolding truth emerges only with the active participation of the human mind. Nature's reality is not merely phenomenal, nor is it independent and objective; rather, it is something that comes into being through the very act of human cognition. Nature becomes intelligible to itself through the human mind.

In this perspective, nature pervades everything, and the human mind in all its fullness is itself an expression of nature's essential being. And it is only when the human mind actively brings forth from within itself the full powers of a disciplined imagination and saturates its empirical observation with archetypal insight that the deeper reality of the world emerges. A developed inner life is therefore indispensable for cognition. In its most profound and authentic expression, the intellectual imagination does not merely project its ideas into nature from its isolated brain corner. Rather, from within its own depths the imagination directly contacts the creative process within nature, realizes that process within itself, and brings nature's reality to conscious expression. Hence the imaginal intuition is not a subjective distortion but is rather the human fulfillment of that reality's essential wholeness, which had been rent asunder by the dualistic perception. The human imagination is itself part of the world's intrinsic truth; without it the world is in some sense incomplete. Both major forms of epistemological dualism—the conventional precritical and the post-Kantian critical conceptions of human knowledge—are here countered and synthesized. On the one hand, the human mind does not just produce concepts that "correspond" to an external reality. Yet on the other hand, neither does it simply

"impose" its own order on the world. Rather, the world's truth realizes itself within and through the human mind.

This participatory epistemology, developed in different ways by Goethe, Hegel, Steiner, and others, can be understood not as a regression to naive participation mystique, but as the dialectical synthesis of the long evolution from the primordial undifferentiated consciousness through the dualistic alienation. It incorporates the postmodern understanding of knowledge and yet goes beyond it. The interpretive and constructive character of human cognition is fully acknowledged, but the intimate, interpenetrating and all-permeating relationship of nature to the human being and human mind allows the Kantian consequence of epistemological alienation to be entirely overcome. The human spirit does not merely prescribe nature's phenomenal order; rather, the spirit of nature brings forth its own order through the human mind when that mind is employing its full complement of faculties—intellectual, volitional, emotional, sensory, imaginative, aesthetic, epiphanic. In such knowledge, the human mind "lives into" the creative activity of nature. Then the world speaks its meaning through human consciousness. Then human language itself can be recognized as rooted in a deeper reality, as reflecting the universe's unfolding meaning. Through the human intellect, in all its personal individuality, contingency, and struggle, the world's evolving thought-content achieves conscious articulation. Yes, knowledge of the world is structured by the mind's subjective contribution; but that contribution is teleologically called forth by the universe for its own self-revelation. Human thought does not and cannot mirror a ready-made objective truth in the world; rather, the world's truth achieves its existence when it comes to birth in the human mind. As the plant at a certain stage brings forth its blossom, so does the universe bring forth new stages of human knowledge. And, as Hegel emphasized, the evolution of human knowledge is the evolution of the world's self-revelation.

Such a perspective suggests of course that the Cartesian-Kantian paradigm, and thus the epistemologically enforced double bind of modern consciousness, is not absolute. But if we take this participatory epistemology, and if we combine it with Grof's discovery of the perinatal sequence and its underlying archetypal dialectic, then a more surprising conclusion is suggested: namely, that the Cartesian-Kantian paradigm, and indeed the entire trajectory into alienation taken by the modern mind, has not been simply an error, an unfortunate human aberration, a mere manifestation of human blindness, but has rather reflected a much deeper archetypal process impelled by forces beyond the merely human. For in this view, the powerful contraction of vision experienced by the modern mind has itself been an authentic expression of nature's unfolding, a process enacted through the growingly autonomous human intellect, and now reaching a highly critical stage of

transfiguration. From this perspective, the dualistic epistemology derived from Kant and the Enlightenment is not simply the opposite of the participatory epistemology derived from Goethe and Romanticism, but is rather an important subset of it, a necessary stage in the evolution of the human mind. And if this is true, several long-standing philosophical paradoxes may now be cleared up.

