

THE FUTURE OF RELIGION

How Will Spirit Consciousness Be Given Social Shape  
In The Emerging Civilization?

By

Gene W. Marshall

## **CONTENTS**

**Preface**

**I A World In Transition**

**II The Healing Of Despair**

**III What Is Spirit?**

**IV The Shift In Religious Metaphors**

**V The Global Perspective On Spirit And Religion**

**VI The Recovery Of The Body**

**VII A Contemporary Map Of Spirit Consciousness**

**VIII Personal Vocation And Social Responsibility**

**IX The Role Of Religion In Society**

**X The Future Of Religious Practice In Personal Living**

**Afterword**

### Dedication

To Joseph Mathews, whose amazing creativity fathered my own, and to Joyce, whose insistence on personal intimacy reconstituted my whole life. And also, to the coming generations, especially to Wayne and David, Kathy and Teresa, Leslie and Jan.

## Preface 1

"Humanity faces a quantum leap forward. It faces the deepest social upheaval and creative restructuring of all time. Without clearly recognizing it, we are engaged in building a remarkable new civilization from the ground up." -- Alvin Toffler, The Third Wave<sup>1</sup>

Somewhere near the very center of the "quantum leap forward" that Toffler mentions is the shift which is the subject of this book. The shift in spirit consciousness and in religious form is one key part of this whole leap. Yet the spirit shift is probably the least understood of all the deep changes that are taking place. In part, this is due to the great diversity in religious practices around the globe, and the rather narrow range of meaningful religious experience which most of us have had. However, I believe it is possible for each of us, no matter what our religious heritage, to discern a broad global shift going on in the dimension of human life we may call "spirit" or which we can also call "religion" when we think of the external forms we give to our interior spirit consciousness. In other words, the arena of religion is facing a new future in much the same way as the arenas of economics or life style. In the light of this understanding, I have titled this book "The Future of Religion."

I have written this book for the secular person who is also in some sense religious and for the religious person who wants to be relevant in the secular world. This is both a sociological book and a personal book. It is about my own experience, my own human journey, my own participation in religious form. And yet it also aims to provide social perspective. It is about what is happening in spirit awareness and religion on the entire planet. It is written for the non-professional reader. And yet it attempts clarifications, distinctions,



## Preface 2

and broad perspectives that are in dialogue with the best academic minds. I am profoundly critical of most popular religious thought and practice. And yet I understand myself to be, above all else, a religious person. I have written this book for thousands of readers I do not know, and yet I have also written it for myself and my closest friends.

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About 67,000 Words

## THE FUTURE OF RELIGION

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### Chapter I

#### The World in Transition

"At the beginning of the last two decades of our century, we find ourselves in a state of profound, world-wide crisis. It is a complex, multidimensional crisis whose facets touch every aspect of our lives . . ."

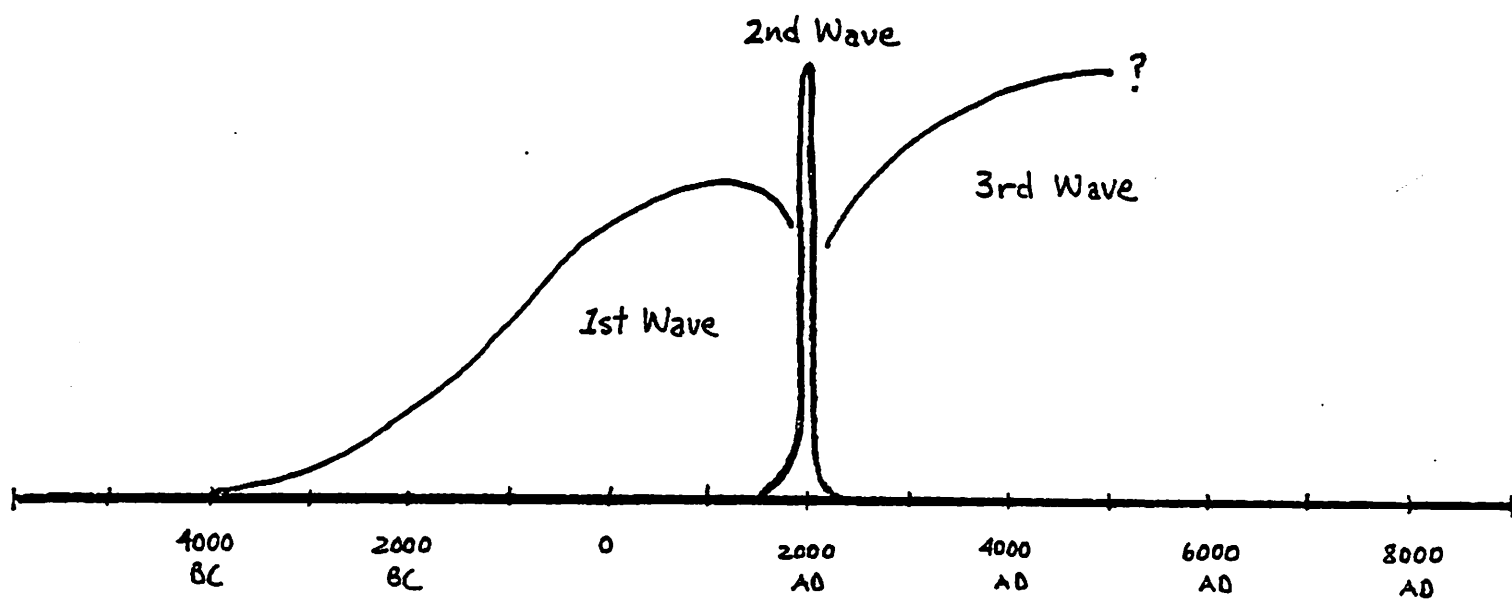
Fritjof Capra, The Turning Point<sup>1</sup>

In this introductory chapter, I want to describe briefly my own broad vision of the comprehensive future I see emerging. In the succeeding chapters, I want to focus upon what I will call "The Spirit Revolution."

I am dependent for my current social vision upon many sources. A number of years ago, E.F. Schumacher's Small is Beautiful deepened my vision in an important way. Then a sequence of great books began opening my eyes still further: Lewis Mumford's Transformations of Man, Theodore Roszak's Person/Planet, Alvin Toffler's The Third Wave, Daniel Yankelovich's New Rules, Buckminster Fuller's Critical Path, and in 1982, Fritjof Capra's The Turning Point, Kirkpatrick Sale's Human Scale, Hazel Henderson's The Politics of the Solar Age, and Murray Bookchin's The Ecology of Freedom.

# Illustration # 1

Page 2



And these are only the books which have changed my broad perspective. Many of the empty spaces in my social perspective have been filled in by authors like Marilyn Ferguson, Esther Harding, Irene Claremont de Castillejo, Betty Friedan, Gail Sheehy, Jonathan Schell, Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber, Jeremy Rifkin and others. It is a preposterous task to boil down what I have learned from such people into one chapter. But I need to share this quick overview of our times as a way of getting into my subject.

I have taken from Alvin Toffler the exciting picture of the three waves of civilization.<sup>2</sup> The first wave is basic agrarian civilization which had its earliest beginnings some centuries after 4000 B.C. and which still exists in all parts of the un-industrialized world. The second wave is our familiar industrial civilization, now several hundred years old, having totally conquered vast regions and made some impact on every part of the world. The shifts that characterize our present decades are related to the descent of these two waves and the rise of yet a third massive wave of civilization. While this third wave is rising to power in a matter of decades, I believe we are witnessing the birth of a civilizing energy and quality that will shape many centuries.

Drawing a picture of these three waves to the scale of time makes clear that the second wave is a very brief burst, a transitional era in the long sweep of history.

#### Illustration # 1

I also like certain aspects of this close-up picture you get from altering the scale.

#### Illustration # 2

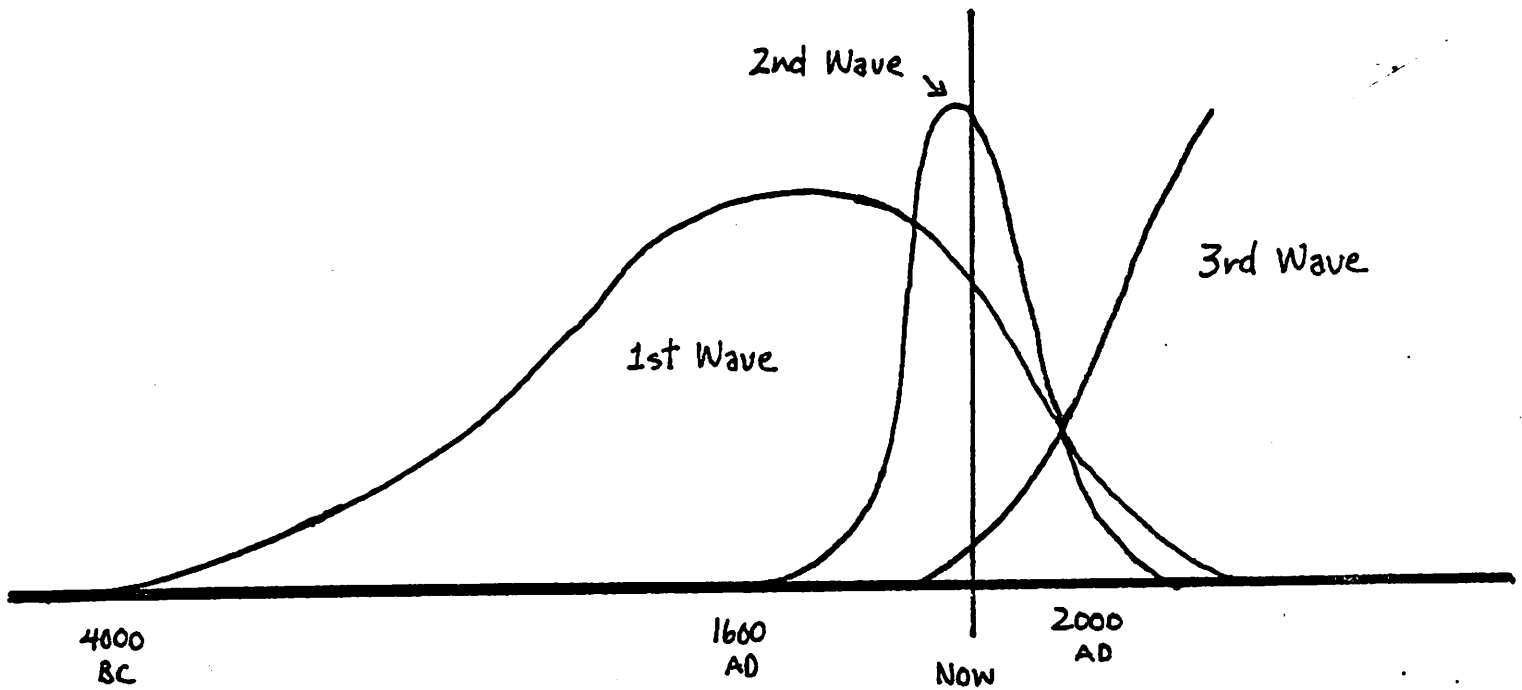
Toffler cannot be held responsible for all the following insights, for I am using Toffler's overall image and elaborating it from many other sources.

Civilization began when settled organizations of humanity larger than an agrarian village began to be prominent in that crescent of land from the Persian Gulf to the Nile Valley. The year 1600 A.D. stands for the time when Galileo, Bacon, Descartes, Newton, and others launched the scientific burst that made our immense industrial civilization possible. The diagram is drawn to show that we are now beyond the crest of the second wave. Perhaps 1973, when OPEC took charge of its oil, is the time of the crest. Until that time, growth was the character of civilization in North American and Europe (Japan and other places as well). In the late 1970's, many big cities began to lose population. Huge corporations began going broke. Braniff will not be the last. The American automobile industry is already struggling. What will happen when gasoline reaches \$2.00 and \$3.00 a gallon? There may be small recoveries from short term recessions but the overall trend for all second-wave institutions is down. The huge corporations have become quite unmanageable anyhow. Too many decisions are made by too few people. Everyone, including the top managers, have become attendants to huge runaway machinery and systems which pay little attention to what human beings inside and outside these corporations really need. And, even by their own "holy" standard of making money, they are becoming unsuccessful. If hidden and open public subsidies to many of our largest corporations were withdrawn, they would collapse very soon. Reorganizing, decentralizing, and imaginative computerizing will keep many large corporations going for a while. But the trend is down for any institution that is highly dependent on cheap and plentiful fossil fuels. This is a first fundamental characteristic of second-wave civilization.

(1) Cheap and plentiful fossil fuels is what second-wave civilization grew with! It is "made of oil" as Servan-Schreiber points out.<sup>3</sup> At its present

Illustration # 2

Page 2



rate of use, oil will be gravely depleted in 20 or 30 years. Coal could last 100 years or so, but if we use it properly so as to prevent the pollution of our air and erosion of the land, it will be more and more expensive. If everyone on earth used fossil fuels at the per capita rate of the USA, these dates would be greatly shortened. However you figure it, the expansion of second-wave civilization is over. Looking at this and other unique qualities of second-wave civilization gives us a springboard for sensing how radical this shift to the third wave really is.

(2) Energy guzzling machinery is a second characteristic of second-wave civilization. We are so dependent on this way of doing things that it is hard even to imagine what life will be like when we are living with low-energy high technology driven by solar energy (plus wind and water movement). Our history of technological success tempts us to think that someone will surely do something to fix things so we can at least continue with skyscrapers and automobiles. I personally thought at one time that nuclear power would be our savior. It is now obvious to me that nuclear power is too unsafe and too costly to play more than a very small part in our future. The danger has been dramatized well enough by Three-Mile Island and by a host of less well-publicized incidents covered over by military secrecy. But the extreme costliness of it is not understood well because we tend to not count the total cost: for example, the governmental cost of trying to keep plants safe--and even more important, the cost of disposing of nuclear wastes. As of yet, we do not have a safe method of disposal. Plutonium takes about 500,000 years to become harmless. We have no way to safely store this deadly poison for even a fraction of that time. The physicist, Fritjof Capra, dramatized the danger in this manner: "One pound, if uniformly distributed, could potentially induce lung cancer in every person on earth. Given these facts, it is truly frightening to know that each commercial

reactor produces four hundred to five hundred pounds of plutonium per year. Moreover, tons of plutonium are routinely transported along American highways and railroads and are flown into airports."<sup>4</sup> The thought of establishing enough nuclear energy plants to take the place of fossil fuels is simply mind-boggling on the waste disposal end. Buckminster Fuller suggest that there is only one good way to dispose of radioactive wastes: "Rocket them to the sun."<sup>5</sup> That is costly and rockets do fail. But a better way is not likely to be invented. We have met a limit that the pride of technological man is loathe to face. We are reduced to coming to terms with no more skyscrapers, airplanes, or automobiles as we now know them.

(3) The megalopolis, another second-wave phenomenon, was made possible by cheap and plentiful fossil fuels. Imperial Rome at its height probably only had 400,000 people. London was the first city to reach a million as late as 1810. Kirkpatrick Sale, in his book, Human Scale, says that all the crucial global cultural enrichment functions of a great city have been and can be done by cities of 50,000 to 100,000 people.<sup>6</sup> And any city larger than 100,000 becomes increasingly unmanageable and increasingly detrimental to the ecology of the planet. Chemical wastes, trash disposal, and air quality are already serious issues. These problems are all easily solvable in cities of a manageable human scale. And so are the problems of crime and democratic participation. Cities beyond a certain size exceed the scope of effective human responsibility.

Only a few years back I was giving lectures on the new world of giant cities connected by airlines. How proud I was of the grandeur of this. How certain I was of its future. I am now trying to visualize a world of quite small self-sufficient cities connected mostly by electronic communications. Probably we will learn to move our bodies around the world by solar power.



But the massive exchange of heavy goods may be amazingly reduced.

(4) Big is better! This mindset is so ground into us we find it hard to believe that small worker-owned corporations and small people-run cities are more efficient, more profitable, more humane in every way. Third-wave civilization will seem almost disappointing to those of us captured by that especially American love affair with bigness. "Size is the measure of excellence: in cars, tomatoes, cigarettes, houses, breasts, audiences, salaries, freeways, skyscrapers, muscles, children, penises, and fish."<sup>7</sup>

(5) Nation states are also a second-wave phenomenon that will soon be over. When Buckminster Fuller said this I was shocked.<sup>8</sup> I wrote it off, because I could not imagine a functioning world without nation states. However, when Kirkpatrick Sale finished documenting how nation states are already non-functional, already creating more problems than they solve--actually making themselves necessary by taking power away from the proper levels of responsibility--I began to give up the USA, Canada, England, Germany, France, and Japan to the scrap heap of obsolete institutions. I don't expect the readers of this brief overview to make such a sacrifice of old images without getting the data for themselves. But Sale's book, Human Scale, has converted me.<sup>9</sup> And I find this disturbing in a way I have not been disturbed for a long time. I have never been a super-patriot. I have been a strong opponent of nationalism. Yet the concepts of "nation building" and "national self-interest" and "national sovereignty" and "national responsibility" have played a big role in my mentality. I am sure that our cultural and historical identity with geographical areas will have some kind of continuity into the future, but trusting the institutions of the huge bureaucracy-bound nation state to solve anything at the local level or the global level is over for me. I see now that such trust has been ending for me (and many others) for some

time. All of us who have concerned ourselves with local development have had to fight the top-down mentality and build elaborate means to block it. And on the global level, the idiocy of a Falkland Island war or of the nuclear armaments race can be traced back to the nation-state mentality. The need of both Russia and the United States to be the most powerful, to be the most in control, to be the best, to be the most able to win whatever there is to win-- what is all this about? It is about the defensive self-assertion of dying forms of civilization. The nation state is not the solution. It is the problem.

What all this means for re-imagining some kind of workable world order is baffling. Huge multinational corporations are not some kind of hope, either. They also will pass away, at least in their current form. In third-wave civilization, there will have to be global networks of some kind between cities. There will have to be world-wide controls of some things. But to envision a third-wave future, we will have to get the mentality of nation states out of our heads entirely. The United Nations also has a short future. In the 21st century, there will be no nations to unite.

Some say that this is a pessimistic picture; but I have laid out the optimistic picture. The pessimistic picture is the scenario of what happens if we try to keep second-wave institutions growing. The most likely outcome of that is a nuclear holocaust reducing the life forms on the planet to insects and grass. (See Jonathan Schell's The Fate of the Earth).<sup>10</sup> Even if we avoid that, second-wave expansion will result in the irreparable pollution of the planet and the genocide of most of the earth's people by the few who manage to maintain control of the machinery of a global second-wave fascism. And this is no exaggeration! There is no humane second-wave future.

SO, IF WE ARE TO BUILD THIRD-WAVE CIVILIZATION, WHERE MUST WORK BEGIN?

Work can begin anywhere that the shift from second-wave to third-wave civilization is underway. What follows is my list of the most important places where radical change is already in process and needs to be completed. I will be looking at these shifts through the lens of the second-wave world. However, in the first-wave world, rural development needs to embrace these same shifts by skipping second-wave development and moving directly into third-wave forms and images of civilization building.

#### THE ECONOMIC SHIFTS:

1. The limitation and eventual elimination of nuclear weapons and nuclear power.
2. The limitation and transformation of all activities damaging the ecology of the planet.
3. The shift to solar energy.
4. The shift to low-energy human scale technology. This includes new ways of doing human functions in all fields: communications, transportation, architectural design, agricultural tools, household gadgets, etc.
5. The shift to human scale ecologically self-sufficient household and community living arrangements. This includes recycling wastes, use of urban land to grow vegetables, redesigned energy use systems, etc.
6. The shift to human scale organic farming and food marketing.
7. the shift to human scale holistic health services.