I shall focus here on one especially significant area. Much of the most exciting work in contemporary epistemology has come from philosophy of science, above all from the work of Popper, Kuhn, and Feyerabend. Yet despite this work, or rather because of this work, which has revealed in so many ways the relative and radically interpretive nature of scientific knowledge, philosophers of science have been left with two notoriously fundamental dilemmas—one left by Popper, the other by Kuhn and Feyerabend.

With Popper the problem of scientific knowledge left by Hume and Kant was brilliantly explicated. For Popper, as for the modern mind, man approaches the world as a stranger—but a stranger who has a thirst for explanation, and an ability to invent myths, stories, theories, and a willingness to test these. Sometimes, by luck and hard work and many mistakes, a myth is found to work. The theory saves the phenomena; it is a lucky guess. And this is the greatness of science, that through an occasionally fortunate combination of rigor and inventiveness, a purely human conception can be found to work in the empirical world, at least temporarily. Yet a gnawing question remains for Popper: How, in the end, are successful conjectures, successful myths, possible? How does the human mind ever acquire genuine knowledge if it's just a matter of projected myths that are tested? Why do these myths ever work? If the human mind has no access to a priori certain truth, and if all observations are always already saturated by uncertified assumptions about the world, how could this mind possibly conceive a genuinely successful theory? Popper answered this question by saying that, in the end, it is "luck"—but this answer has never satisfied. For why should the imagination of a stranger ever be able to conceive merely from within itself a myth that works so splendidly in the empirical world that whole civilizations can be built on it (as with Newton)? How can something come from nothing?

I believe there is only one plausible answer to this riddle, and it is an answer suggested by the participatory epistemological framework outlined above: namely, that the bold conjectures and myths that the human mind produces in its quest for knowledge ultimately come from something far deeper than a purely human source. They come from the wellspring of nature itself, from the universal unconscious that is bringing forth through the human mind and human imagination its own gradually unfolding reality. In this view, the theory of a Copernicus, a Newton, or an Einstein is

not simply due to the luck of a stranger; rather, it reflects the human mind's radical kinship with the cosmos. It reflects the human mind's pivotal role as vehicle of the universe's unfolding meaning. In this view, neither the postmodern skeptic nor the perennialist philosopher is correct in their shared opinion that the modern scientific paradigm is ultimately without any cosmic foundation. For that paradigm is itself part of a larger evolutionary process.

We can now also suggest a resolution to that fundamental problem left by Kuhn—the problem of explaining why in the history of science one paradigm is chosen over another if paradigms are ultimately incommensurable, if they cannot ever be rigorously compared. As Kuhn has pointed out, each paradigm tends to create its own data and its own way of interpreting those data in a manner that is so comprehensive and self-validating that scientists operating within different paradigms seem to exist in altogether different worlds. Although to a given community of scientific interpreters, one paradigm seems to be superior to another, there is no way of justifying that superiority if each paradigm governs and saturates its own data base. Nor does any consensus exist among scientists concerning a common measure or value—such as conceptual precision, or coherence, or breadth, or simplicity, or resistance to falsification, or congruence with theories used in other specialties, or fruitfulness in new research findings—that could be used as a universal standard of comparison. Which value is considered most important varies from one scientific era to another, from one discipline to another, even between individual research groups. What, then, can explain the progress of scientific knowledge if, in the end, each paradigm is selectively based on differing modes of interpretation and different sets of data and different scientific values?

Kuhn has always answered this problem by saying that ultimately the decision lies with the ongoing scientific community, which provides the final basis of justification. Yet, as many scientists have complained, this answer seems to undercut the very foundation of the scientific enterprise, leaving it to the mercy of sociological and personal factors that subjectively distort the scientific judgment. And indeed, as Kuhn himself has demonstrated, scientists generally do not in practice fundamentally question the governing paradigm or test it against other alternatives, for many reasons—pedagogical, socioeconomic, cultural, psychological—most of them unconscious. Scientists, like everyone else, are attached to their beliefs. What, then, ultimately explains the progression of science from one paradigm to another? Does the evolution of scientific knowledge have anything to do with "truth," or is it a mere artifact of sociology? And more radically, with Paul Feyerabend's dictum that "anything goes" in the battle of paradigms: If anything goes, then why ultimately

does one thing go rather than another? Why is any scientific paradigm judged superior? If anything goes, why does anything go at all?