I am not going to write a long paragraph on each of these. Great chapters on each can be found in Sale's Human Scale and in Fritjof Capra's The Turning Point. I do want to make some special comments on Food and Health. These are two places where the individual person can begin to move, and increasing

numbers of people are motivated to do so. Not only do we have dire lacks of food and health care in most of the first-wave world, but also the quality of food and health care in the second-wave world is being seriously questioned. Huge supermarkets that ship tasteless tomatoes from the opposite side of the country and spend more of our money on packaging, additives, and preservatives than on food are not the hope of the future. The over-sugared, over-salted, over-greased, over-chemicalized, over-processed diet of most Americans does not kill as fast as starvation, but it is certainly bad enough to motivate more and more people to wrest their food management away from the big food syndicates and advertisers. A similar mood is rising toward big medicine. It is no longer certain that the good done by standard modern medicine clearly outweighs the damage that is also done. Health will be improved much more by our learning to care for ourselves through diet and exercise and other natural wisdoms than by greater dependence on the current M.D. and increasingly expensive health machinery.

#### THE POLITICAL SHIFTS

The political shifts are more hazy, at least for me. My one key insight is that we must not allow our imagination to be captured by the now-exiting political forms. The third-wave civilization will be very different.

Sale's book, *Human Scale*, gives us some clues about what human scale structures will need to look like.<sup>11</sup> I think the most important political shifts are those that organize the elemental parts of the new society and the relationships between them. Here is my list of the end products of such shifts:

1. Interactive direct-democracy neighborhoods of about 625 people.

This number is approximately the maximum number of people with whom one can maintain any sort of face-to-face relationship.

2. Self-sustaining communities of about 5,000 people.

3. Culturally enriching cities of 50,000 to 100,000 people.
4. Worker owned and controlled corporations of less than 625 people.
5. Actual work and planning groups of five to seven people. Groups larger than this cannot involve every person creatively.
6. Global Networks:
  - (a) for political order, and the protection of universal human rights.
  - (b) for the economic cycling of rare products, and for tragedy relief.
  - (c) for electronic and physical circulation of global information, art, books, entertainment, and other cultural exchanges between cities.

Perhaps the most local expression of this global network ties together a city and its nearby rural communities or ties together a large expanse of rural communities where no city exists.

The important characteristic of these networks is that they are non-hierarchical, non-bureaucratic, non-class-structured, non-authoritarian. In other words, they are non-second-wave and non-first-wave. Probably they will have a quality that Toffler called the "Matrix organization"-- that is, many small committees of five to seven people wired into an overall array of responsibilities that covers all the needs.<sup>12</sup> Although many of us sense we are already experiencing some aspects of this shift, we also realize that our imagination is at a boundary: third-wave polity is hard to envision.

#### THE CULTURAL SHIFTS

1. The intellectual revolution: The shift from the machine image of Newtonian science to the organic systems thinking consistent with the style of post-Einsteinian physics. Fritjof Capra's book, The Turning Point, contains excellent chapters on this. He spells out how this shift affects all aspects of thought and practice.<sup>13</sup>

Health care is a good example of a field still tyrannized by the machine image. The human body is treated by the established medical mindset as if it were a machine that is prone to need fixing. "Fixing" means technological intrusion with surgery or drugs. If the body is seen as not only a machine but also more -- an organic-psycho-spiritual whole in a planetary ecology -- then a whole new view of health and health care emerges.

This rethinking of basic reality is needed in every aspect of human life and social practice -- agriculture, economics, urban planning, psychology, and religion.

2. The shift in communications from mass media to creative personal access to a whole world of electronically stored information.
3. The shift in education from the large, impersonal, linear-learning fact-factories to existential, imaginal, personally creative, intensely intimate contact with wise human beings.
4. The shift in style from second-wave codes of living to the third-wave codes that Toffler describes. He shows how our style of life is moving beyond second-wave standardization, specialization, synchronization, concentration, maximization, and centralization.<sup>14</sup> Daniel Yankelovich, in his book, New Rules, also describes the shift in life style as a massive cultural change.<sup>15</sup> This includes the demand for meaningful and creative work. It includes new attitudes toward domestic life. It means flexibility. It means human scale patterns of living. And much more!
5. The shift to a new form of family life -- call it the volunteer commune, the shared household, the association of primal intimates. This will have many different forms, but one of the popular forms will likely be three or four units of parents and their children creating a workable replacement for the old extended family.

## 6. The feminine revolution.

Some extended comments are needed on this shift. This is not a minor change. It is a departure from an established pattern that is at least 5,000 years old. The patriarchal style of living and thinking dominates both the first and second waves of civilization. The affects of this long history will not be undone by a few more economic and political privileges for either well-educated or poverty-stricken women.

Sometimes feminists have talked as if this revolution were simply a matter of giving women the same status as men in the old Newtonian machinery, the old runaway bigness, the old over-rational society. A deeper view is that the rise of woman entails the rise of feminine motifs in the lives of both men and women and for the tone of society as a whole. The gifts of masculine rationality pioneered in the last twenty-five centuries are precious. But reason can and must be healed by being restored to its proper balance with spirit and heart, awe and feeling, contemplation and passion. This is the root meaning of the feminine revolution. The roles of both men and women are undergoing radical change. Every motif of consciousness will have a new position in the lives of both men and women. Men are becoming more able at gifts thought the province of women. Women are becoming more able at gifts thought the province of men. Both will come to respect very much more highly those gifts preserved by the women through the long centuries of patriarchy.

The fact that most of us have experienced several levels of unclarity on all this is a witness to the depth of this revolution. The pain of awareness and change in this area is very great because our self esteem and sense of personal identity is crucially at stake. We are not dealing here with a social minority. We are dealing with a transformation of the imaginal, emotional,

and sexual patterns of every man, woman and child on earth.

I want to suggest that it is understandable and appropriate that we are unclear about the extent to which men and women are biologically different and biologically the same. And it is also appropriate that we are unclear about the relative impacts of sociological conditioning and biological evolution on the responses and capabilities of men and women. What is important, I believe, is that we remain open to our real experience in all these arenas and that we remain open to the full depth of this primary revolution that has only just begun to happen to us.

Finally, it is important to note that a sociological approach to this revolution is not enough. As writers like Carl Jung and Anais Nin and many others have made clear, a deep psychological approach to the data of this change is also necessary to understand it or to assist individual people to participate in the full depths of it. I believe that the deepest levels of the feminine revolution overlap with the arena of spirit, symbolism and mythology. This is the subject of my last key cultural shift.

#### 7. The spirit revolution.

By this shift, I mean a highly fragmented multiplicity of movements in various kinds of quest: for depth, for fulfillment of life, for meaningful vocation, for contact with self, others and reality, for appropriation of mystery, for liberation or freedom, for finding a place for the expression of care, for realistic peace, certainty, and joy. Many different streams of endeavor flow into this river: religious renewal movements, transcultural religious dialogue and exploration, deeper experiments in psychology and counseling, various attempts at communities of nurture and communities of service, certain kinds of art, certain kinds of education and philosophy,



some social action movements, even some kinds of physical sport, dance, and so on. Our culture is alive with genuine spirit quest. There are also many charlatans and many arrogant groups who think their fragment is the whole of the spirit revolution.

In my opinion, none of the many truly great books I have been reading has done an adequate job of describing the spirit revolution. Nor have they illuminated its central importance in relation to all the other shifts. This is only to say that I experience a gap in the available literature that I hope to help fill with this book. There are good books like Theodore Roszak's Unfinished Animal which survey the plethora of religious and secular movements and identify some of their common emerging concerns.<sup>16</sup> But I want to do a different job. I want to define with great care that dimension of human consciousness I am calling "spirit." And I want to describe the major historical shifts that are taking place in the fundamental forms of religion. I want to paint a long historical perspective and yet also give each reader a way to experience more vividly his or her own personal experience of these awesome changes.

## Chapter II

### The Healing of Despair

"Just as the physician might say that there lives perhaps not one single man who is in perfect health, so one might say perhaps that there lives not one single man who after all is not to some extent in despair, in whose inmost parts there does not dwell a disquietude, a perturbation, a discord, an anxious dread of an unknown something, or of a something he does not even dare to make acquaintance with, . . . "

Søren Kierkegaard, The Sickness Unto Death<sup>1</sup>

In this first chapter on the "spirit revolution," I want to illustrate in everyday, secular, personal experience the "religious dimension of life." I will discuss the subject of despair as my initial effort to say what "spirit" is. Despair is a sickness in the spirit dimension of our lives.

On the feeling level, despair might be defined as a state of abject hopelessness. But such feelings are but clues to a more profound understanding of what despair is. Kierkegaard calls despair the sickness of the spirit. He defines it as a dynamic of disrelationship with my actual life. In despair, I am not willing to be myself. I am not willing to be the relationship with reality which I actually am. Since I cannot get rid of reality -- since I cannot get rid of myself -- I am doomed with having to be what I am unwilling to be. Hence, I despair..

When I was in high school, I came to believe the common notion that there were four ways to be a real man: football, basketball, baseball, and track. I went out for basketball. My senior year, my B-team coach said, "Marshall, you are as clumsy as a baby moose." This was an all-too-true summary of my

years of effort. I despaired. I hung around and smiled, but I internally hurt. Not because someone said something cruel to me -- I despaired because I did not want to be the person who was as awkward as I actually was. Many years later, when I realized that my awkward boyish nature was one of my best (and certainly not unmanly) qualities, I even found a new relaxation and ability on the basketball court. But as a senior in high school, had I not been doing well as a student, I might have considered suicide. That sounds silly to me now, but despair is not funny to the person experiencing it.

Later on in my life, I was an officer in the United States Army. A three-star general came to visit my post and inspected the building for which I was responsible. Several crucial discrepancies were found. The next day, my colonel called me into his office. "Captain Marshall," he said, "you are probably the most well-educated man on this base, but sometimes you remind me of an immature little boy." I managed not to cry until I got out of his office.

If what he had said to me had been totally wrong, I could have shrugged it off. I had come into the army primarily to experience things and grow up a bit. But his comment revealed a level of immaturity in my life that I was not willing to admit. So I was in despair over not willing to be the immature young man I actually was. I was in despair about being stuck with this situation, being the person I was, having no way to get away from the person I was, and hating it. My immaturity, and my hidden despair over it, had been my situation before the colonel spoke to me. But I had been unaware of it. I was smiling my way along in an unconscious daze, being relatively unaware of my despair. My becoming conscious of my despair was the first step toward its healing.

What are the basic dynamics of healing despair? I want to walk through the above story and use it to illustrate the steps that a person goes through

whenever despair comes to the surface and is healed.

1. The Intrusion of More Reality

The hearing of my despair began with an intrusion into my sense of reality. In this example, I was drifting along, smiling at the world, expecting to be approved, while not being fully aware of what I was doing. The colonel's words broke through my shell of unconsciousness.

2. The Feeling of Intrusion

I was ashamed, hurt, stunned and angry. I existed in a dull pain for many days after this. I felt sad. I did not want to cry. And at the same time, I did.

3. The Question of Living

I was raising some fresh questions. Who am I really? An immature kid? A budding intellectual? A dandy young officer? A slob? Stupid? What is my real potential?

4. The Defense of My Old Self

At the same time that these first three things were going on, I was refusing to experience them fully. I did not want to talk to anyone about it. I made up some elaborate excuses for myself. I rehearsed with myself all sorts of angry outcries at this colonel. "You're just picking on me because you know I am smarter than you. You never had a clear thought in your life. What do you know about me, anyhow?" I progressed on in my defensive thinking to -- "The army is just hell. I should never have stayed and come to Europe in the first place." And so on. My old self worked overtime to patch up its old sense of reality and not let in what was really happening.

5. The Awareness of My Despair

However, I could not put this out of my mind. this crude military colonel had insight into my life. I was somewhat unthorough. I was unaggressive.

How totally embarrassing! I didn't want to be this person! But I couldn't get loose. I hurt! Going for a walk -- sleep -- nothing helped.

#### 6. The Dawning of My Acceptance

At a moment like this, a person can do one of three things, according to Dostoevsky:

- (1) commit suicide
- (2) create a more durable illusion
- (3) admit the real situation and see that real life is still liveable.

It dawned on me that this third option was possible. "Nothing is really wrong here. I am just growing up. I came into the army to get some experience. Well, I'm getting it. My immaturity is just what my past has made of me. So what? My greater maturity lies ahead of me as something I can now begin to move on. The army is not hell. These officers are just doing their jobs. I am not a bad person, either. My life is really not hopeless."

#### 7. The Decision for Realistic Living

While my old self was still offended -- "Nonsense, this feels bad. I can't do this." -- I, nevertheless, moved forward. I accepted the fact that life could still be lived. I started giving up my panic over becoming different. I started trusting in the possibilities of a more realistic approach to the whole situation.

#### 8. The Transformation into a New Self

Almost without thinking about it, I began to change: step by step I began to add on a new self:

- (1) thoroughness
- (2) concentration to detail
- (3) aggressive leadership of my co-workers

And step by step I began to substract my old self:

- (1) leaning on my charm and wit
- (2) expecting to be treated gently no matter what
- (3) lazy, day-dreaming my way along

Some such transformation in my life really did begin to happen with that event and others like it. It seems to me that this same transformation is still happening. A change that began years ago is still moving in my life like a wave that has yet to reach the shore. Perhaps all our healing events are like that: the concrete transformation has a fairly dramatic beginning, but then becomes a process that takes a long time, probably the rest of our lives. The pangs of despair are healed, however, as soon as we have thoroughly consented to being in this process of change.

This was a fairly small and simple event in my life. I have many others that are much more consequential, painful, complex, and difficult to tell. But these eight dynamics, which I illustrated, apply to all my healing events. Perhaps you would like to examine in detail some significant event in your own life. If so, the following chart of categories and questions can allow you to do that.

Take any important or memorable event in your life -- one that resulted in some kind of change -- and write out your answers to the following questions. Doing so will unearth some old despair in your life -- one that may by now be rather well healed, or may still not be healed, or may be partially healed. You will certainly learn something about your life and about the healing of despair.

Healing, then or now, means bringing the despair out into the open and discerning the way in which a "wrong turn" of "not willing to be yourself"

COMPONENTS OF A HEALING EVENT		
Components		Reflection Questions
The SITUATION before THE CHANGE		Describe the situation at the time of the event. What was your sense of reality?
E N C O U N T E R	1. The INTRUSION of MORE REALITY	What happened that intruded on your sense of reality?
	2. The FEELING of INTRUSION	How did this make you feel?
	3. The QUESTIONS of LIVING	What questions did this raise for you?
	4. The DEFENSE of MY OLD SELF	How did you try to deny knowing what you knew?
R E S P O N S E	5. The AWARENESS of MY DESPAIR	How was this new reality inescapable? How did you fail in your attempts to deny it?
	6. The DAWNING of MY ACCEPTANCE	What are some of the ways you knew that this change was not only possible, but good?
	7. The DECISION for REALISTIC LIVING	What was the choice you made that most symbolized entering a new phase in your life?
	8. The TRANSFORMATION into MY NEW SELF	In choosing this new life, what aspects of your past way of life did you give up?  What new behaviors did you take up?

was taken. Healing also means realizing that your real life is your real hope.

### Illustration #3

Out of such personal experiences of despair and its healing, we can construct a very clear vision of the sickness and health of the spirit. Abstract ideas are not enough, each of us needs a personally rooted sense of such reality. Each of us needs to see that clear ideas about spirit, despair, and healing grow out of concrete living and illuminate that living.

In the next chapter, I will describe more fully that aspect of consciousness I am pointing to with the word "spirit." In this chapter, the description of despair provides an initial insight into spirit consciousness. Despair is spirit in the sense that it is the sickness of our spirit relationship with reality. If spirit is the depth dimension of the self, then despair is the result of my spirit capacity creating a "backing-away" from being this deepest realism.

Such definitions of spirit and despair are very important and must be understood in our own personal experience. Otherwise, everything I am trying to say in this chapter become trivialized -- like, for example, "Despair is a bad feeling, and healing is a trick we use to start feeling better." No, despair is a grim state of being, the loss of our fundamental happiness. Despair means the loss of the fullness of awe-filled reality. This is a strange loss; for it is the loss of that which cannot be gotten away from. Despair is what happens to us when we reduce reality to reality without awe. But reality without awe is an unreality. In despair, we have become committed to an unreality.



This would not be a problem to us if reality were not always in process of defeating our unreality. But reality is reality: sooner or later all unreality is defeated. Therefore, we despair.

Despair is also the doorway back to reality. And there is no other portal. To get from unreality to reality we must pass through the doorway of self-conscious despair. As Hermann Hesse said: "Despair is the result of each earnest attempt to go through life with virtue, justice and understanding and to fulfill their requirements. Children live on one side of despair, the awakened on the other side."<sup>2</sup>

Kierkegaard pointed out that even before we get to a self-conscious doorway of despair, we can be said to be in a state of despair -- unconscious despair. The state of our life can be despair precisely because we are living in an illusion; for all illusion is doomed. To paraphrase Kierkegaard, "How horrible to be deathly ill and not even know it. How horrible for time to run out on us without our ever becoming conscious of our sickness of despair, or of our essential capacity for spirit consciousness, or of our possible happiness in realistic living."

When despair becomes conscious and painfully real to us, then we are at the door. We are at the place where we can pass out of unreality into reality and therefore away from despair. While our living can be a real victory over despair, most of our actual lives are better characterized as a war between despair and wholesome spirit consciousness. However, despair can never win this war. Reality, and hence authentic spirit, always prevails in the end. This is why despair is despair -- poor underdog of underdogs -- losing every war even when winning a few battles.

If my overall vocation and the meaning of my entire life were to love

reality and to enjoy reality profoundly, and if I brought off such a vocation without blemish, then I would be unassailably and supremely free of despair. However theoretical, or at least extremely rare, such a life may be, no despair is possible in such a life. Every other program of life contains some measure of despair. Each of us, when and if we become conscious of having a choice, choose reality or choose despair telling ourselves it is not despair. Why not choose reality and live abundantly? This simple question is the doorway to both understanding all the religions of humankind and to building an effective critique of their perversions. In the fourth chapter, I will begin looking at that subject.

## Chapter III

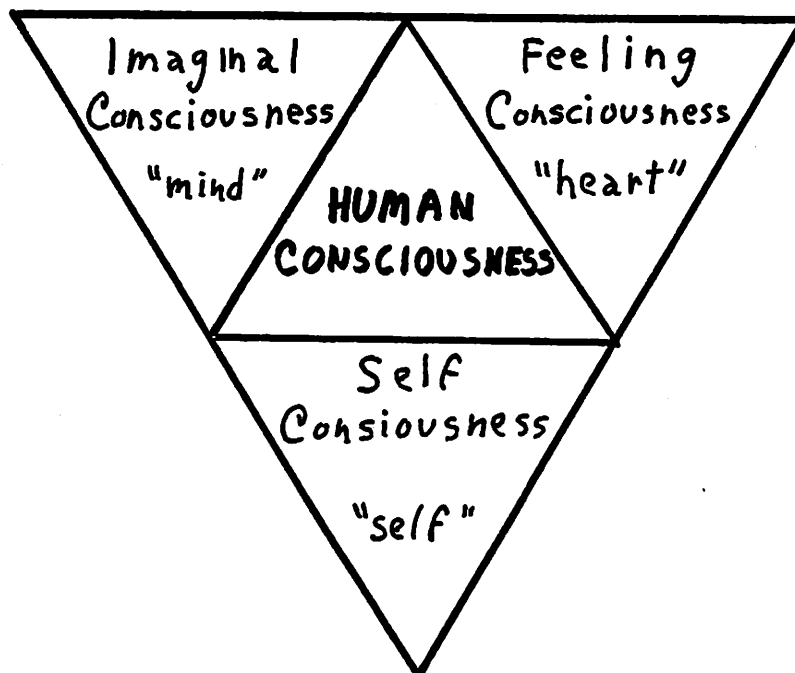
### What Is Spirit?

What is spirit? I am using the word "spirit" to mean the deepest level of human consciousness. And what is consciousness? Consciousness is the quality that most distinguishes the human being from all other forms of life. However "conscious" the higher forms of mammalian life may prove to be, human consciousness is a qualitative leap beyond them. Spirit is the depth dimension of this uniquely human quality.

Many of the functions of a human being go on unconsciously. Consciousness is an activity added to the already functioning activities of mind and body which in infancy are almost totally unconscious. Consciousness is the "plus factor" which renders human life a potentiality for lifelong deepening.

The most ancient discoveries about consciousness were shared in poetic forms. The mind (or imaginal consciousness as I will call it) was associated with the SUN and with male sun gods who blazed illumination, clarity, and practical power. The heart (or feeling consciousness as I will call it) was associated with the MOON and with female goddesses who embodied the softer light of intuitive sensitivity, emotional contact, and physical desire. This polarity of mind and heart was one of the most ancient insights into the structure of human consciousness.

Much later, humankind discovered the "soul" or "self", as modern thinkers tend to call it. The reality of the self did not become fully conscious for human beings until after about 1000 B.C. Consciousness of the self broke loose in many places on the planet. In India, the Upanishads (1000-700 B.C.) express such awareness. Later in the sixth century B.C., Gautama, the Buddha enriched India on the consciousness of the self, and Confucius and Lao Tzu



awakened China. These breakthroughs spread throughout Asia in many combinations of religious creativity. In the Mediterranean and Middle Eastern areas, consciousness of the self was awakened (in Persia) by Zoroaster (perhaps before 600 B.C.) and by the major prophets of Israel and Judah (850-500 B.C.) and by the philosophers and playwrights of classical Greece (600-300 B.C.). In their different ways all these movements of civilization, philosophy, and religion discovered the wonder of the individual self, including what I will call the "spirit dimension of the self."

So here is an initial map of human consciousness:

#### Illustration #4

Spirit consciousness is the deepest aspect of the self. The other aspects of the self can be summarized under these titles: "perception" and "will." Perception is the "eye" of the self, the "seeing reality" or awareness functions of the self. Will is the active response or intentionality functions of the self. Spirit must be distinguished from both of these, even though spirit could be shown to deepen our awareness and reshape our will. Spirit is experienced as an alien force, upsetting and transforming our existing selfhood, our current sense of reality, our current arrangements of willing. Spirit means those deepest states of being which the fullness of reality occasions in the enigmatic foundations of our selfhood.

Here is an expanded map of human consciousness, including these three aspects of the self:

#### Illustration #5

Human history has taken a journey from initial awarenesses of the upper parts of this map down into the depths of spirit consciousness. And each individual person can take this same journey. If this triangular drawing is seen as a map of the entire system of consciousness, then I can use this map as a guide for describing a journey of self-discovery. The following will be my sequence of steps on this journey:

- Step one: The discovery of "mind" or imaginal consciousness
- Step two: The discovery of "heart" or feeling consciousness
- Step three: The discovery of consciousnesses itself
- Step four: The discovery of spirit consciousness

Spirit consciousness will be my main concern, but I want to describe these other aspects of consciousness in order to illuminate what spirit is. One of my overall aims here is to ground the word "spirit" in contemporary philosophical and psychological wisdom. I will do this not by surveying many schools of thought, but by presenting a brief overview of what I have learned from many sources. I will present this overview as a journey into the depths of consciousness.

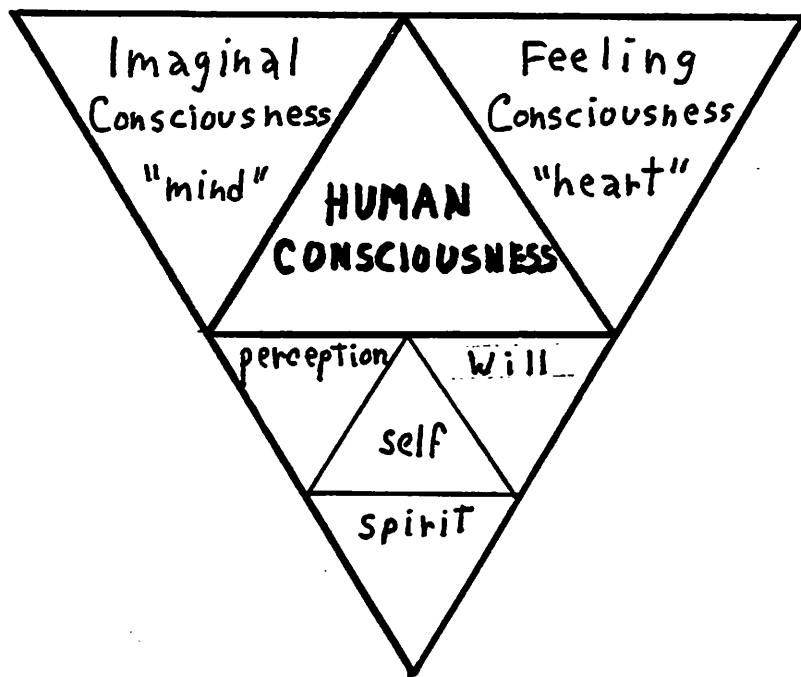
#### STEP ONE: THE DISCOVERY OF "MIND" OR IMAGINAL CONSCIOUSNESS

"All swirl about me like a river, dancing and whirling; faces tumble like water and chaos howls.

"But I, the Mind, continue to ascend patiently, manfully, sober in the vertigo. That I may not stumble and fall, I erect landmarks over this vertigo; I sling bridges, open roads, and build over the abyss. . .

"I impose order on disorder and give a face -- my face -- to chaos."

Nikos Kazantzakis, The Saviors of God<sup>1</sup>



Step one is about what we sometimes call "an intellectual awakening." But by this I mean something more than acquiring mental skills like reading or computer programming. I mean becoming conscious of our own mental processes. I mean sensing the force of my own imagination -- becoming aware of my own image-making process -- beginning to assume responsibility for the images that govern my behavior.

What do I mean by "images?" I don't mean words or even linguistic ideas. I mean the kind of concrete pictures that appear in our dreams. I mean the kind of emotion-packed replicas of living that an artist is trying to create. Images are at the roots of all our mental life. Our environment is first presented to our minds through concrete images. Words or ideas are abstractions from these ordinary sensory images. Language is like a filing system for ordering all our images. It is as if we have put many specific pictures of trees into one file folder and then labeled the folder "tree."

Images are pictures that help us order our practical behavior. For example, we have a picture in our minds about which side of the street cars drive down. When stepping off the curb to cross the street, we almost automatically look first to the left. Winston Churchill, on one of his visits to America, is said to have stepped off a curb after having looked only to the right. He was hit by a bicycle coming from his left. Since cars and bicycles drive down the left side of the street in England, Churchill's images for crossing the street in North America were inadequate.

Not only our simplest behaviors are ordered by images, but also our most comprehensive scientific and historical knowledge is composed of images that order our behavior. If our picture of history is "inevitable progress" then we behave as if we do not need to do anything to assure a wholesome future.



If, however, we see both doom and progress as options in the nature of history, we will probably struggle with what choices lead to progress and avoid doom. Whatever our images of the flow of history may be, they affect our practical behavior.

A child learns images from the surrounding culture before he is conscious that there is such a thing as images. And his behavior is determined by those images. Life is perceived through those images and choices are made with the aid of those images. All this goes on quite unconsciously for a person until that fateful day when the inherited images become unsatisfactory to such an extent that one is motivated to undergo the disturbing experience of giving up old images and embracing new ones.

For example, part of the struggle of adolescence is giving up images that were appropriate to childhood but are no longer appropriate for adulthood. Being a child is a total way of life with roles to play that are very different from adulthood. Making this shift requires a revolution in most of a person's images of self and world.

Such shifts in our operational images take place in our adult life as well. For example, I used to think that being distant and aloof was what it meant to be strong. I thought being close to people, especially being vulnerable with them, was weak. So I feared it. I feared being weak. I feared being mistreated by the strong. I barely let myself know how much I longed for at least a few close relationships. Then I began to look at my life through a new image: being strong means having the courage to risk being vulnerable with people I want to be close to. Being strong means admitting when I do not know something. Being strong means sharing my fears and despondencies and doubts and sadness and warmth with others. This new image changed

my behavior, but not without a struggle. I was good at acting out of the image of "Be strong, be aloof." I found it frightening (and still do) to retire this old image that has served me so well for so many years. And I have also found it a daring adventure to embrace the new image, "Be strong, risk being vulnerable," an image that I have not yet had much experience using.

Small image shifts may not seem too upsetting. But when this shifting of images takes place in the highly-valued and long-practiced habits of my life, the earth seems to quake, the whole scene becomes frightening and unfamiliar. I experience a moment of radical choice: whether to turn back into the old images, or risk an unknown future with images I can hardly grasp, much less trust. At this point, it is easy to believe that the old images are more true than the new -- even though I know, at some level of my consciousness, that the old images are inadequate, and that the new images are more adequate to grasp what is actually going on, and hence more adequate to help me deal with my life.

The deepest level of this awakening occurs when I come to see that even my new images are not synonymous with the truth. They may be better, but there is no best. That is, there are no images in which I can rest secure forever. I am in a life in which images, like everything else, are finite. My images undergo old age and death. If I cling fast to my old images, my contact with living reality will decay with the decaying images. This awareness means that I begin to treat all my images with a certain detachment. My most passionate beliefs become provisional tools for this particular year or month or day of living. At any moment I may cast them aside and pick up other stronger tools to work with.

Seeing all my images, even my most precious beliefs, as functional tools

created by human beings and chosen by me for my purposes places a very powerful force in my hands. When this intellectual awakening has happened to me, my mind is no longer merely a powerful collection of my cultural past. It becomes a locus of creativity for everyone's cultural future. Every awake person can create new forms, not just a few creative individuals. Even if the creativity of some is more amazing, every awake person re-creates the forms he gets from others. When this discovery of imaginal consciousness has begun, the tyranny of existing culture over the awakening person is ending.

And it is a matter of utmost importance that the individual in our modern societies become a creative force in the building of new images for the whole global evolution of human kind. We live in a time when new images are replacing the old images of our societies at a rapid rate of speed. Chapter One contains many examples of this. Taking responsibility for our own image changes is one essential part of becoming deeply conscious.

#### STEP TWO: THE DISCOVERY OF "HEART" OR FEELING CONSCIOUSNESS

"Let us unite, let us hold each other tightly, let us merge our hearts, let us create-- so long as the warmth of this earth endures, so long as no earthquakes, cataclysms, icebergs or comets come to destroy us -- let us create for Earth a brain and a heart, let us give a human meaning to the superhuman struggle."

Nikos Kazantzakis, The Saviors of God<sup>2</sup>

Step two is about feelings, about consciousness of feelings. This is the arena of consciousness upon which most of the edge therapies concentrate their attention. Some movements of eastern religion have also concentrated on stopping the mind and experiencing the feelings of the human body. Western civilization has quite obviously overemphasized the mind. It is difficult for

many westerners to believe that body-consciousness is anywhere near as serious a subject as mind-consciousness. I am taking the view that both of them are equally important and that a proper balance between them is crucial to the health of each.

Consciousness of our feelings is frequently restricted by our images. Often, we feel only what our thoughts allow us to feel, and the rest of our feelings are either suppressed or confused in some way. As a result, what we really and fully feel is seldom altogether conscious to us. When we are asked, "How do you feel right now?", we are often halting in our response; we may feel a little threatened even to be asked; and we often say something quite inaccurate about our feelings.

For example, my images of who I am might include: "I am a quiet, calm and self-controlled person." then, when I become deeply afraid, my images do not allow room for the fullness of my fear to become conscious or active in my expression and behavior. Someone else may see how afraid I am, but I am not accurately aware of it. I may admit to some fear, but not to the full intensity of it. I might say in a soft voice, "This is scary", when it would be more accurate for me to say, "I'm terrified!", in a full trembling voice. This "cut-back" expression is part of an overall behavior pattern I use to cut back my consciousness of my feelings insofar as those feelings don't fit into my images of what I think I am like or ought to be like. In addition to cutting back with my expression of my feelings I also may cut back with my total body activity. I keep my body from trembling or in any way looking afraid. Or if I am excited, I don't show it with vigorous movement, but behave in a blase manner. I may also "cut back" my feelings by being unclear about them. I give far-fetched explanations of why I am or am not afraid or excited or whatever. Perhaps I am lonely and I think I am hungry.

The total effect of my various ways of being unclear, unexpressive and inactive is that I don't fully feel my feelings and I don't make full contact with the other human beings who are associating with me. That is, I am not conscious of the feelings in my own body or of how my body is affecting others and being affected by them. I am "out-of-touch", as we say, with other human beings and "out-of-touch" with a dimension of my own being. All of this "out-of-touch" unconsciousness can go on at the same time that I am very conscious in other ways. A highly conscious social reformer, for example, can be disastrously inept in communicating immediate feelings to a spouse or a friend.

Obviously some people have intense contact with their feelings but relatively low consciousness about many of their operating images. Nevertheless, some imaginal awareness is a prerequisite to accurate feeling consciousness. For by feeling consciousness I do not mean the immediate expressive behavior of childhood. Children may be, in one sense, in touch with their feelings; but in another sense they are not yet consciously in touch with anything in their lives. It is true that in the process of becoming more conscious a child may begin using images that separate him from parts of his bodily awareness that he or she naturally possessed as a child. But such phenomena do not indicate that children have better feeling consciousness than adults. Children have very little consciousness at all. Adults, as a rule, are more conscious even though their consciousness may be unbalanced or twisted in such a way as to obscure their natural bodily experiences, including those experiences they were open to as a child. This reflection on childhood helps me to say more clearly what I mean by feeling consciousness. I mean a form of consciousness that exists alongside imaginal consciousness and functioning in constant dialogue with it. Any revolt against imaginal consciousness and

structured society in the name of feeling consciousness and pristine childhood is naive. For both adults and children, an appreciation of language and logic need not mean a depreciation of feelings (or vice versa). The step of being conscious of our feelings includes learning to appreciate a deep tension in our human make-up: the tension between feeling consciousness and imaginal consciousness.

Why are feelings important? Feelings are our link with reality. Touch, taste, smell, hearing and sight are all ways that the body feels the world that is exterior to the body. Pain, pleasure, desire, are all ways that the body feels the functioning that goes on within the body itself. Emotions are ways that the body registers the challenges of the environment to the conscious self, and emotions also accompany the self's responses. My loss of contact with any of these feelings means a loss of contact with what is going on around me and within me. The feelings are the initial mediators of reality. Images and words are secondary: they give meaning and order to the sensations of the body. Without the functioning of images and language, the body's sensitivities to reality would be of no avail. But the converse is also true: images and language are a world of total unreality unless they are grounded in reality as it is being felt by the body. My body -- leaning up against a table -- sitting in a chair -- is always in touch with reality. It is I myself who gets out-of-touch with my body and therefore out-of-touch with the reality that my body is in touch with.

It is of course true that the feeling processes of the body can become dysfunctional and therefore undependable guides to reality. Poor eyesight and hearing are one kind of example. Chemical imbalances that result in psychedelic trips or enduring schizophrenia are another kind of example. Still a

third kind of impairment of our feeling processes can result from our use of various rationally constructed patterns to suppress feelings from consciousness. Not only sexual desire, but also fear, anger, humiliation, sorrow, and many other feelings have been thought to be bad, weak, unmanly, unwomanly, crass and many other negative judgements. Such decisions by consciousness to use thoughts to suppress feelings can become ongoing rigid attitudes in a particular person's living. Such attitudes shield me from being conscious of my feelings and therefore shield me from my experience of reality as well. In extreme cases, persons lose contact with reality altogether and live in a world of rigid rational patterns and behaviors. To some extent we all lose contact with reality any time our imaginal patterns no longer bend and adapt to the changing flow of experience and to the changing flow of feelings which accompany all our actual experience.

Obviously, sorting out reality from unreality goes on all our lives. The cruciality of feeling consciousness is this: feelings are always messages from reality to our consciousness. It is our consciousness that gets mixed up about our feelings and about everything else. Losing touch with reality is a common experience, but our feelings and our marvelous bodies which produce them should not be blamed for our tours into unreality. Our bodies, through our feelings, are doing their best to keep us in touch with reality. It is up to the conscious "I" to learn to listen and interpret properly the wisdoms of the body. Literally thousands of books are being written on this subject. Useful clarity in this arena is a crucial edge in the whole progress of civilization.

### STEP THREE: THE DISCOVERY OF CONSCIOUSNESS ITSELF

"THE PERCEIVED WORLD is the always presupposed foundation of all rationality, all value and all existence. This thesis does not destroy either rationality or the absolute. It only tries to bring them down to earth."

Maurice Merleau-Ponty, The Primacy of Perception<sup>3</sup>

Step three on our brief journey into the deeps of consciousness is about the "I", the ego, the conscious center of attention and intention. If consciousness of reality is pictured as a human being sitting on a chair looking out the window at reality, then consciousness of consciousness is like that same person looking in a mirror and seeing himself sitting on a chair looking out the window. The gaze of consciousness upon consciousness itself is never quite direct; it requires mirrors, just as my eyes require mirrors to see themselves. The mirrors for seeing myself are found somehow in the images of the mind, in the feelings of the body, and in the behavior of the whole person. Without being able to explain fully how I do it, I see myself. I see that I am the ongoing functions of seeing and willing. I perceive reality and I decide to act upon reality. I am perceiving. I am willing.

Here is a story to illustrate what I mean by perceiving. On a certain island in the middle of an imaginary ocean lives an unusual spider who builds intricate webs across a mile-wide canyon. How the creature does it, no one knows. If this spider represents human perception, then the web is rational pattern spun out by the spider. And the canyon is the abyss of reality.

If the canyon of reality is as big as the universe, the spider web of reason is spread very thin over the abyss of the unknown. Rational order is a spider web reaching out as far as radio telescopes can see, and down into things as far as a particle accelerator can discriminate. Reality is a mystery



which reaches beyond our most "far out" experience. And all the ordered insight we do have is surrounded by more empty space than any web over a canyon. Only by clinging to the web can perception avoid falling into the canyon of reality.

Furthermore, the spider web was made by the human spider (lots of them). Different cultures of humankind make the webs differently. The fact that webs are similar is due to the fact that human minds made them all over the same canyon. So the spider webs do tell you something about the canyon and something about the human spider. But to say that the mental web is reality, is to overlook the canyon and the mysterious factor called perception. The web of reason is a product of consciousness using the tool of the mind to express its conscious relation to the canyon of reality.

The irrational is experienced by perceptive consciousness through reason -- through the very reason which consciousness itself has built. The constant rebuilding of reason is a crucial project of consciousness, for without reason, consciousness cannot be conscious of the canyon of reality at all. The canyon of reality is consciously experienced only as it affirms or negates the spider web of reason. Consciousness extends its knowledge of the canyon of reality by building the spider web into firmer contact with the canyon. Sometimes whole pieces of web that are well-filled-in come unattached from the canyon walls and drift around in the air. We forget what part of the canyon these pieces of web were created to map. These floating pieces are dead ideas. They are dead because consciousness is no longer passionate about them as a means of being conscious of the canyon.

It is reality that I see. But it is I who see reality. Both ends of this relationship have to be examined to grasp what perception is. Even our most faulty seeing is still some experience of reality. And our most realistic

perceptions are nevertheless shaped by our own states of relatedness to reality and, hence, by all the finite factors involved. This journey of seeing reality is without any end point. There is always more reality to be seen. And there is always more sight to become.