The answer I am suggesting here is that a paradigm emerges in the history of science, it is recognized as superior, as true and valid, precisely when that paradigm resonates with the current archetypal state of the evolving collective psyche. A paradigm appears to account for more data, and for more important data, it seems more relevant, more cogent, more attractive, fundamentally because it has become archetypally appropriate to that culture or individual at that moment in its evolution. And the dynamics of this archetypal development appear to be essentially identical to the dynamics of the perinatal process. Kuhn's description of the ongoing dialectic between normal science and major paradigm revolutions strikingly parallels the perinatal dynamics described by Grof: The pursuit of knowledge always takes place within a given paradigm, within a conceptual matrix—a womb that provides an intellectually nourishing structure, that fosters growth and increasing complexity and sophistication—until gradually that structure is experienced as constricting, a limitation, a prison, producing a tension of irresolvable contradictions, and finally a crisis is reached. Then some inspired Promethean genius comes along and is graced with an inner breakthrough to a new vision that gives the scientific mind a new sense of being cognitively connected—reconnected—to the world: an intellectual revolution occurs, and a new paradigm is born. Here we see why such geniuses regularly experience their intellectual breakthrough as a profound illumination, a revelation of the divine creative principle itself, as with Newton's exclamation to God, "I think Thy thoughts after Thee!" For the human mind is following the numinous archetypal path that is unfolding from within it.

And here we can see why the same paradigm, such as the Aristotelian or the Newtonian, is perceived as a liberation at one time and then a constriction, a prison, at another. For the birth of every new paradigm is also a conception in a new conceptual matrix, which begins the process of gestation, growth, crisis, and revolution all over again. Each paradigm is a stage in an unfolding evolutionary sequence, and when that paradigm has fulfilled its purpose, when it has been developed and exploited to its fullest extent, then it loses its numinosity, it ceases to be libidinally charged, it becomes felt as oppressive, limiting, opaque, something to be overcome—while the new paradigm that is emerging is felt as a liberating birth into a new, luminously intelligible universe. Thus the ancient symbolically resonant geocentric universe of Aristotle, Ptolemy, and Dante gradually loses its numinosity, becomes seen as a problem full of contradictions, and with Copernicus and Kepler that numinosity is fully transferred to the heliocentric cosmos. And because the evolution of paradigm shifts is an archetypal process, rather than merely either a

rational-empirical or a sociological one, this evolution takes place historically both from within and without, both "subjectively" and "objectively." As the inner gestalt changes in the cultural mind, new empirical evidence just happens to appear, pertinent writings from the past suddenly are unearthed, appropriate epistemological justifications are formulated, supportive sociological changes coincidentally take place, new technologies become available, the telescope is invented and just happens to fall into Galileo's hands. As new psychological predispositions and metaphysical assumptions emerge from within the collective mind, from within many individual minds simultaneously, they are matched and encouraged by the synchronistic arrival of new data, new social contexts, new methodologies, new tools that fulfill the emerging archetypal gestalt.

And as with the evolution of scientific paradigms, so with all forms of human thought. The emergence of a new philosophical paradigm, whether that of Plato or Aquinas, Kant or Heidegger, is never simply the result of improved logical reasoning from the observed data. Rather, each philosophy, each metaphysical perspective and epistemology, reflects the emergence of a global experiential gestalt that informs that philosopher's vision, that governs his or her reasoning and observations, and that ultimately affects the entire cultural and sociological context within which the philosopher's vision is taking form.