In perception, I see reality, even though the reality I see is seen from my perspective. Reality is something objective to me and my perspective. Reality is a challenge to my perspective. Reality is capable of occasioning a transformation of me and my perspective. Reality is that "not I" which is encountering the "I" in the moment of conscious perception. The "not I" may be a rock or a tree. Or the "not I" may be a feeling or an image; for each feeling or image is part of reality. My feelings and images appear to my conscious center as empirical objects, that is, "not I".

Feelings and images are also means that my consciousness uses in order to perceive reality. Without the mediation of feelings and images, I would have no connection to reality. Perception of reality is done through my images and through my feelings. For example, when I say, "I see that you are sad," I may not feel sad; yet my feelings tell me something. I see your sadness through my feelings occasioned by your presence. I also see the expression on your face. My imagination interprets it as appropriate to sadness. But facial expressions are not what I see. I see sadness. I am aware of the sad person. I am affected by your presence.

It does not take away from this experience of seeing to say that I may come to see more and therefore see that previously I was not seeing as fully as I am now. It may happen that I am mistaken about your sadness. Perhaps you are not sad at all, but only acting. But then, I may see that you are acting. I may say, "That is not sadness, you are just putting on."

Perception, as a journey of consciousness, is the training of our conscious gaze to see reality: (1) to see reality outside my skin, (2) to see reality inside my skin, and (3) to see reality inside another person's skin. Seeing the validity of all three of these realms of reality will require us to see reality as something different than the "facts" of scientific method.<sup>4</sup>

The journey of perceptive consciousness goes on with the aid of science, and it also goes on alongside science through art, intuition, human intimacy and the various awarenesses of the body. The full nature of perception is as boundless as any aspect of human consciousness.

Consciousness is not only seeing reality; it is also willing. Consciousness is more than passive awareness. It is also an active energy which chooses, decides and creates effects. Consciousness is intentionality. Unintentional processes are not of the nature of consciousness. We sometimes call them "unconscious". Unconscious can refer to automatic processes like the heartbeat. Unconscious can also point to a lack of attention. And unconsciousness can mean a negative intent of consciousness -- like suppression -- a choice or habit of choices to be unconscious of something of which I am at least partially conscious. Intentionality is consciousness in action.

The nature of life is constant activity. Intentionality is an activity added to all the other activities of living. For example, breathing goes on without the activity of the conscious will, but the will can hold the breath or use it for singing. Life never waits on the conscious will to act. Life is activity in continuous motion. The conscious will must leap up and add its activity to the already proceeding activity. Not only the body but also the mind is in constant motion. As consciousness sleeps, the feelings of the body are given form by the mind in dreams of which we may or may not become conscious. If we do become conscious of a dream, then we can add the conscious activity of

finding meaning in the dream to the unconscious activity of dreaming. The conscious will is an acting capacity that can reinforce, override or effect shifts in the ever-acting functions of mind and body. Here are some examples:

Focused attention. Perception goes on perceiving whether the conscious will focuses attention or not. In the midst of this ongoing awareness, the conscious will can "pay attention" to this idea or that sensory impression. This intensifies perception. Perception becomes active through the power of consciousness to focus attention. This insight supports how true it is to say that perception and intentionality are two sides of the same reality -- the conscious self.

Physical control is the power of the conscious will over the muscles of the body. This power is great but not absolute, as any exhausted athlete knows. Nevertheless, the power of the conscious will over the action of the body is amazing.

Intentional commitment is the power of the conscious will to shape the overall direction of a person's life. We often describe the power of intentionality as drive overagainst passivity. We may also describe it as discipline overagainst scatteredness. A commitment is more than a desire or a want. It is a choice for a specific direction and an ongoing choosing to maintain that direction over a period of time. This commitment may be in agreement with certain desires or wants and it may be opposed to other desires or wants. In either case, commitment is a conscious power of the will, an activity added to these other propelling forces. My specific set of commitments comprise my specific personhood. I am this matrix of commitments. A shift in my commitments shifts who I am.

I am my intentions and I am my perceptions. My immediate processes of perceiving and willing grow out of the fact that I have become a specific

personality. I have a structure, a history, a future to my personal selfhood. I am an entity composed of all the perceptions and choices that I have participated in throughout my past and up to this present moment. I am in this present moment participating in and forging out perceptions and choices that will add to my personality still further structure, history, and qualities that I will then be in my future. I am a personality in process of becoming.

What determines the "I" that I will become next? My society, my biology, these certainly are determining factors in my life. But also, I experience that I myself am a determining factor in what I become. This awareness of an interior freedom that is somehow not determined by the personality that I now am is an awareness of a still deeper "I" -- the spirit self.

#### STEP FOUR: THE DISCOVERY OF SPIRIT CONSCIOUSNESS

" . . we are dealing with something for which there is only one appropriate expression, 'mysterium tremendum'."

"Of modern languages, English has the words 'awe', 'awful', which in their deeper and most special sense approximate closely to our meaning."

"It first begins to stir in the feeling of 'something uncanny', 'eerie', or 'weird'. It is this feeling which, emerging in the mind of primeval man, forms the starting point for the entire religious development in history."

"For 'shuddering' is something more than 'natural', ordinary fear. It implies that the mysterious is already beginning to loom before the mind, to touch the feelings."

Rudolf Otto, The Idea of the Holy, Chapter Four<sup>5</sup>

" . . it has at the same time another aspect, in which it shows itself as something uniquely attractive and fascinating.

"These two qualities, the daunting and fascinating, now combine in a strange harmony of contrasts, and the resultant dual character of the numinous consciousness . . . is at once the strangest and most noteworthy phenomenon in the whole history of religion. . . . The 'mystery' is for him not merely something to be wondered at but something that entrances him; and beside that in it which bewilders and confounds, he feels a something that captivates and transports him with a strange ravishment, rising often enough to the pitch of dizzy intoxication; . . . "

The Idea of the Holy, Chapter Six<sup>6</sup>

These poetic excerpts from Otto's careful analysis of religious experience illustrate what I mean by spirit consciousness. Spirit consciousness occurs when my ordinary sense of reality is undermined by reality itself and I am catapulted into a sense of reality that is at once dreadful and fascinating.

Let me give a simple example. I was driving a car alone at night. A bird flew up and smashed into my windshield. I was startled and shocked. A little further on, an opossum, blinded by my headlights, stood in the middle of the road until my bumper smashed him. Now I was trembling. I imagined my own body being smashed. It was as if death appeared before me like a stone wall across the road. I was facing an irresistible force. As I traveled on down the road, I felt stunned, numb with a dull terror, aware of my helplessness before the overwhelming power of reality. I would, sooner or later, be smashed out of life just like a bird, just like an opossum. And I was not in control of the place or the time.

So what is spirit consciousness?

It is an experience in which the ordinary flow of our life is interrupted by a strong awareness attended by feelings of dread and fascination and calling upon new resources for courageous living. Any such state-of-being-conscious-of-reality I will call a state of being in awe. When I am experiencing awe I can discern these three closely-related processes going on in my life:

- 1) a powerful "alien" image in my mental processes is cutting through my otherwise ordinary flow of thought,
- 2) a feeling of dread and also of fascination is interrupting my otherwise ordinary flow of feeling,
- and 3) insofar as I pay attention and do not flee from the experience, a new resolve in my will is taking place, a new courage for realistic awareness and living is coming into being.

There are many types of awe-experience. The realm of spirit-consciousness is like a large planet. Two of the continents on this planet might be called Oblivion and Resurgence. The confrontation with my own death is an example of an oblivion experience. Resurgence is a land that can be visited on the other side of the land of oblivion.

These two types of awe occur in a story I heard about a man who fell out of an airplane and lived to tell about it. He first experienced oblivion: "No, no, no, this can't be happening to me!" But just before he hit the ground he began experiencing resurgence: "How wonder-filled and alive I am!" He began to luxuriate in the aliveness of immediate living in the full face of the mystery he was facing. Then when he hit some soft ground and somehow lived, he was awe-struck again by the wonder of going on with the ordinary task of living after having so totally experienced detachment from it.

Let me use the old story about Noah and the flood to illustrate one more time these two lands of awe: Oblivion and Resurgence. First, Noah and his

family had to leave behind everything and board the boat. However bad Noah's world may have been, it must have been rocking to leave it. It was the only past he knew. Noah had to be awe-struck by such a total destruction. This was the awe of oblivion. Then after 40 days the boat was set back down on the earth. And what a scene that must have been! Dead animals and dead human beings all over the place, mud and rotting trees, and there was no one but Noah and his family to clean up the mess and start life on a new course. At that point, awe occurred again -- a new sort of awe -- the awe of forging a new human world. This was the awe of resurgence.

In the broad history of our century, we have had plenty of occasions for the experience of oblivion: two world wars, a world-wide depression, the dropping of atomic bombs, the threat of nuclear holocaust. And we may also have experienced the passionate awe of resurgence in the strong movements for new life: the black revolution in America, the revolt and rise of other non-white peoples, the youth movements, the women's movements, to name only a few. We have only begun to experience the full awe of oblivion in the death of second-wave civilization or the full awe of resurgence in the rise of third-wave civilization.

The awe of resurgence includes the experience of elemental freedom, care and passion for living. It includes the experience of extreme vulnerability in constructing for ourselves a whole new self, a whole new way of life. It includes the audacity of building a new social world for ourselves and others. Such newness and risky creativity is dreadful but also fascinating to the extent of profound excitement.

Spirit consciousness, both as oblivion and as resurgence, has to do with changing who I am, changing the entity that was "me" to a new "me". This is why spirit consciousness is frightening. Basic change in my life is very



frightening. It may be refreshing to leave an old self and take up a new self. But I don't know that beforehand. All I know in the midst of a time of deep change is that all I have been is dying! And that is terrifying. I also know that a new self is new, that is, unfamiliar! "Perhaps the old secure self is best, even if it is obsolete. Obsolete comfort is perhaps better than wild new beginning." In some way or another, our old self is always saying this in a time of deep change.

Adolescence is often a time of spirit awakening. Childhood has to be given up. Some sort of adulthood has to be forged. Going through all that, many persons have a burst of spirit consciousness. The oblivion of ourselves as a child and the resurgence of ourselves as an adult person may cast us into a conscious contemplation of these deep dynamics of humanness.

But then, most of us manage to forget that we ever went through such a profound change and become pretty stodgy in some adult ways of being. And then one day, we may experience another period of basic change -- oblivion of an old self and resurgence of a new self. Twice in my life, I have given up virtually everything I was doing in order to go do something else. The old had become boring and stifling even though I was successful at it. Yet it was very sad to leave it. And frightening. I would go for days in a weary astonishment that I was actually doing what I was doing. Even though I eventually became very glad about these changes, in the early stages I was in shock. In one of these changes my stomach became so upset I went to the doctor and had extensive tests. It turned out that I was just anxious.

This is the pattern of any deep change in our lives: first oblivion -- this is a suffering that continues until a deep surrender of the old self has been completed, then resurgence -- the hard, uncertain work of building the new life, and of facing the unfamiliar. Such new life may be exciting and

fascinating; but it is also dreadful. There are so many new things to figure out, it makes you weary.

Sometimes our lives take a dip down into spirit consciousness, but we eventually get ourselves put back together. And then we forget that such things ever happen to human beings. We become a new set, rigid, inflexible person. Then, unexpectedly -- WHOOM -- the bottom falls out again. And here we are again -- dying to our old ways and being born into ways we don't know yet.

I have long been a fairly skilled thinker and talker. But in the last few years I have become conscious of weaknesses I have had in being an emotional person -- in being warm -- in being honest with myself and others about what I was actually feeling. I became conscious that I was using my skills as a thinker to talk my way around my weaknesses, to justify them, to avoid them. It was an oblivion experience for me to give up a certain kind of feelingless verbosity. For me, giving up feelingless verbosity was hell.

And then, this was also a resurgence experience for me. I began, with considerable help, to learn how to notice my feelings and to express them accurately to other people. It was a resurgence experience to become aware that I wanted to become closer to other people -- to see that I was weary with being aloof and distant.

This kind of change is wonderful, but it is also painful. It fills us with terror every time. Usually, we fight it with defensive anger, endless argumentation, and with blaming other people for results that we ourselves are causing.

Spirit consciousness is consciousness of these deep change-dynamics. And the deepest spirit consciousness is surrender to changing, surrender to oblivion and resurgence. Such surrender is my initial definition of a third

type of awe. I will call it "tranquility". Tranquility means surrender to having oblivion experiences my whole life long. Tranquility means surrender to having resurgence experiences over and over again. It means surrender to dying to the very self I now am and surrender to the birth of a drastically new and unfamiliar me. Tranquility means keeping this whole domain of spirit consciousness open and alive. Tranquility means a kind of contentment with ongoing awesome change.

True tranquility is not getting my life put together: "Aha! I'm set. No more oblivion and resurgence." No, it means becoming content with never getting my life put together -- except temporarily and partially. Real life is coming apart and putting together and coming apart and putting together as an endless process. Life is an endless process of changing. The journey of spirit consciousness has no end point.

On my rational map of the spirit realm, oblivion, resurgence and tranquility are the three major dynamics of spirit consciousness.

- (1) Oblivion is the death of my self as now constituted -- a departure from life as I have known it.
- (2) Resurgence is the emergence of the freedom and passion to create a new and unfamiliar self -- a return to specific living as I have not yet known it.
- (3) Tranquility is the eerie happiness of the person who has become surrendered to being in the never-ending process of oblivion and resurgence, of dying to the old sense of reality and behaviors and of being born anew into a new sense of reality and into new manners of behavior.

The description of these three realms or dynamics of spirit consciousness

could fill a library with books and indeed already has. In Chapter Seven, I want to describe these three dynamics in enough detail to awaken still more awareness of what I mean by the term "spirit consciousness". Understanding spirit consciousness is central to the discussion of this entire book. First, however, in the next three chapters, I want to examine how spirit consciousness has been given form in the recent and ancient history of human society.

## Chapter IV

### The Shift in Religious Metaphors

In Chapter Three, I described spirit consciousness as a subjective or interiorly experienced phenomena, namely the experience of awe, the dynamics of dread, fascination, and courage. In this chapter, I want to explore the objective side of the awe-phenomena. What is the external reality that occasions subjective awe in the individual person? And how can this reality be rationally imaged in our evolving culture?

In our classical religions the reality that occasioned awe in us was usually called "God" or "angels" or perhaps "gods". But today these ways of imaging the objective source of our awe are fraught with difficulties. "God" for most people has become either meaningless or filled with obsolete meanings -- obsolete because these meanings have no relation to the practical issues of living. So confusing has the usage of the word "God" become, that some of the most alert religious thinkers have proposed doing away with any further use of this word. For myself, I have nothing against the word "God". I even believe that it is essential that we learn anew how to use this word, so as not to be cut off from meaningful dialogue with the past. However, if anyone asks me if I believe in God, I find I cannot answer that question until the asker has made clear to me what is being asked. What do you mean by "God"? What do you mean by "believe"?

Consider the following imaginary conversation:

A: Do you believe in God?

B: What do you mean by God?

A: Oh, you know, the Supreme Being.

B: What do you mean by being and what kind of being is supreme?

(The conversation might end at this point, but a really persistent questioner might go on.)

A: Oh you know, the Supreme Being is the cause of everything that has being. Surely you don't believe we all got here by accident.

B: Oh, so you want to know if I hypothesize another world in which some invisible being causes everything that goes on in this world.

A: Well, I don't know about everything. Maybe some things are caused by Satan and some by Nature. But, yes. Is there a God who causes at least many things and got this universe started in the first place?

B: I don't believe there is another world with any kind of being in it -- God, Satan, angel, or anything else. So I guess I don't believe in what you mean by "God".

This conversation is something more than fiction. Something like it goes on in the lives of all of us. It goes on there because it represents a conflict between two opposing types of "religious metaphors" -- the "two-story" metaphors of our classical past and the "one-story" metaphors of our contemporary wisdoms. The two-story way of picturing God as a man-like-being-up-in-heaven but operating somehow in this-world-down-below is not merely superstitious. It is a very widespread way that human cultures have reasoned about reality for thousands of years. What has happened is that we have recently gone through a deep and far-reaching cultural shift in the way we talk about reality. Believing in the existence of a second-story world has become meaningless.

I recall the first time this became quite obvious to me. As a youth, I was an active member of the Methodist Church. One Sunday I went with a friend to the Presbyterian Church. When we came to that part of the service in which the Apostle's Creed is recited, I heard an unfamiliar phrase -- "descended into

Hell". In my church we never said that. So I asked my pastor why the Presbyterian Church added that phrase. My pastor explained that the phrase was in the ancient creed but that the Methodists had left it out because it no longer meant anything to people. Later, I wished I had asked him why the Methodists left in "ascended into heaven" since that didn't mean anything to people either. The truth was that the whole creed was jarring to my emerging scientific mind. I had started coughing through the Virgin Birth part of the creed some months before.

This story is familiar to many of us. At one point or another we have awakened to realize that we are living in a 20th century world with 20th century life-problems to understand and respond to, but we are still trying to make the religious dimension of our lives function with the metaphors invented two thousand or three thousand years ago. It could be assumed that such old metaphors are all the better because they have stood the test of time. But the actual experience of human beings who are trying to live realistically today supports another view: the old metaphors are antiques -- wonderful for scholars and anthropologists to study, but inadequate for everyday life. Using them in our everyday life has the same comic and tragic results as showing up on an eight-lane expressway riding a horse.

But surely it is not necessary to totally cut ourselves off from the religious thinking of all previous generations. How do we resolve this confusing dilemma?

First of all, we must allow our minds to see that religious forms of any kind are finite creations. And what are religious forms? Spirit consciousness, when given social form, is called "religion". Let us look at that sentence very carefully. What is spirit consciousness? What is social form? What does this sentence mean about the nature of religious forms?

Spirit consciousness is the numinous or awe-filled experience of reality. As such, spirit has been likened to a wind that blows through individual lives, through the interchange between individuals, and through all the processes of social existing. This wind cries out to be given form; yet the spirit can never be contained in any of the forms we create for it.

What do I mean by "forms"? I mean the rational creations of human beings. I mean patterns of thought, styles of behavior, structures of society, techniques, methodologies, art and language. All forms are social in nature. Religious form, the social form which human beings give to spirit consciousness, appears in our social history as:

- (1) mythic stories
- (2) ritual practices
- (3) pictorial, plastic and architectural symbolisms
- (4) ethical models of commitment
- (5) social organizations to support and spread the above.

The "aliveness" of such religious forms depends upon the capacity of the people using them to experience the spirit consciousness which originally gave impetus to their creation. Religious forms, like all forms, are lifeless apart from the lives of living human beings who find meaning in them.

Furthermore, no religious form has to be "believed in" as some kind of literal truth. The current ideas in our society about literal truth arose with experimental science. It is hard for many contemporary people to grasp that such literalism did not limit human imagination a thousand years ago. All the originators and enrichers of the great religions were artists and poets playing with symbolic forms in a wildly creative effort to give form to their spirit experience. The very genius of religion is destroyed when literalism is brought into it.



Modern science taught us all to ask, "Did this really happen?". Was Jonah really swallowed by a big fish or was that in fact a short story understood even by its author to be fiction? What was literally true? Religious thinkers who thought "literally true" and "religiously true" to be the same thing, defended the literal truth of the Bible and other religious traditions from scientific thinkers whose pursuit of literal truth resulted in contradictions with religious statements when those statements were taken literally.

The irony of this long warfare, still being waged by many people, is that both sides of the battle agree that literal truth is the truth that matters. Both would say, "If the earth was not literally created in seven days, then the first chapter of Genesis is erroneous, worthless, and untrue". Thus the "truth" that religious form was created to express is being ignored by both the "defenders of religion" and the "scientific-minded religious skeptics".