For the very possibility of a new world view's appearance rests on the underlying archetypal dynamic of the larger culture. Thus the Copernican revolution that emerged during the Renaissance and Reformation perfectly reflected the archetypal moment of modern humanity's birth out of the ancient-medieval cosmic-ecclesiastical womb. And at the other end, the twentieth century's massive and radical breakdown of so many structures—cultural, philosophical, scientific, religious, moral, artistic, social, economic, political, atomic, ecological—all this suggests the necessary deconstruction prior to a new birth. And why is there evident now such a widespread and constantly growing collective impetus in the Western mind to articulate a holistic and participatory world view, visible in virtually every field? The collective psyche seems to be in the grip of a powerful archetypal dynamic in which the long-alienated modern mind is breaking through, out of the contractions of its birth process, out of what Blake called its "mind-forg'd manacles," to rediscover its intimate relationship with nature and the larger cosmos.

And so we can recognize a multiplicity of these archetypal sequences, with each scientific revolution, each change of world view; yet perhaps we can also recognize one overall archetypal dialectic in the evolution of human consciousness that subsumes all of these smaller sequences, one long meta trajectory, beginning with

the primordial participation mystique and, in a sense, culminating before our eyes. In this light, we can better understand the great epistemological journey of the Western mind from the birth of philosophy out of the mythological consciousness in ancient Greece, through the classical, medieval, and modern eras, to our own postmodern age: the extraordinary succession of world views, the dramatic sequence of transformations in the human mind's apprehension of reality, the mysterious evolution of language, the shifting relationships between universal and particular, transcendent and immanent, concept and percept, conscious and unconscious, subject and object, self and world—the constant movement toward differentiation, the gradual empowerment of the autonomous human intellect, the slow forging of the subjective self, the accompanying disenchantment of the objective world, the suppression and withdrawal of the archetypal, the constellating of the human unconscious, the eventual global alienation, the radical deconstruction, and finally, perhaps, the emergence of a dialectically integrated, participatory consciousness reconnected to the universal.

But to do justice to this complex epistemological progression and to the other great dialectical trajectories of Western intellectual and spiritual history that have paralleled it—cosmological, psychological, religious, existential—would require another book altogether. Instead, I would like to conclude with a brief, very broad overview of this long historical evolution, a kind of archetypal meta narrative, applying on a large scale the insights and perspectives that have been set forth in the foregoing discussion.

Bringing It All Back Home

Many generalizations could be made about the history of the Western mind, but today perhaps the most immediately obvious is that it has been from start to finish an overwhelmingly masculine phenomenon: Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Paul, Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, Copernicus, Galileo, Bacon, Descartes, Newton, Locke, Hume, Kant, Darwin, Marx, Nietzsche, Freud....The Western intellectual tradition has been produced and canonized almost entirely by men, and informed mainly by male perspectives. This masculine dominance in Western intellectual history has certainly not occurred because women are any less intelligent than men. But can it be attributed solely to social restriction? I think not. I believe something more profound is going on here: something archetypal. The masculinity of the Western mind has been pervasive and fundamental, in both men and women, affecting every aspect of Western thought, determining its most basic conception of the human being and the human role in the world. All the major languages within which the Western tradition has developed, from Greek and Latin on, have tended to personify the human

species with words that are masculine in gender: anthropos, homo, l'homme, el hombre, l'uomo, chelovek, der Mensch, man. As the historical narrative in this book has faithfully reflected, it has always been "man" this and "man" that—"the ascent of man," "the dignity of man," "man's relation to God," "man's place in the cosmos," "man's struggle with nature," "the great achievement of modern man," and so forth. The "man" of the Western tradition has been a questing masculine hero, a Promethean biological and metaphysical rebel who has constantly sought freedom and progress for himself, and who has thus constantly striven to differentiate himself from and control the matrix out of which he emerged. This masculine predisposition in the evolution of the Western mind, though largely unconscious, has been not only characteristic of that evolution, but essential to it.

For the evolution of the Western mind has been driven by a heroic impulse to forge an autonomous rational human self by separating it from the primordial unity with nature. The fundamental religious, scientific, and philosophical perspectives of Western culture have all been affected by this decisive masculinity—beginning four millennia ago with the great patriarchal nomadic conquests in Greece and the Levant over the ancient matriarchal cultures, and visible in the West's patriarchal religion from Judaism, its rationalist philosophy from Greece, its objectivist science from modern Europe. All of these have served the cause of evolving the autonomous human will and intellect: the transcendent self, the independent individual ego, the self-determining human being in its uniqueness, separateness, and freedom. But to do this, the masculine mind has repressed the feminine. Whether one sees this in the ancient Greek subjugation and revision of the pre-Hellenic matrifocal mythologies, in the Judaeo-Christian denial of the Great Mother Goddess, or in the Enlightenment's exalting of the coolly self-aware rational ego radically separate from a disenchanted external nature, the evolution of the Western mind has been founded on the repression of the feminine—on the repression of undifferentiated unitary consciousness, of the participation mystique with nature: a progressive denial of the anima mundi, of the soul of the world, of the community of being, of the all-pervading, of mystery and ambiguity, of imagination, emotion, instinct, body, nature, woman—of all that which the masculine has projectively identified as "other."

But this separation necessarily calls forth a longing for a reunion with that which has been lost—especially after the masculine heroic quest has been pressed to its utmost one-sided extreme in the consciousness of the late modern mind, which in its absolute isolation has appropriated to itself all conscious intelligence in the universe (man alone is a conscious intelligent being, the cosmos is blind and mechanistic, God is dead). Then man faces the existential crisis of being a solitary and mortal conscious ego thrown into an ultimately meaningless and unknowable universe. And he faces

the psychological and biological crisis of living in a world that has come to be shaped in such a way that it precisely matches his world view—i.e., in a man-made environment that is increasingly mechanistic, atomized, soulless, and self-destructive. The crisis of modern man is an essentially masculine crisis, and I believe that its resolution is already now occurring in the tremendous emergence of the feminine in our culture: visible not only in the rise of feminism, the growing empowerment of women, and the widespread opening up to feminine values by both men and women, and not only in the rapid burgeoning of women's scholarship and gender-sensitive perspectives in virtually every intellectual discipline, but also in the increasing sense of unity with the planet and all forms of nature on it, in the increasing awareness of the ecological and the growing reaction against political and corporate policies supporting the domination and exploitation of the environment, in the growing embrace of the human community, in the accelerating collapse of long-standing political and ideological barriers separating the world's peoples, in the deepening recognition of the value and necessity of partnership, pluralism, and the interplay of many perspectives. It is visible also in the widespread urge to reconnect with the body, the emotions, the unconscious, the imagination and intuition, in the new concern with the mystery of childbirth and the dignity of the maternal, in the growing recognition of an immanent intelligence in nature, in the broad popularity of the Gaia hypothesis. It can be seen in the increasing appreciation of indigenous and archaic cultural perspectives such as the Native American, African, and ancient European, in the new awareness of feminine perspectives of the divine, in the archaeological recovery of the Goddess tradition and the contemporary reemergence of Goddess worship, in the rise of Sophianic Judaeo-Christian theology and the papal declaration of the *Assumptio Mariae*, in the widely noted spontaneous upsurge of feminine archetypal phenomena in individual dreams and psychotherapy. And it is evident as well in the great wave of interest in the mythological perspective, in esoteric disciplines, in Eastern mysticism, in shamanism, in archetypal and transpersonal psychology, in hermeneutics and other non-objectivist epistemologies, in scientific theories of the holonomic universe, morphogenetic fields, dissipative structures, chaos theory, systems theory, the ecology of mind, the participatory universe—the list could go on and on. As Jung prophesied, an epochal shift is taking place in the contemporary psyche, a reconciliation between the two great polarities, a union of opposites: a *hieros gamos* (sacred marriage) between the long-dominant but now alienated masculine and the long-suppressed but now ascending feminine.