A closer look at the whole matter reveals that science has no ability to destroy religion. The true destroyers of religion are those "religious" thinkers who began thinking literally about the realm of religious metaphor. The genuine truth of religion has been lost whenever we have been asked to "believe in" a literal heaven or hell or supernatural being or angels or devils. What is literally true is that all these things are metaphors, poems, myths -- creations of the religious imagination for the purpose of giving expression to the human experiences of awe. If we have bound our minds with literalism, we will not possess the suppleness necessary to fly on the wings of metaphor and poetry into a full participation in spirit consciousness.

Furthermore, the massive cultural shifts taking place in this century have rendered the inherited religious forms incapable of kindling the awe and aliveness they did in the centuries in which and for which they were originally created. I intend now to examine in some detail the specific characteristics

of this shift in religious forms. I will look at these four areas of religious thought: (1) the awe-producing reality, (2) the spirit self, (3) the ethical forms for spirit living, and (4) the forces of evil. I will describe how the shift in religious metaphors has affected each of these arenas.

A. In describing the awe-producing reality there is a shift  
FROM THE EDGE OF NATURE TO THE CENTER OF BEING

The classical religious metaphors pictured reality as two realms. One came to be called "the natural realm". That simply meant ordinary life -- that part of life we could hope to understand and manage to some extent. The second realm came into view at the edge of the natural realm -- at death, at birth, whenever our finitude was obvious. It was called "the super-natural realm". Not only sophisticated philosophy and theology operated with these two realms, but also the literature and sacred writings and everyday religious conversations used these two realms to make their points.

As an example of these two realms in Hindu thought, here is a colorful story of a particular holy man who is walking through ordinary reality when suddenly he experiences the un-ordinary:

"A holy man, Mārkaṇḍeya by name, is wandering inside the god, over the peaceful earth, as an aimless pilgrim, regarding with pleasure the edifying sight of the ideal vision of the world. This Mārkaṇḍeya is a well-known mythical figure, a saint endowed with life unending. He is many thousands of years old, yet of unaging strength and alert mind. Wandering now through the interior of Viṣṇu's body, he is visiting the holy hermitages, gratified by the pious pursuits of the sages and their pupils. At shrines and holy places he pauses to worship, and his heart is made glad by the piety of the people in the countries through which he roams.

"But now an accident occurs. In the course of his aimless, unending

promenade, the sturdy old man slips, inadvertently, out through the mouth of the all-containing god. Vishnu is sleeping with lips a little open; breathing with a deep, sonorous, rhythmical sound, in the immense silence of the night of Brahmā. And the astonished saint, falling from the sleeper's giant lip, plunges headlong into the cosmic sea.

"At first, because of Vishnu's Māyā, Mārkandeya does not behold the sleeping giant, but only the ocean, utterly dark, stretching far in the all-embracing, starless night. He is seized by despair, and fears for his life. Splashing about in the dark water, he become presently pensive, ponders, and begins to doubt. 'Is it a dream? Or am I under the spell of an illusion? Forsooth, this circumstance, utterly strange, must be the product of my imagination. For the world as I know it, and as I observed it in its harmonious course, does not deserve such annihilation as it seems now suddenly to have suffered. There is no sun, no moon, no wind; the mountains have all vanished, the earth has disappeared. What manner of universe is this in which I discover myself?'

. . . . .

"The saint, forlorn in the vast expanse of the waters and on the very point of despair, at last became aware of the form of the sleeping god; and he was filled with amazement and a beatific joy. Partly submerged, the enormous shape resembled a mountain range breaking out of the waters. It glowed with a wonderful light from within. The saint swam nearer, to study the presence; and he had just opened his lips to ask who this was, when the giant seized him, summarily swallowed him, and he was again in the familiar landscape of the interior.

"Thus abruptly restored to the harmonious world of Vishnu's dream, Mārkandeya was filled with extreme confusion. He could only think of his brief yet unforgettable experience as a kind of vision. Paradoxically,

however, he himself, the human being unable to accept any reality that transcended the interpretative powers of his limited consciousness, was now contained within that divine being, as a figure of its universal dream."

As told in Heinrich Zimmer's book, Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization<sup>1</sup>

The basic structure of this story pictures two realms: the ordinary world and the extra-ordinary realm -- here pictured as the dark endless sea in which Vishnu lies swimming. Water, darkness, endless horizon, no sun, no moon, no stars -- all these elements are symbols expressing an oblivion type of awe experience. Mārkaṇḍeya had fallen out of ordinary reality into another sort of consciousness of reality. He now sees ordinary reality as a very fragile and limited thing -- the interior dream of Vishnu. The sudden death of ordinary consciousness produces dread, but also fascination. Mārkaṇḍeya is attracted to the power of this "other worldly" experience. He sees the finite world for what it is. And as he returns to "finite consciousness", the experience of the endless dark sea is not wholly forgotten. In fact, the above story continues and Mārkaṇḍeya falls out again and again.

These two realms of reality are expressed in the stories and teachings of all classical religions. Even the Confucian and Taoist traditions, down-to-earth as they are, also presuppose a second-story "order of heaven". From Western tradition, consider another colorful example, this story of Isaiah in the temple of Jerusalem:

"In the year of King Uzziah's death I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the skirt of his robe filled the temple. About him were attendant seraphim, and each had six wings; one pair covered his face and one pair his feet, and one pair was spread in flight. They were calling ceaselessly to one another,

Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts:

the whole earth is full of his glory.

And, as each one called, the threshold shook to its foundations, while the house was filled with smoke. Then I cried,

Woe is me! I am lost,

for I am a man of unclean lips

and I dwell among a people of unclean lips:

yet with these eyes I have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts.

Then one of the seraphim flew to me carrying in his hand a glowing coal which he had taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. He touched my mouth with it and said,

See, this has touched your lips;

your iniquity is removed,

and your sin is wiped away.

Then I heard the Lord saying, Whom shall I send? Who will go for me? And I answered, Here am I; send me. He said, Go and tell this people: . . . "

-- from the New English Bible, Isaiah 6: 1-9<sup>2</sup>

Isaiah says that he sees the second-story of reality invade his earthly space. Meditating on the recent death of a very great political leader, King Uzziah, Isaiah sees the KING -- sovereign of all things -- high and lifted up. His face is hidden by the wings of flapping awe. In my dramatization of this story, I have the voices of the seraphim sound like crows and they say, "AWE, AWE, AWE". "Holy, holy, holy" is too overlaid with recent centuries of sentimental piety. But if we understand Rudolf Otto's Idea of the Holy, then "Holy, holy, holy" can also communicate the nature of this experience. This story obviously begins as an awe-experience of the oblivion variety: "the threshold shook to its foundations, while the house was filled with smoke."



This is surely one of Otto's mysterium tremendum events. The disintegration of the ordinary world in earthquake and volcano type imagery is a clear dramatization of dread in the face of oblivion. Isaiah cried, "Woe is me! I am lost."

Then a conversation begins in which Isaiah confesses his and his society's uncleanness and experiences his forgiveness. For Isaiah, the past is now put behind him. He then overhears a celestial counsel meeting going on up in heaven, "Whom shall I send?" Isaiah apparently makes himself heard up there, "Hey, I'm here. Consider me. Send me." Then the way I imagine the response from the chairman of this second-story assembly of supernatural beings is this: the entire temple is filled with one gigantic chorus of sound -- "GO!"

In this dialogue about being sent, we see a dramatization of the awe of resurgence. Isaiah is sent by the second-story spirit world to the first-story ordinary world. The message Isaiah has to bring is basically about the finitude of the nation and the people's blindness to that fact. The people are living in only one story and have forgotten the reality of the King in heaven.

If we try to take Isaiah's second-story experience literally, as many conservative Christians, Jews, and Muslims still tend to do, we miss experiencing the genius of the ancient mind in its use of these second-story metaphors. And we also miss the excitement of seeing in our own lives the experience that Isaiah was expressing. We know we have not seen seraphim and heard literal voices out of heaven. We don't believe people today who say they have. But we can intuit that we somehow know what Isaiah experienced. We too, perhaps, have experienced the depth of oblivion and been sent back into our ordinary world with a disquieting message for the still sleeping multitudes. But we, in our 20th century scientific unitary world view do

not automatically visualize such experiences in second-story metaphors. While we may be able to understand the validity of these earlier generations using second-story poetry, we must learn to talk about our awe-experiences in a new way that is satisfying to our whole sense of truth.

If we are able to discern that the Hindu story and the Isaiah story were indeed talking about awe, then we are already aware of a new and modern way of articulating our own experiences of awe. Awe, for us, bubbles up in the very midst of our ordinary experience. It is as if ordinary life were a piece of paper that someone put a match underneath. All of a sudden this particular place in the paper starts turning brown, then black, then bursts into flame. That is the way we experience awe: this bit of ordinary reality is on fire. No second-story miraculous invasion of the natural order is presupposed. I am just encountering reality with an intensity of awareness that vastly exceeds the awareness which characterizes the usual flow of my life. In such an awe-moment, I am seeing reality in a deeper way. Reality has not itself become deeper; rather, the depths of reality have been "revealed" to me. All the descriptions of awe in Chapter Three and Chapter Seven of this book are examples of this. It is not necessary to use the word "God" to describe these experiences. It is not necessary to presuppose a supernatural realm. Nevertheless, an experience of something quite real invading our familiar reality is in each case described. Ordinary consciousness is an experience of reality as something familiar, normal and to be expected. Spirit consciousness is an experience of reality that is awe-producing. In spirit consciousness we are relating to a deeper reality. We can call this level of reality "supernatural" if we want to; but if we do, we are using this term in a new way. For we are experiencing the "supernatural" in the very center of our ordinary living -- not at the edge of the "natural" realm. In fact, the "natural" as

we now use that term has no edge. There is, therefore, really no "natural". There is just ordinary reality and ordinary reality filled with AWE. And furthermore, ordinary reality is always filled with awe; so it is never merely ordinary. It is only we ourselves, in our habitual insensitivity, who reduce reality to ordinary reality without awe. In truth, there is just reality, in part familiar and predictable, but also in greater part dreadful and fascinating and mysterious and unpredictable. And this awe-producing mysteriousness is not something to be solved with one more year in a good science class. It is a permanent quality of reality. The mysteriousness of reality is totally inescapable no matter how great the extent of our knowledge and technological skill become. A really sensitive student of modern science knows this.

In the period in which our classical religions were developed, the "natural" meant that part of reality that was intelligible to the mind of man. When our reason was pushed out to the edge of what we could understand, we ran into the supernatural -- that is, the omniscient one, who knows everything we don't know. Similarly, when our power to act was pushed to its limit, we came to the edge again and met the supernatural -- this time as the omnipotent one, who can do anything. And all this was thinking by analogy. No one had ever seen the omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent God -- the sovereign ruler of all reality. It was a dramatic bit of poetic imagination used to express a real experience. The extent to which a Medieval thinker like Thomas Aquinas is aware that he is using poetry is often a shock to modern literalists. Consider this short quote:

"Now it is manifest, supposing that the world is ruled by Divine Providence, that the whole community of the universe is governed by Divine Reason. And therefore the plan of government in things, as it is in God the Sovereign of the universe, bears the character of a law. And because the Divine Reason



conceives nothing according to time but has an eternal concept, therefore it is that this manner of law must be called eternal."

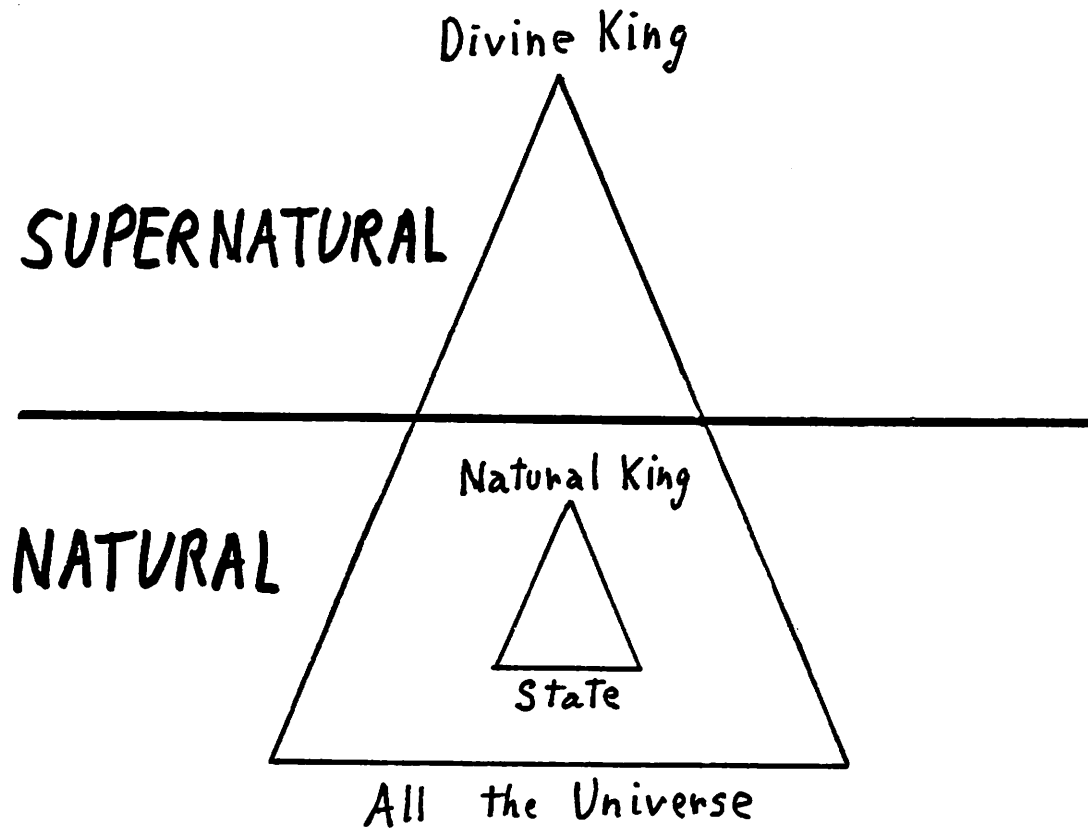
-- from "On the Laws"<sup>3</sup>

The italics are mine. The word "supposing" shows the analogical thinking. Aquinas has drawn a cosmic picture for us:

#### Illustration # 6

The Divine King is merely an analogy based on our ordinary experience with earthly kings. "Divine Reason", "Sovereign", "plan of government", "law" -- all these are analogies built in parallel with the ordinary political experience of a medieval person. What does "conceives nothing according to time" mean? It means that no human being can conceive of the Divine Reason. It has "an eternal concept". We have "temporal concepts". We find Divine Reason totally incomprehensible. The very idea of Divine Reason is a "supposing" built out of something we can fathom, namely the "ruling reason of an earthly king". The "eternal law", since it is totally unknown and incomprehensible to human beings, is simply a medieval thinker's now-quaint way of pointing to what we today would more likely call "the mysterious depth of reality".

Thomas Aquinas goes on to define "natural law" as that part of the eternal law that our human minds can participate in. Putting it that way makes me realize that I too stand in wonder that the mind of a human being can understand some part of what really goes on and predict to some extent what will happen. Students of post-Einsteinian physics know something about natural law that Thomas Aquinas did not see -- namely, that natural law is an expanding, changing body of humanly-invented wisdom. Aquinas saw natural law as something



static and stable, imbedded in the mind of man. He was not aware that we human culture-builders had imbedded it there. But Aquinas was clear about something some modern thinkers forget: the natural law, however far it is developed, will never make comprehensible the eternal law. In other words, reality is mysterious in a way that can never be overcome.

Aquinas' distinctions between natural law and eternal law remind us that reality is something more than the last and best scientific theories. Reality is an awe-producing un-understandableness that burns through ordinary experiences and surrounds and engulfs our scientific theories. And the very fact that we know anything at all is as mysterious as the vastness we don't know. In the center of every scrap of being, BEING appears and scalds us with AWE.

Furthermore, Aquinas' metaphysical poetry is saying something more than the awareness that reality is mysterious and beyond human comprehension. His second-story imagery is expressing his belief-faith-trust that reality is "under good government". Aquinas defines "law" idealistically -- that is, if it is not good law (which means reason working for the welfare of all) then it is not worthy to be called "law" at all. So his picture of an eternal law -- incomprehensible to human intelligence and ruling all things -- translates into our contemporary religious metaphors as: everything that happens is good. Everything is working like an ideal government on behalf of the wellbeing of each and all. Everything that is really real -- however mysterious or chaotic it seems, however orderly and filled with beauty it seems, however ugly or violent it seems --- is good.

This is a strong statement. The union of value and existence, the good and the real, is a theme that is central to the classical Western use of the word "god". Protestant Christianity, no less than Catholic Christianity, used the word "God" to express a living belief or trust that what is real is also

good. Martin Luther was especially centered on this theme. The following is an example:

"It is a further function of faith, that whom it trusts it also honors with the most reverent and high regard, since it considers him truthful and trustworthy . . . . This is the very highest worship of God, that we ascribe to Him truthfulness, righteousness and whatever else ought to be ascribed to one who is trusted. Then the soul consents to all His will, then it hallows His name and suffers itself to be dealt with according to God's good pleasure, because clinging to God's promises, it does not doubt that He, who is true, just, and wise will do, dispose, and provide all things well."

-- from "A Treatise on Christian Liberty"<sup>4</sup>

For modern people, no real sense can be made of this passage until the word "God" and terms like "God's will" and "God's good pleasure" are translated into the modern metaphors. Like Aquinas, Luther operates with ease in the second-story poetry. And, like Aquinas, his second-story imagination is a way of talking about reality as it is experienced every day by Luther. When lightning strikes a tree and scares the living daylights out of him, Luther views that event as an example of "God's will", of "God's good pleasure" confronting Luther with Luther's finitude and everyday vulnerability to having his life suddenly concluded.

Trusting God means trusting that mysterious, unknown, enigmatic reality operating within the course of events to "provide all things well". Trusting God means ascribing "goodness" to whatever is really happening. This is why "faith" can have such an all-inclusive and revolutionary meaning for Luther. He does not mean intellectual assent to the idea of a second-story supernatural being. That is just the taken-for-granted mode of thinking in his era. By "faith" he means an attitude of affirmation of everything that is real. It

means loyalty to the mystery, depth and greatness of everything that has being. It means surrender to the wholesomeness of utterly realistic living. It means establishing the context for seeing any illusion or rebellion from the real as the meaning of evil. Hence, "faith" for Luther, can be seen as the sole necessity for a victorious life. It is a "spiritual dominion in which there is nothing so good and nothing so evil, but that it shall work together for good to me if only I believe".<sup>5</sup>

This quick tour through classical Christian thinking in the West was done with the aim of illustrating these two crucial facts about our current situation: (1) We are cut off from the metaphors of the past. It is only with some effort that we can see Aquinas and Luther as real persons, like ourselves, struggling with real questions of living and therefore having something to share with us that could enrich our lives. And (2) We do not need those second-story metaphors to say to ourselves and our companions what Aquinas and Luther said to themselves and their companions in this now-quaint manner of speaking. I do not mean by this that I am unappreciative of the great poetry of the past and of the fact that its powerful ministry to its era brought us to this moment.

But for us, there is no natural and no supernatural at the edge of the natural. Nor is there just a natural secular world with no presence of mystery and awe in the midst of it. Such a view would merely be the old two-story worldview with the top story knocked off. No, we experience one world, but that one world is filled with the presence of mystery. We can see in the very center of our unified sense of reality the mysterious depths of reality, and hence we see what previous generations were pointing to with the word "God". We have an objective sense of that reality which occasions awe within us. We can consider what it would mean to trust that reality, to call it good, to experience the strength of an unswerving loyalty to realistic living. We can

also experience a new capacity to dialogue with all the classical religious literature of the past.