And this dramatic development is not just a compensation, not just a return of the repressed, as I believe this has all along been the underlying goal of Western intellectual and spiritual evolution. For the deepest passion of the Western mind has been to reunite with the ground of its being. The driving impulse of the West's

masculine consciousness has been its dialectical quest not only to realize itself, to forge its own autonomy, but also, finally, to recover its connection with the whole, to come to terms with the great feminine principle in life: to differentiate itself from but then rediscover and reunite with the feminine, with the mystery of life, of nature, of soul. And that reunion can now occur on a new and profoundly different level from that of the primordial unconscious unity, for the long evolution of human consciousness has prepared it to be capable at last of embracing the ground and matrix of its own being freely and consciously. The telos, the inner direction and goal, of the Western mind has been to reconnect with the cosmos in a mature participation mystique, to surrender itself freely and consciously in the embrace of a larger unity that preserves human autonomy while also transcending human alienation.

But to achieve this reintegration of the repressed feminine, the masculine must undergo a sacrifice, an ego death. The Western mind must be willing to open itself to a reality the nature of which could shatter its most established beliefs about itself and about the world. This is where the real act of heroism is going to be. A threshold must now be crossed, a threshold demanding a courageous act of faith, of imagination, of trust in a larger and more complex reality; a threshold, moreover, demanding an act of unflinching self-discernment. And this is the great challenge of our time, the evolutionary imperative for the masculine to see through and overcome its hubris and one-sidedness, to own its unconscious shadow, to choose to enter into a fundamentally new relationship of mutuality with the feminine in all its forms. The feminine then becomes not that which must be controlled, denied, and exploited, but rather fully acknowledged, respected, and responded to for itself. It is recognized: not the objectified "other," but rather source, goal, and immanent presence.

This is the great challenge, yet I believe it is one the Western mind has been slowly preparing itself to meet for its entire existence. I believe that the West's restless inner development and incessantly innovative masculine ordering of reality has been gradually leading, in an immensely long dialectical movement, toward a reconciliation with the lost feminine unity, toward a profound and many-leveled marriage of the masculine and feminine, a triumphant and healing reunion. And I consider that much of the conflict and confusion of our own era reflects the fact that this evolutionary drama may now be reaching its climactic stages. For our time is struggling to bring forth something fundamentally new in human history: We seem to be witnessing, suffering, the birth labor of a new reality, a new form of human existence, a "child" that would be the fruit of this great archetypal marriage, and that would bear within itself all its antecedents in a new form. I therefore would affirm those indispensable ideals expressed by the supporters of feminist, ecological, archaic, and other countercultural and multicultural perspectives. But I would also

wish to affirm those who have valued and sustained the central Western tradition, for I believe that this tradition—the entire trajectory from the Greek epic poets and Hebrew prophets on, the long intellectual and spiritual struggle from Socrates and Plato and Paul and Augustine to Galileo and Descartes and Kant and Freud—that this stupendous Western project should be seen as a necessary and noble part of a great dialectic, and not simply rejected as an imperialist-chauvinist plot. Not only has this tradition achieved that fundamental differentiation and autonomy of the human which alone could allow the possibility of such a larger synthesis, it has also painstakingly prepared the way for its own self-transcendence. Moreover, this tradition possesses resources, left behind and cut off by its own Promethean advance, that we have scarcely begun to integrate—and that, paradoxically, only the opening to the feminine will enable us to integrate. Each perspective, masculine and feminine, is here both affirmed and transcended, recognized as part of a larger whole; for each polarity requires the other for its fulfillment. And their synthesis leads to something beyond itself: It brings an unexpected opening to a larger reality that cannot be grasped before it arrives, because this new reality is itself a creative act.

But why has the pervasive masculinity of the Western intellectual and spiritual tradition suddenly become so apparent to us today, while it remained so invisible to almost every previous generation? I believe this is occurring only now because, as Hegel suggested, a civilization cannot become conscious of itself, cannot recognize its own significance, until it is so mature that it is approaching its own death.

Today we are experiencing something that looks very much like the death of modern man, indeed that looks very much like the death of Western man. Perhaps the end of "man" himself is at hand. But man is not a goal. Man is something that must be overcome—and fulfilled, in the embrace of the feminine.

The End

The Passion of the Western Mind

by Richard Tarnas

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