B. In describing the spirit self there is a shift  
FROM GHOSTLY SUBSTANCE TO TRANSPARENT RELATIONSHIP

Classical religion produced an image of the human being that paralleled the two-story cosmos. Within our natural body we were conceived to have a supernatural soul.

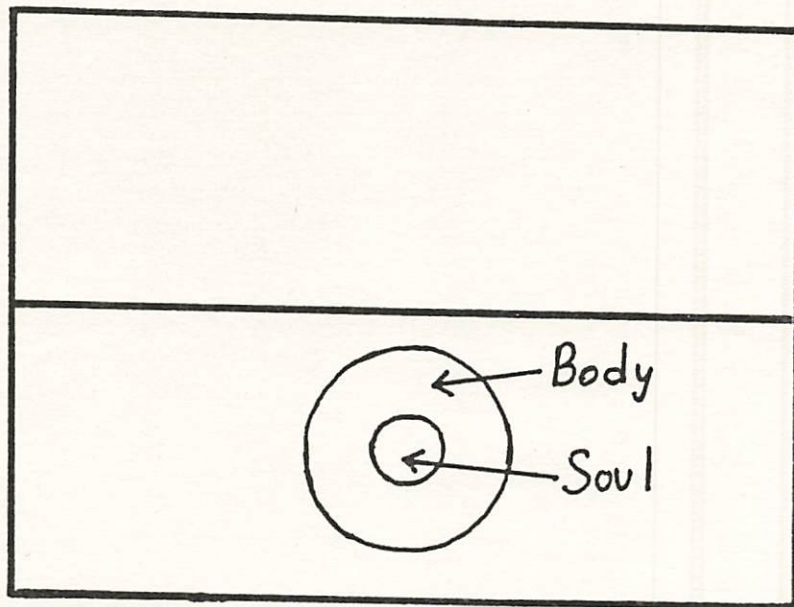
Illustration # 7

The soul was that part of our interior make-up that was able to experience supernatural reality. Other elements of our interior world -- mind, reason, thought, desire, emotion, sensation -- were, like the body, earth-bound. They were natural faculties. But the soul was immortal, blessed or doomed with the necessity of a destiny beyond the death of our natural body and our natural faculties.

Some traditions thought of the soul as "being-of-one-substance-with" supernatural being, like a drop of water cast into the ocean. Others thought of it as a lost spark torturously finding its way back from the darkness and dross of the material realm to the light of the heavenly realm. Perhaps successive lifetimes were needed to complete this trip. Christianity developed a variation on this theme that made the soul contingent and dependent upon the Sovereign God. It ~~was~~ not part of God. It was a created thing, and hence, vulnerable. If the soul did not in this lifetime discover its proper participation in the supernatural, it was sealed forever in having not-made it -- sealed in a supernatural place called "hell". If, on the other hand, the soul did in this lifetime discover its proper participation in the supernatural and

Supernatural

Natural



did not lose it but maintained this participation until death, it was sealed forever in having made it -- sealed in a supernatural place called "heaven".

This cosmic drama enabled a religious genius, like Dante, to describe in detail the various interior states of spirit consciousness. His experience of the many forms of human despair made possible a picturing of the geography of hell. His experiences of wholesome awe yielded pictures of the geography of heaven. The various struggles of the "heaven-bent" person with that person's remaining fragments of despair was pictured in the geography of purgatory. Those of us who have rejected belief in a literal heaven, hell, or purgatory can still read Dante with appreciation. In other words, we intuit that he was not insane or superstitious. He was just living in a different time and sharing his insights through the metaphors of that time.

Today, however, the soul (or "the self" as we usually call it) is conceived in a much different manner. It is not conceived as a ghostly substance within our natural substance. The whole concept of substance has been replaced by the image of dynamic relationship. Even in physics the new images concerning matter itself are more about dynamic energy exchanges than about elemental particles. A "particle" now means a structure of energy on the way to somewhere to expend itself in creating a different structure of energy. In contemporary psychology and philosophy, the self is described in a similar way. The self is a structure of energetic relationships in a process of continual change. Each new perception of reality, each new decision to relate to reality shifts in some measure the quality of the self. In Chapter Three, I called this the "becoming self". The entity that I am is not a strange substance lodged in my brain or solar plexus. I am a network of relationships moving through time. My oldest relationships with those who raised me as a baby and child still constitute part of my structural make-up. And I am still adding and subtracting from the network of relationship patterns that I am.



Also the deep "spirit self" though distinguishable from the "becoming self" does not have to be conceived as an entity or "soul substance". Søren Kierkegaard and many other contemporary philosophers and religious thinkers have discussed the spirit self through the category of relationship. Relationship means encounter and response. The spirit level of the self is the response of awe to the encounter with an awe-producing external reality. Perhaps I could call the spirit self, the self of "transparent relationship". The spirit self is my relationship with reality when reality has become transparent. I mean by "transparent" that I see through the ordinary aspect of reality to the inexhaustible mysteriousness which resides within all reality.

The old metaphor of the soul as a substance is operating not only in the Western doctrine of the immortal soul but also in the Asian doctrine of the reincarnation of the life monad. The life monad was conceived to live through many successive bodily lifetimes. In most Asian religions this endless cycle of rebirths was seen as a bondage. The complete spirit experience was seen as a liberation from this grind of rebirths into a union with pure being. Put positively, the many lifetimes were many opportunities to complete your spirit liberation. On the other hand, the many lifetimes were understood as the means whereby you could be punished for your violations of the laws of reality. Your status in the hierarchy of life forms could be lowered the next time around. However many variations there were on this theme, the common metaphor of a substantialistic soul is used throughout.

Also, in the basic sub-Asian understanding of spirit liberation, a substantialistic Atman (Spirit Self) is understood to be "of-one-substance-with" the substance of the Brahman (the Wholeness of Being). This key Hindu phrase "That, I am" means "That (Being as a whole), I (the Atman self) am." "That, I am" points to a profound spirit experience that can be expressed in contemporary

relational language, but the original metaphors of the Vedic heritage were substantialistic, not relational.

Let me try to illustrate this by talking about the Atman-Brahman experience in relational terms. The Atman is the subjective component of the awe phenomena. The Brahman is the objective component of the awe phenomena. So understood, they are two ends of the same relationship. Brahman is reality as seen from the Atman perspective. Atman is the nature of the self when Brahman is being perceived. So, how do we understand the assertion of their oneness? Simply put, the wonder and mystery of my capacity to experience the awe of reality is as great as the wonder and mystery of the awe-producing reality itself. Atman and Brahman need not be conceived as being "of-one-substance". Rather they can be seen as the "within" and the "without" of one AWE-experience.

Hopefully, this illustration has not side-tracked the reader's mind beyond all recovery. My point is simply this: the religious experience of ancient Vedic religion is not synonymous with the substantialistic metaphors that these classical geniuses used to express their experience. I can reject their metaphors and express the same experience in the relational metaphors of my own contemporary culture. Even as the translation from one language to another is not always easy, so also the translation from one mindset to another is not always easy. But the process of doing so reveals something very important for the future of all religion on this planet. No metaphors or mindsets are themselves eternal or even necessary to express an experience of "eternal" being. The substantialistic metaphor and the relational metaphor are both finite, historical, rational inventions. Atman-Brahman, as spirit experience, transcends them both. This does not mean that we can arbitrarily choose whichever

set of metaphors we prefer. No, we are fated to live in the 20th century when substantialistic metaphors have become obsolete and relational metaphors are the highly improved set of rational tools with which we actually do communicate with one another. Whenever a substantialistic metaphor sneaks into our conversation, a miscommunication is highly likely.

For example, we still tell ghost stories and go to a few movies in which ghosts scare us or otherwise entertain us. But we don't really believe in ghosts. We don't really hypothesize a filmy substance that actually survives the grave. There are many mysterious energies in all living things, energies for which modern science does not yet have very good theories. But the modern scientific approach to all kinds of so-called "para-normal" phenomena does not need to use the hypothesis of spirit beings who survive the grave. We may discover that our genes somehow pass on memories of events that took place in the lives of our ancestors. We may discover how our powerful interior energies can indeed be focused on physical healings. But none of these explorations will prove "life after death".

Supernatural life after natural death is simply a very old way of thinking about human experience. It is the interior reflection of the two-story worldview. At the edge of the natural we experience the supernatural. Where were we before we were born? Where will we be after we die? These questions could only come up if we thought of ourselves as a ghostly substance that was here now and could be somewhere else before or after.

Imagine asking, where will I, a relationship to reality, be after my body, which is my means for having a relationship with reality, is gone? A disembodied relationship with reality is meaningless.

Both the eastern doctrine of reincarnation and the Western doctrine of the immortality of the soul were built assuming a substantialistic view of the self.

In the relational view, there is no substantial entity that could survive the body. The "I" which I am is a dependent reality -- dependent upon my body through which I am my relationships -- dependent upon reality as a whole with which I am a relationship. I am a capacity to relate to all my relationships. I have an ability to anticipate the future, remember the past, watch the present. Nevertheless, none of these phenomena prove the existence of a substantialistic entity which survives the body.

Many of the great religions of the past have witnessed to a very intense spirit experience we might describe as the total embracing of death and the resulting experience of a livingness that could not be threatened by death. Anyone experiencing this quality-of-being-related-to-reality could not help being impressed by it and would find names like "eternal life" or "endlessness" an appropriate description of it. I believe that this quality of spirit experience was probably the experiential ground that gave rise to doctrines like reincarnation, immortality, and even the resurrection of the body.

However, the most common use now being put to these doctrines is the creation of excuses for evading a realistic experience of death. Such a use is exactly opposite to the perspective that death is a sacred experience, a holy experience, an awe-experience, a human experience to be experienced fully. The experience of death sets us free. The fact that all things die, that our own particular personality dies, is the beginning point for meaningful personal change. Dying is indeed half of what all living things do. Living and dying, dying and living, this is simply reality for any living being. Any religion which denies the reality of death is not giving form to spirit consciousness. It is an unrealistic religion treating as "holy" the arrogance of a finite human being's pretence to be infinite.

When these old religious doctrines of reincarnation and immortality are

literally believed by someone in the contemporary world, both the reality of contemporary life and the reality of the ancient period of history are violated. Reincarnation makes no sense in the contemporary world and therefore belief in it creates various forms of insanity, depreciation of the body, and other dehumanizing results. Furthermore, belief by a contemporary person in immortality or reincarnation separates that person from a proper appreciation of those doctrines as an ancient treasure -- as religious forms that did mean something in the eras for which they were invented and used.

Such awareness illustrates how we are unavoidably fated to our period of history. We cannot pick and choose the reality we will live in -- part contemporary and part ancient. Wholehearted living in contemporary reality is the only realistic approach. If the forms of contemporary society are not adequate to include my contemporary experience, I can work to change them. I may use resources from the past to help me to do this. But I cannot go back and live in the past. The past is past. And the substantial soul is part of that past.

Today we can communicate very clearly with our contemporaries about a relationship with reality that is filled with awe. We can also see that this "transparent relationship" -- transparent to the mystery and wonder of reality -- is a means of sharing with one another that same human experience that our ancestors marveled over and called "the soul".

C. In describing the ethical forms for spirit living there is a shift  
FROM THE AUTHORITY OF ETERNAL PATTERNS TO THE AUTHENTICITY OF TEMPORAL MODELS

We turn now to the realm of ethics -- to the realm of giving temporal form to the concrete living of the spirit life.

Classical religion operated out of the image of "authority". First of all it was the authority of the super-natural realm, often pictured as a Divine

King or Kingdom. And secondly, classical religion promoted the authority of a temporal tradition: the Bible, the Church, the Koran, the Buddha's teachings, etc.

For example, when the prophet Amos appeared to speak to his nation, he did not say "Now, according to my considered opinions about these coming events, --". No, Amos worked with the image of authority: "Thus saith the Lord -- thus saith the highest authority I know: 'This place is going to be demolished by the Assyrians.'". Amos expresses his certainty about what is going on and about what his country should therefore do in this poetry, "God has spoken." When Moses "published" the Ten Commandments he gave a similar context: "God spoke and these were his words."

This image of authority is especially clear in all forms of Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. In the sub-Asian and oriental religions an emphasis upon alternative paths for different individuals sometimes clouds the fact that the image of authority is operating. But within each separate religious teaching or path, the authority of divine knowledge is clearly claimed.

In the Western world, a fight over authority has been raging for centuries. Is authority to be found primarily in the Bible? Or is authority to be found primarily in the Church? Or is authority to be found primarily in the autonomous reason of humankind?

To see that this whole image of authority is now obsolete can be a deeply liberating understanding. In the deepest current of 20th century life, philosophers, artists, and many thinking persons express their ethical certitude through a new metaphor: authenticity. Is it real or illusory? Is it based on my actual experience? Is it in accord with what I know about human existence out of my own experience of existing? When writers have spoken to us with power, they have done so because they were "saying it the way it is". They

were getting hold of what is authentic. Authenticity means knowing life to be the way that you will bet your life that life is. There is risk. You may lose the bet. But obedience to my best understanding of some authority is also a bet. We now prefer to bet on our own sense of reality. When someone says, "This is the way life is --", we decide, "Yeah, that is the way life is.", or, "No, it isn't.". And this is not an arbitrary decision. We are deciding about the authentic nature of life. Such decisions are a risk, because life is a mystery and we can never grab the whole of life by the tail. But we risk on what we know we know and open ourselves to grow in our appropriation of what is real.

This attitude toward practical truth and action is dramatically opposed to an unquestioning obedience to some authority. For example, when I read the letters of the Apostle Paul in the New Testament, it is not the fact that Paul is an apostle that makes me respect him. It is not that he is an authority in the context of the Christian tradition that makes Paul interesting to me. The reason Paul excites me is that this first-century, audacious character "says it the way it is". Perhaps I say in amazement, "How could anybody who lived in the first century be so clear?". It is his authenticity speaking to my authenticity that makes Paul an "important person" in my life. I also talk back to Paul. I say things like, "Paul, you are stuck in the patriarchal age. Your attitudes toward women won't do for the 20th century." That is the way I, as a 20th century person, am struggling for authenticity and against authority.

Closely associated with the concept of "authority" is the concept of "eternal patterns". By "eternal patterns" I mean the presupposition of the existence of a Universal Law of God, or a Universal Law of Nature, The Dharma,

The Tao. Whatever language was used, all the classical religions believed that there were permanent patterns for understanding reality and for organizing ethical responses. I mean there were patterns in the very structure of the cosmos that could be learned and known by humankind. No one raised a question about whether or not there were any such patterns. The question was only how do we find out what the eternal patterns are? Or if we already have them, how do we apply them to every single situation in our lives? The arguments that arose between factions, or between religions, was not over whether or not there were eternal patterns. The arguments were over how you knew or discovered what the eternal patterns were. Some said eternal patterns were revealed through the scripture. Some said the eternal patterns were revealed through the Church. And then there was the Talmud, the Koran, and other sacred writings. There were also counsels and popes and great gurus and prominent theologians and canonized saints. Some even said that the eternal patterns were revealed through the exercise of our natural reason. But everyone believed in eternal patterns. There was just no other way to think about organizing your life for realistic living.

Now as we have witnessed the clash of global cultures and have walked in the footsteps of cultural anthropologists who showed us the amazing diversity of social patterns, surely some skepticism about this whole idea of "eternal patterns" was inevitable. The eternal patterns of Western civilization are different from the eternal patterns of Eastern civilization. While many still believe that their culture is right and everyone else's is wrong, it has slowly dawned upon human consciousness that there are no eternal patterns. There never have been any. And there never will be any. There are just "temporal models" built by the various cultures in their attempts to be as inclusive and realistic as they know how. These temporal models may have held, and still do hold,



great wisdom; but none of them are totally adequate guides for all people in all places in all future generations.

What do I mean by a temporal model? Every civilization has formulated patterns for ethical behavior: how to establish a family, raise children -- how the sexes are related, protected, married, divorced -- how economic support is to be acquired legally, ethically, humanely. Virtually every area of life has been formulated with ethical models. Some of these models have been seen as changeable. Others were rooted in traditions that were thought to be sacred and ultimately rooted in some kind of unchanging law. Contemporary life has been characterized by increasing change in every area of life. In family life, no longer do the generations reduplicate the identical patterns that are so old that everyone thinks they are forever. We now see that all our ethical models, from the most specific to the most universal principles, are social inventions vulnerable to drastic reformulation by the coming generations.

Even our natural scientists have become increasingly modest about the "lasting qualities" of their "natural laws". The Newtonian to Einsteinian shift in physics has left everyone a little dazed about the temporality of all "natural law". And there is no meaning to our saying that there is a true and valid natural law "out there" somewhere waiting to be discovered. "Natural law" is nothing more than the currently best wisdom of the human community about the functioning of reality.

All the "eternal patterns" of all our religious heritages are, similarly, "temporal models". This awareness places us in a whole new consciousness about the future of our forms of religion. We, the human community, in dialogue with the past, will ourselves create the more adequate temporal models for describing the working of depth reality and for guiding our ethical responses. We will not wait for "eternal patterns" to drop down from heaven.

We will recognize that the ancient patterns did not drop down from heaven either. Moses, and all the others who stood in the blazing fires where "Divine Laws" were born, were simply very creative persons. They were not lying when they said that God gave them the laws. After all, such men were certainly on fire with awe.

According to the Exodus account of the origin of the commandments: It thundered -- lightning flashed. The mountain smoked. The people trembled and stood a great ways off, while Moses approached the dark cloud. If any of us have stood in the white hot center of raw creativity, we understand the basic feeling of this.

The implications of this shift from the authority of eternal patterns to the authenticity of temporal models are very far-reaching for the forms of religious practice in the future. Not only the intellectual forms of religion will change, but the structural forms as well. Popes, bishops, clergy, abbots, patriarchs, rabbis, -- leadership roles in every religion were invented to maintain the authority of a sacred tradition of eternal patterns.

The hierarchical structures of our religious institutions were patterned after the hierarchical structures in civilization as a whole: emperors and popes, kings and bishops, nobility and clergy. The democratization of both the institutions of society and religion has only partially shifted the "authority-to-peasant" feel of our institutions. Religious institutions, though serving to preserve spirit consciousness, have also long been seen to resist many expressions of authentic spirit. Fresh spirit consciousness inevitably bubbles up from the grass roots levels of life and challenges the stodginess of the old hierarchies. In the future, we should expect to see our increased consciousness issue in new styles of religious institutions. At this point it is difficult for us even to imagine institutions that are democratic enough

and flexible enough that a new breakloose of spirit consciousness would almost inevitably lead the social body. Such new visions of social order will initially seem like chaos to all of us who have been raised on hierarchical images of social order for the last five thousand years.

D. In describing the forces of evil there is a shift  
FROM DEMONIC SUBSTANTIALISTIC BEINGS TO UNREALISTIC RELATEDNESS

The classical way of talking about evil was as a kingdom of forces and powers personified as demons -- pictured as ghostly substantialistic beings who enter into our being and hold us in an evil grip. The kingdom of evil had a sort of cosmos-wide organization. And, like any social organization in classical times, this "spiritual" organization had a TOP MAN -- Satan. Not only Christianity, but every classical religion used demons and kingdoms of demons, often pictured in paintings and statuary.

"What's wrong with you?" "The devil's got into me." This was more than a figure of speech for the classical period of religion. This was serious language used for social, psychological, or spiritual diagnosis. "Some demons have taken over my life. I try to do right! I've got my eternal model in my hand. I know what I'm supposed to do; I stick my foot out to go the right way, and I don't go that way. There are demons in my life. Something's got into me. Subtle powers have taken over control of my life; I'm not free. I'm not a liberated human being; I'm bound by demons." People actually talked about their real experience in that quaint way.

Now you and I, in the twentieth century, if we are honest, have a hard time believing in demons. When we say, "Something's got into me.", we are sort of joking. We don't normally talk about any kind of supernatural gremlins that sneak into our will power and bind it. And yet we may know what our medieval

and ancient ancestors were actually talking about. We know about the interior struggle; we know about the fight inside our own being. But we have to understand it differently. We just don't take seriously little gremlins, devils, and evil spirits.

A contemporary equivalent for this classical poetry about demons is hard to find. When I was discussing despair in Chapter Two, I was touching on this theme. Despair happens when we have taken an unrealistic relationship to reality and then experience reality coming after us, challenging our illusory sense of reality. The evil here is not that we are driven to despair by reality. The evil is that we have taken an unrealistic relationship to reality in the first place.

Relating to reality unrealistically is an image through which we can view the racism and nationalism of men like, say, Adolf Hitler. Such attachment to "my race" or "my nation" squeezes my full realistic humanity into a narrow mold. I would also like to suggest that the persistence we encounter in the preposterous escalation of nuclear armaments by Russia and by the United States is rooted in relating to reality in an unrealistic manner. In both the United States and Russia, loyalty to a nation and to the ideology of a nation has blinded millions of people to the real wellbeing of everyone involved. As Buckminster Fuller illustrates so graphically: "We have today, in fact, 150 supreme admirals and only one ship -- Spaceship Earth. We have the 150 admirals in their 150 staterooms each trying to run their respective stateroom as if it were a separate ship. We have the starboard side admirals' league trying to sink the port side admirals' league. If either is successful in careening the ship to drown the 'enemy' side, the whole ship will be lost."<sup>6</sup> Unrealistic loyalty to a nation and a national viewpoint has rendered citizens in each nation paranoid about the action of other nations. However understandable

and explainable some aspects of this fierce drama may be, the hidden root of it all is a form of unrealism that a classical religious thinker might well call "demonic".

But why call any relationship to life "evil"? In our day, with no authorities and no eternal patterns, how can anyone say that any way of life is good or evil? Some scientific-minded philosophers reject the whole question of value except as a matter of personal preference. In other words, there is no truth about good and evil that can be used to evaluate anyone or anything or any society. Usually, what these philosophers are actually opposed to is a definition of good and evil based on some authority or eternal pattern -- both of which they passionately reject. Relative to this passion, even the most thorough-going scientific positivist might admit to having a personal commitment to the good of clarity and an opposition to the evil of lazy, sloppy-minded thinking. At bottom, this passion is not un-akin to the passion for reality that is part of the spirit consciousness I am trying to illuminate in this book.

A foundational assumption of this entire book is that authentic spirit consciousness is a love of reality -- certainly not an escape into illusion. The commitment to live in spirit consciousness means a commitment to reality. In other words, whatever is real is "good". "Evil" is any attitude which values illusion over reality. This context still leaves us with many possible debates over what is really real and therefore good; but with this context we are able to see how the discerning of good and evil can be a serious issue for contemporary people and why this issue was treated with great seriousness in the past.

If reality is good, then each fragment of reality is also good. But if a fragment is considered to be the whole, then it is evil -- not in itself,

but because our relationship to it is illusory. The philosophies of ancient China, through the concepts of yin and yang, worked toward affirming the whole of reality. Not yin or yang, but yin and yang is reality. For example, male and female are both real. One does not exist without the other. A proper love of reality finds the complementary balance between the two. Similarly, nature and society are both real. Living and dying are both real. One does not exist without the other. A proper love of reality finds the complementary balance between the two. It is clear that this tradition, at its best, was saying that the whole of reality is good. And it was saying that evil was any attitude or style of living which separates a fragment of reality from the whole and considers that fragment to be the only part of the whole that has value.

In the religious heritages of India and other parts of sub-Asia, we also often find that the search for what is good is understood as the search for what is truly real. The religious novice starts out in a limited state of consciousness about what is real. His quest is for an expanded consciousness of what is real. The fullness of reality, when found, will mean liberation, wholesome life -- in other words, "the good".

Western religions, being more talkative than their contemplative Asian cousins, expressed their spirit consciousness in terms of verbal battles between human beings and the invisible mouth of Sovereign Reality. Adam and Eve in the garden had a talk with both God and Satan about good and evil. God said that the knowledge of good and evil is a forbidden fruit. Satan said that knowing good and evil is a good thing, it makes you wise like God. Now, since, in this tradition, what God says is so, and Satan is always the deceiver, the meaning of this old story is quite clear. The reality of human nature is to be finite, ignorant, without an ultimately valid knowledge of good and evil.

Any time we finite creatures think we know what is good and what is evil we have entered into illusion. Only God knows what is good and evil. Human beings do not ever get to be "like God, knowing good and evil". Satan lied, as usual. Eating illusion involves us in a certain penalty at the hands of reality. Reality, being in power, opposes illusory living quite effectively. All the elements of our finitude are witnesses against us that we are not "like God" and that we don't know anything about good and evil. When we have decided to become infinite, everything -- our work, our pain, our nakedness -- have become curses, reminding us that we are finite. Before eating the illusion of infinitude, work was not a curse. Tending the garden was part of the joy of living. In this old story, nakedness, pain, and death also existed before this "fall-up-into-grandeur". And they were not then experienced as curses. So what is this old story saying is good? God is good, and only He knows what He is. In other words, reality is good and we human beings are on a never-ending quest to know what reality really is. We are ignorant, and that is good. We want to become infinitely wise, and that is evil.

To use the old metaphor, Satan, like a snake, still coils inside our beings. We can hear him speaking to the pain of our finitude. "Surely this is not so. Surely Jesus brought us the Truth (or Mohammed, or Werner Erhard or Reverend Moon, or somebody). Surely modern science, in a few more decades, will make us ultimately wise. Surely we have a few principles of right and wrong that are totally trustworthy. Surely we know what religious group we have to belong to, whom we have to believe, what we have to believe. Surely we know already or can know very soon what is good and what is evil." The snake never rests in thinking up new ways for us to be "wise like God". And we understand the meaning of a snake that talks like this, even though we don't buy the metaphor behind personifying evil as a talking snake.



<div> The Metaphors  the Arenas </div>	The Classical Religious Metaphors	The Metaphors Giving Form to Spirit Consciousness Now and in The Future
Profound Reality	The Edge of Nature	The Center of Being
Spirit Self	Ghostly Substance	Transparent Relationship
Ethical Form	The Authority of Eternal Patterns	The Authenticity of Temporal Models
Evil Forces	Demonic Beings	Unrealistic Relatedness



In the new metaphor for picturing evil -- which I have named "unrealistic relatedness" -- "evil" means that we attach ourselves to some fragment of our finitude and treat it as if it were absolute rather than finite. There is nothing evil about our human knowledge and wisdom. It is just finite. Evil means forgetting that our knowledge is finite and believing that it is absolute. It is amazing to me that the originators of the Adam and Eve story so clearly saw this. Adam and Eve were not tempted into becoming more knowledgeable or more conscious. This is not a story about becoming conscious. This is a story about being tempted into absolutizing the capacity of finite human beings. Evil means living out of the belief that our knowledge ought to be absolute. Evil also means railing at reality that we are ignorant. Evil means illusion and/or rebellion against the fact that some finite thing is not absolute. Such relationships to temporal reality bind us, enslave us, separate us from the agony and glory and joy of realistic living. The real is the good! Any other relationship to reality impairs the spirit health of human beings. Living in unreality is a state and a destiny of despair -- for reality will always win over our unreality in the end. After all, reality is reality!

\* \* \* \* \*

I have now described four aspects of this one immense shift in religious metaphors. The following chart holds all this together:

#### Illustration #8

The group of metaphors in the left column has been one of the most successful inventions in the whole history of the human race. These metaphors

enabled at least a hundred generations of human beings to communicate the deepest awe in their lives. The passing of these metaphors is itself a deep experience of oblivion for the human race. How is it possible that something that was so filled with meaning could become meaningless? How could something that was once so central to the whole building of civilization become something fit only for the shelves of our museums and the pages of our history books? It fills me with awe to realize that human beings lived out of these metaphors for thousands of years. And it also fills me with awe that I do not live out of these metaphors. And humankind will never live out of them again.

## Chapter V

### The Global Perspective on Spirit and Religion

While many of my examples have been taken from Western religion, the shift in religious metaphors described in Chapter Four is a global shift. I realize that each religious tradition has had to grapple with this shift in a slightly different manner. And I admit that I have written this with an English-speaking, Western audience in mind. Nevertheless, what I have described can be directed to any audience, whatever their religious background. This shift is global.

And this is not the first shift in religious forms that happened all across the earth. The birth of the classical religions was another such time in history. The Upanishads of India (1000-700 B.C.) mark what was perhaps the earliest upsurge of classical religion. The major prophets of Israel forged the classical religion of the Old Testament between 850 and 500 B.C. And in that amazing sixth century B.C. lived Gautama the Buddha in India, Confucius and Lao Tzu in China, Zoroaster in Persia, and Pythagoras and Heraclitus in Greece. By 500 B.C. the classical era of religion could be said to be launched on a global basis, even though many parts of the world were not impacted by a classical religion for thousands of years afterwards when Islam and Christianity spread so aggressively.

#### The Religion of Early Agrarian Civilization

Prior to this shift to classical religions, the religions of the world had a much different quality. In pre-classical religion, there was virtually no emphasis upon the individual spirit self. Elaborate religious systems had come into being along with civilization itself, but these religions were like a cosmic backdrop for the drama of the society itself. The individual person

was like a replaceable actor who was playing a part in this earthly-heavenly drama. The drama was the thing. It gave each person a place, a role, a meaningful world to live in. But the religious forms of civilization in the pre-classical era did not break the individual person apart from his social role and give him an individual spirit quest. Even the highly exalted kings and queens were roles rather than persons on an individual quest. In many of the earliest civilizations, the priests even ritually slaughtered the royal households every seven years or so. This practice surely illustrates an understanding of the royalty as roles rather than unique spirit persons. (See Joseph Campbell, The Masks of God, Primitive Mythology)<sup>1</sup>

Some individual spirit consciousness must have characterized the lives of the great artists and religious geniuses who invented these early civilizations and anointed their chosen political leaders with "divinely bestowed" powers. But even they may have been so caught up in the half-conscious, half-unconscious process of creativity that their own spirit personhood was but weakly perceived. Nevertheless, literature like the ancient epic of Gilgamesh 2500 B.C. certainly contains spirit consciousness. This remarkable story of a Sumerian king who goes in search of immortality and returns wise about his mortality shows how these early inventions of vast dramas about kings and queens, gods and goddesses did nurture the spirit of human beings and prepare the ground for the spirit breakloose of classical religion.

### Pre-Civilization Religion

Long before the classical religions began, there was another world-wide shift in religious form. This one happened with the rise of civilization itself. The quality of the religion that arose with the birth of civilization is described by Lewis Mumford in these interesting quotes:

"Slavery, compulsory labor, social regimentation, economic exploitation, and organized warfare: this is the darker side of the 'progress of civilization.'

. . . . .

"This was a heavy price to pay for the humanizing feats of civilization: yet all over the world men once paid that price. Though from the very beginning a dominant minority took command of the agents of civilization and appropriated its good, the mass of mankind tamely acquiesced in that act.

. . . . .

"The reason for civilization's acceptance remains undiscoverable until we allow for the influence of the irrational and the supernatural. Civilization was made possible by an inner transformation almost too deep for analysis: a transformation that brought into existence two magnified kinds of being, the hero and the god, and combined their functions in the office of kingship. In this change, civilized man freed himself partly from his preoccupation with his inner self: he turned increasingly to external objects, detached from bodily feeling: his ideal self was the hero, the person of giant strength, capable of performing mighty feats of prowess, like the labors of Heracles, and his hero god was a Prometheus, who stole fire from heaven for the benefit of man.

"The trials that the hero faces are physical trials: the slaying of giants and dragons, the moving of giant stones, the turning of the course of rivers; and it was in such feats that the godlike monarchs of ancient civilizations traditionally excelled."<sup>2</sup>

Mumford contrasts the life quality of pre-civilization with that of civilization:

"Primitive man was sustained by a sense of union with his world: stones, trees, animals, spirits, people, all spoke to him and responded to him; and he was in them and of them. Civilized man thrived on struggle and opposition: he

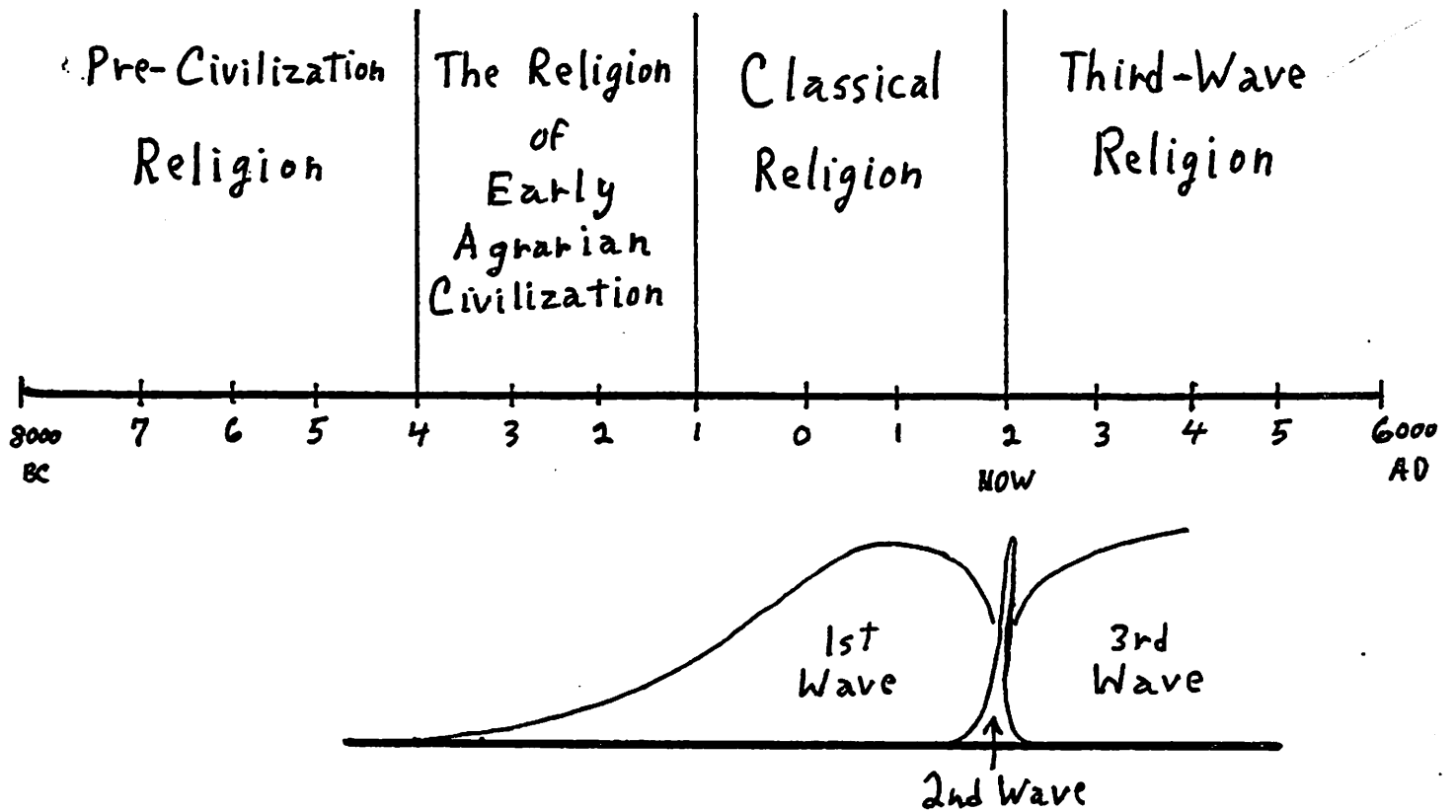
must master or be mastered, and the more formidable the struggle the greater his own sense of life. Dominated by this attitude he punishes himself, as well as those who are the objects of his aggression; . . . "3

The basic gentleness, equality, and communal solidarity of pre-civilized people is such an amazing contrast with civilization that even some "civilized" anthropologists have been loathe to believe it. And primitive peoples had a solidarity with and a respect for nature that causes some modern ecology-minded scholars to hold them up as an example. (See Murray Bookchin, The Ecology of Freedom)<sup>4</sup> While their religious forms were sometimes elaborate and while similar forms were sometimes used over a wide area, the highly organized cosmic systems of gods and stars and seasonal calendars and kings and queens did not yet exist. The religious art and story were childlike -- being intuitively rather than rationally ordered. But these primitive forms had a certain sophistication and deep meaning. They were full of mystery and simple natural feeling. They were very closely related to the forces of nature and to the natural forces within the human individual.

The following is a chart of these major shifts in religion. Fragments of all four types of religion still exist today, so the chart does not mean that the new rising type of religion totally conquered the previous types.

#### Illustration # 9

I have drawn below the chart on the history of religion a diagram on the rise and fall of the three waves of civilization that Toffler described. I want to show how these shifts in civilization correspond to the major shifts in the history of religion. From this we can readily see that classical religion was born somewhere near the middle of the development of first-wave



civilization. The dates on the chart are put at the very earliest signs of change. Classical religion did not flower until 800-500 B.C. And the earliest known civilization, the Sumerian in the Mesopotamian mud flats, was not in full operation until about 3200 B.C. Civilization was present in the Nile Valley by 2800 B.C. and in the Indus Valley by 2600 B.C. From these early beginnings civilization spread slowly west to Ireland and east to the Americas.

### The Second-Wave Period in Religious History

The period of second-wave civilization has been and is a transition period in the history of religion. This has been a very creative period in which the critique of classical religion has taken place stage by stage. For example, in the West, Protestant Christianity began just a century before second-wave civilization began to rise. Protestantism was thoroughly a part of classical religion, and yet in some ways the protestant emphasis was also the beginning of the critique and death of classical Christianity.

In the 19th and 20th centuries, many Protestant, Catholic and Jewish theologians allied themselves strongly with the historical critical skills of modern science and have thereby become, step by step more conscious of the end of the classical period of religion. Names like Paul Tillich, Hans Küng, and Martin Buber illustrate this trend. The various conservative religious movements of recent decades are, figuratively speaking, the last gasps of the classical metaphors defending themselves from dying. Names like Billy Graham and Pope John Paul II are illustrations of this.

Similar dynamics have also happened during these recent centuries in the classical religions of India, China, Japan, the Middle East, everywhere. Sadat is an example of a Moslem who opened himself to the modern world. Khomeini is an example of the conservative backlash in Islam. Gandhi is an example of



a Hindu who studied the whole modern world and moved Hindu spirituality toward the future. The period of second-wave civilization has been a complicated and wonderful era in the history of religion. Still it was only a transition from the classical period to what lies ahead.

### The Future of Religion -- Third-Wave Religion

Now an even more radical period is beginning. We are now faced with an enormous creative task: the reforging of religious form on a global basis and in the unfamiliar post-classical metaphors.

This is such a radical shift that it is very easy to take two steps forward and one step back. This is what has happened to almost everyone who is still trying to use the word "God" as if nothing has happened. Also, anyone who still talks about metaphysics as if there were literally some kind of mystical or rational second-story reality has slipped back into the classical mindset. The metaphysics of the classical two-story world is hovering in our memory like a huge mouth always ready to swallow us back into our familiar and comfortable past.

And yet another pitfall gapes all around us: namely, cutting ourselves off from the past and proceeding with some recently invented gimmickry. Scientology and est are two good examples of this. Both of them promise quick-fix healing of our spirit lives and deliver on their promise to a very considerable extent. Compared to slogging along in a decayed classical religion, both of these up-to-date secular associations provide awakening and spiritual (or at least psychological) growth. However, the price that must be paid for joining these movements is the replacement of any sense of historical depth with an all-too-neat set of modern teachings. These teachings are authenticated by a revered leader whose authority is taken as absolute and

whose teachings are beyond question. This is one way that these movements are still trapped in the classical past. They preserve the motif of authority! But for the most part, each is a new "religion" which has concluded or cut off the dialogue with thousands of years of religious creativity.

The "middle road", which I want to describe and recommend, is a way of proceeding into the future that does not cut off the dialogue with the past. The future of religion is not to be understood as the creation of a new religion to add to the maze of religions we already have. "Creating another religion" is the way someone still trapped in the classical metaphors thinks and acts. Nor does the future hold the end of religion as a key dynamic in social and personal life. A continuity with all the religious creativity of the past can be maintained even in the midst of announcing a dramatic discontinuity in the history of religion.

One of the key qualities of the future of religion will be the end of religious parochialism. However, this does not mean terminating the dialogue with the past. As soon as I am committed to a global future, the whole history of religion on the planet becomes my heritage, not just my Protestant Christian upbringing. Every part of the past is available to me as a resource for building the future of my religious life. I don't have to master it all. No one could! But I do not need to fear learning from any heritage. This becomes even more clear when I realize that every classical heritage is obsolete, including my own. The dread of this chaotic situation becomes also fascination and excitement if I do not forget that whatever is real is good. The death of classical religion is good. The global future of religion is good as well.

#### The Dialogue With the Pre-Classical Eras of Religion

Not only the classical, but also the pre-classical eras of religious

creativity are important resources for us. Each classical religion, as it fought for its life in its place of origin, found it necessary to push against the religions that preceded it. This resulted in breaking the strait jacket that those religions had become. But it also resulted in depreciating certain values that pre-classical religions held in being. For example, classical religion maintained that the older religions had unduly divinized nature and the vitalities of the human body. While this may have been true, it was also true that pre-classical religions had preserved an authentic love for nature and the human body that was often lost by classical religions. Classical religions -- not always, but frequently -- so feared "demonic attachment to the flesh" that they depreciated the body and nature. In extreme cases, the material world and human desire were seen as evil realms from which the spirit self had to be delivered. The refreshing naturalness of much pre-classical religion stands as a corrective to this classical overemphasis on spirit consciousness. Pre-classical religion saw awe in the natural forces of the earth and the forces of bodily human existence. It had close ties with what I call "feeling consciousness" or "the heart".

D.H. Lawrence, in his poetic travelogue called, Etruscan Places, examines the qualities of the Etruscan civilization, the civilization that existed in Italy prior to the Roman and Greek civilizations that conquered that ancient people. Here are a few quotes from this colorful book:

"The human being, to the Etruscan, was a bull or a ram, a lion or a deer, according to his different aspects and potencies. The human being had in his veins the blood of the wings of birds and the venom of serpents. All things emerged from the blood-stream, and the blood-relation, however complex and contradictory it might become, was never interrupted or forgotten. There were different currents in the blood-stream, and some always clashed: bird and

serpent, lion and deer, leopard and lamb. Yet the very clash was a form of unison, as we see in the lion which also has a goat's head.

"But the young German will have nothing of this. He is a modern, and the obvious alone has true existence for him. A lion with a goat's head as well as its own head is unthinkable. That which is unthinkable is non-existent, is nothing. So all the Etruscan symbols are to him non-existent and mere crude incapacity to think.

. . . . .

"The old religion of the profound attempt of man to harmonise himself with nature, and hold his own and come to flower in the great seething of life, changed with the Greeks and Romans into a desire to resist nature, to produce a mental cunning and a mechanical force that would outwit Nature and chain her down completely, completely, till at last there should be nothing free in nature at all, all should be controlled, domesticated, put to man's meaner uses."<sup>5</sup>

In a similar vein, I also enjoyed the King Tutankhamen traveling exhibit. Some of this pre-classical Egyptian art made a powerful impression on me. I was struck both by the odd absence of the controlling ego-perspective and by the immediate contact with nature and with some secret mystery that nature seems to hold.

I believe that the future of religion needs to unite these elements with our heightened spirit consciousness. In fact, we can already observe in our time a strong beginning in the recovery of a deeper love for the human body and for feeling consciousness, and for communion with nature as a vital living force. We cannot go back to the pre-classical era but we can go forward in dialogue with pre-classical religion and thus carry its gifts with us into the future.

Perhaps even more than pre-classical civilization, the religious creativity of pre-civilization has treasures for us. I find the art and stories of the Australian aboriginals very intriguing. These people of such ancient heritage are interesting in their marked contrast with the white-western Australians. I taught an eight-week program in Australia attended by both whites and six aboriginals from a fairly traditional village. In the discussions, the aboriginals were not adept at rational thinking, but they could illustrate religious insights with elaborate stories. I remember when one of the women spoke we all sat and pondered how what she had said related to the discussion. Once we understood what she was saying, we were amazed at her depth of life awareness. Another high point for me was when one of the men came up to me after my lecture on states of awe. He said, "When you talk about the mystery in life, I hear you in my own stories." I will never forget that moment with this man who had roots 25,000 years old in a place which was for so long isolated from the influences of civilization.

This dialogue with the consciousness of pre-civilization is somehow important to me and to my civilization. I want inwardly to know the human story before civilization came to be. I want to feel my own way back through the history of primitive people to the day that our species first became conscious, first spoke, first created a cultural form. I want to sense after the terror of becoming human for the first time. I want to identify with the terror of losing that fragile hold on humanness and falling back into sleepy animalhood. I want to understand the nature of human consciousness in its closest proximity to the biological nature in which it arose. I want to sense my union with the whole drama of biological evolution. I need roots in earthy, blood and bones biological reality. I need it to stand firm in my humanness in these times of technological achievements which distract me into an

all-too-consuming preoccupation with the creations of the human mind. I want the civilization building of tomorrow to honor human biology and the whole life system of this planet. I want human nature, as an experience in my own personal life, to be so vivid to me that it illuminates the whole history of my species. I believe that an important part of "third-wave" religion will be some sort of "half-scientific/half-poetic" story of the origin of human consciousness and its long journey to our own time.

## Chapter VI

### The Recovery of the Body

Much of the rejection of classical religion by contemporary secular people has centered around an attempt to reaffirm the body. Psychologists, novelists, essayists, have all attacked religion for its ascetic and moralistic suppression of sex and other desires and feelings. Not only Victorian England, but the whole of Western civilization has emphasized mind, ego strengths, and spirit awareness to the neglect of the body. Westerners who have been appalled at the ascetic practices of some Eastern religions have nevertheless had a mental and moral asceticism of their own. Hence they have also been appalled at the sexual and emotional frankness of other Eastern religions.

A full and authentic recovery of the body has not been easy for Westerners. All the early psychologists bore the pangs of this civilization's attitudes toward the body. And a writer like D.H. Lawrence would have been burned at the stake by some if that had been legal. In subtler forms these old attitudes extend into the 80's. The need for helping people become aware of their bodies is still immense. Though we are more candid about sex, there is a tendency to mechanize it and split it off from sensuality and emotion. Though seeking help for our emotional lives is now a common practice, there is still much foggiess about the importance of the body and its feelings. And the importance of the body in relation to authentic spirit consciousness is especially cloudy.

#### MOVING BEYOND CLASSICAL RELIGION

Much of our remaining disparagement of the body is related to the ways our minds and spirits are still trapped in the decaying residues of the

classical religions. Some classical religions set up a total dualism -- the bad material realm versus the good spirit realm. Anything finite and corruptible was not worthy of our deepest love. We must love only the eternal and the eternal part of ourselves. Thus, earthly love was a "vale of tears" to be escaped now in our devotional attitude and to be escaped forever after death.

Even classical religions which did affirm the body as good tended to set up a hierarchy in which the body was good, but the mind was better, and the spirit best. Or in some Asian religions, it was the mind that was good, the body better, and the spirit best. In either case, the body was depreciated in relation to the really valuable spirit. Sometimes this was very subtly accomplished by picking a certain spirit capability of the human being, like the capacity for detachment, and then using that capability as the means by which the whole personality was to be "integrated". The result of this, no matter how successful the integration, was to imply that the capacity for detachment is better than the capacity for free-flowing emotional expression or the capacity for sexual love or for other aspects of the total human individual.

The various distinctions that classical religion made concerning "natural" and "spiritual" capacities of the human personality was an important contribution to human awareness. And classical religion's unique passion to demonstrate the power of the spirit capacities is understandable; after all, this was the gift they were contributing. But we who have received these gifts, now have our own 20th century problems. Why should the spirit capacities be any more valuable than all our other capacities? And is the spirit life itself undermined by neglecting the life of the body?



If you are concerned to escape from the bodily or material life and all its frustrations, then you have a reason to give spirit capacities a promotion -- assuming these capacities can indeed effect that escape. But suppose there is no escape! Suppose living my finite life with all its frustration is the only real and authentic destiny I have. Suppose authentic spirit consciousness is only possible in and through that finite bodily life. Then the value of my body and all its capacities becomes no less important than my spirit capacities. Then my body is not a means to the end of my spirit life. My body is gathered up into authentic spirit living as a constituent component.

This understanding of the body is contained in the post-classical metaphors we discussed in Chapter Four. The relational self is a relation to reality through the body. Spirit awareness comes to me in the first instance as a feeling in my body. Awe is a feeling in my body as well as an alien image in my thinking and a new courage in my will. And the active aliveness that comes with the resurgence of spirit is likewise expressed through the body. This is an extremely earthy understanding of spirit consciousness. Humankind is not a collection of immortal souls stuck in their unfortunate dying bodies. Humankind is that part of the mud of planet earth that has evolved into a living being with these remarkable spirit capacities. And this does not mean that humankind is mud; it means that mud is stranger than we thought. The whole natural world is strange from its colliding protons in a blazing star to the equally astonishing development of beings who feel, talk, think, and stand in awe over the whole drama. Such an understanding of spirit consciousness affirms not only my body but the whole realm of nature and history of which my body is part.

## BEING ONE WITH REALITY

The affirmation of all nature and all history calls to mind a theme that has been present in many classical religions: being one with reality. However, whenever I hear contemporary mystics, Christians, Buddhists, or even est graduates talking about being one with reality, I tend to be quite leery about what is meant. What "reality" is it I am to be one with? Is it a spirit realm that I am to be one with? And does being one with it mean I have escaped mortality and entered into my immortal being? And how am I one with it? Does being one mean I am no longer a unique individual but that I and the other purified souls are drops of clear dew in the same cosmic ocean? So many modern "one with" understandings are reworded versions of these very old ways of disparaging the body and disparaging the unique individual finite existence that being a body makes possible. Any such religious philosophy blocks a genuine recovery of the body.

"Oneness with reality" could mean something quite different. Oneness does not have to mean an escape from the body or from personal uniqueness. "Oneness with reality" could mean a relationship of reconciliation with reality. And such reconciliation does not mean that reality has become any less mysterious and alien to me. Reconciliation means that my relationship with reality is such that I allow reality to be as alien and mysterious as it is. In this context, if I speak of being one with another human being, I mean participating in a unity of understanding and shared spirit awareness that respects that person's uniqueness and personal boundaries. Such unity means sharing in another person's painful and wonderful struggles with conscious bodily living. This is made possible in that I am also experiencing my own unique struggles with conscious bodily living. Such unity is not an escape from my body, but means a reconciliation within myself as a relationship

toward living with other beings different from me. Such unity might be expanded to the whole animal kingdom. Contemplating cats, dogs, tigers, or porpoises can be an experience of unity with the mysteries of biological nature and with our own bodies. I am also fascinated with primitive marine life and spiders. A deep silent friendship with certain trees and house plants also has meaning to me. Even rocks are, to me, an object of serious contemplation, precisely because they are not living. Rocks make me wonder at the fact that I am living. And rocks are part of that strange environment out of which life came and within which life lives, and into which life decays. In all these ways, I can understand my oneness with reality without losing my authenticity in some escape from my body or from my identity as a unique development of finite capacities. Rather than escaping my body, I can see my body as my very link with all those aspects of reality with which I am united.

#### RECOVERING THE INTERIOR BODY

The practical task of recovering our bodies goes beyond simply embracing a philosophy which is more affirming toward the body. It includes the practical care of our bodies through exercise and diet and an adequate program of medical repair. Recovering our bodies also includes learning to pay attention to them as our means of being related to everything. The interior body, the body as feelings, is a crucial arena of this recovery. Many of us today are unskilled in discerning the difference between thoughts and feelings. Sadness is not a thought. If you feel sad, you feel sad somewhere in your body. Anger is not a thought. You feel anger somewhere in your body. Emotions are a different kind of bodily feeling than pain or hunger. Emotional feeling -- however mingled with thoughts -- is the body's ever-active process of registering the encounters of everyday life upon the interior self and also registering the actions of the self in response.

Every sensitivity, desire, or emotion is like a message from reality through my body to my consciousness. Every bodily feeling means something! It is to be trusted, though I may not know for what. My body is in touch with reality. My feelings are my mode of being in touch with my body. My mind and consciousness get out of touch with my body and with reality. But that is not my body's fault. In fact, my body signals me in quite definite ways when I am out of touch with reality or out of touch with my body. One part of human wisdom is learning to read these signals.

Let me try to illustrate this in terms of three feelings very frequently misunderstood and confused with one another: fear, dread, and anxiety. In common speech and in psychological literature these words are used in various ways. I am choosing one of those ways. The important thing to see is that I will use these three words to point to three different feelings.

Fear is the warning my body gives me when I am in some concrete danger. Say a man is pointing a gun at me. Or someone I am in conversation with is about to trap me in a lie. Or my wife is going to leave me. In all such situations, I am afraid. Some value of mine is concretely threatened. I can also become afraid by simply imagining the loss of such a value. All this is a normal part of my living. There is nothing I can do to keep from being afraid in a threatening situation. Nor do I need to. Courage is action in spite of fear, not the obliteration of fear. Courage is even the willingness to admit that I am afraid. Fear is just my body's way of telling me that something I value is being threatened -- perhaps in actuality or perhaps in my imagination. I do need to learn to distinguish between when I am experiencing an actual threat and when I am merely imagining one. My body can also help me with that, if I know how to pay attention to my body.

Dread differs from fear in that the object of the threat has been expanded to the inescapable mysteriousness of reality as a whole. In this instance nothing whatsoever can be done to escape the threat. The fullness of reality simply is dreadful whenever I am aware of it. Death is dreadful. Life is also dreadful. The mere thought of death happening to me turns on the dread. Also the mere thought of a new phase of my life (and the responsibility I am going to take on in order to live it) can upset my whole lower abdomen with dread. Dread, like fear, is just a normal part of living. But here the threat is not a concrete crisis to be dealt with. Here the threat is "my finitude as a whole". It is not even exactly a threat. It is just the awareness that I am a vulnerable and threatened being at all times and in all places and always will be. Dread is always some part of the experience of being aware of reality as reality really is.

Anxiety, psychologist Leslie Farber suggests, can be defined as "willing what cannot be willed".<sup>1</sup> For example, I almost always get anxious when I am on my way to an airport to catch my plane and get caught in slow traffic. Here I am -- willing to be at the ticket counter -- and yet my willing can do nothing to speed up this sea of cars. I can "go to pieces" in a situation like that. But what is the real source of my anxiety? The traffic? My desire to be at the airport? My finitude? My concrete inability to do anything that helps? No, none of these. My anxiety is caused by willing these cars to move faster and get me to the airport. This cannot be willed so I am anxious.

If, in the same circumstance, I were not passionately willing what could not be willed, but was instead able to surrender to the high probability of being late, I would not be experiencing anxiety.

Another example, I am playing baseball and I am up to bat with the bases loaded and my friends are watching. I get up-tight. "Up-tight" is good slang

for "anxiety". Why am I anxious? I am willing something that cannot be willed: inevitable success, a 1.000 batting average, at least an ability greater than I actually possess. The clutch hitter is the one who can do his best under pressure, that is, he does not get as anxious as other batters. The perfect clutch hitter wills to be in his situation, with his actual abilities, with his possibilities, with all the pleasure, excitement, fear, and dread he is actually experiencing. Because he is willing what can be willed, he is not anxious.

Sometimes seeing the specific source of our anxiety is not so easy as it is in these examples. Sometimes we show up in a sort of free-floating anxiety, and we have no idea what it means. In a situation like that, we may be tempted to will away the anxiety. But that is not something that can be willed, so trying to do so creates more anxiety. The first step in getting to the bottom of such an anxiety is to will to be in the anxiety I am in -- to go ahead and experience my anxiety fully. Then, let us say, I become aware that I am sad about my friend leaving and that I am not willing to be sad. Since willing away sadness cannot be willed, I have become anxious. If, having seen this, I then surrender to being sad on this occasion and experience my sadness fully, the anxiety will disappear (providing, of course, that this willed-away sadness was the whole cause of my anxiety). It may be that I have mixed in some childhood experience of having been left by my parents with the current experience of my friend leaving me. Then if I have tried to will such past experiences not to come up into my consciousness, I am again willing what cannot be willed. However complicated actual living may be, anxiety is a feeling that only exists when I am willing something that cannot be willed.

This makes anxiety a very important feeling and a very important clue to us about what is happening in our lives. This grasp of anxiety allows us to

view with new eyes the New Testament saying, "Be not anxious". If in the full round of our living we are to "be not anxious", we must learn to will the existence of what is actually there. Such willing is actually a surrender of our tendencies to will to be in a different life or to will to be in this life with different possibilities, or (what amounts to the same thing) to will to be infinite, that is, to be unlimited in some way we are in fact limited. So if we have chosen to devote ourselves to the attitude that being limited is bad and is something to be willed away, anxiety will become a serious and all-consuming problem of our lives. If, on the other hand, we have chosen to devote ourselves to the attitude that our actual finite existence is good, then whenever anxiety comes to us, we will see it as a signal that we have left the track of affirming our real life. Getting back on the track begins with embracing our anxiety as good -- good, but it is a sign that we are not willing to be realistic somewhere in our lives. If we are then led to the real cause of our anxiety, we may find a way to surrender to living more realistically and thus to lessening our anxiety. When our anxiety disappears, we may still have fears and dreads, but fear and dread are different than anxiety. Fear and dread are just part of the basic adventure of realistic living. Fear is just a messenger that some danger is near. Dread is just a messenger that the fullness of reality is near. Such messages help us to live our real lives. And if we are willing to surrender to realistic living, we can overcome anxiety and become "clutch hitters" doing our best with the circumstances given to us.

All our other feelings are, likewise, messengers and guides to us. The feeling we might call "despair" is, like anxiety, an indicator that we are not willing to live realistically. Actually despair, seen as a feeling, means that we are being caught by reality -- arrested in one of our attempts to get away

with unrealistic living. I discussed the dynamics of this in Chapter Two.

Most of our feelings are signs of quite simple and straightforward things. We are sad because we have lost something. We are exuberant because we have something we want very much. We are frustrated over some unfulfilled desire. We are content over some fulfillment. Whatever its meaning, no feeling is in itself bad or shameful or immoral. Anger, hurt, longing, loneliness, falling in love, fascination, peace, joy, ecstasy -- all these are just signs that something important is going on in our lives. We may not know what, but we can trust our body to be doing its best to tell us. No wisdom about feelings is more important than this simple point: all our feelings are good. None are immoral. And even when a feeling is telling us something about ourselves which we do not wish to know, still, it is good for us to know the truth. All our feelings are messengers of the truth, not evil forces trying to harm us.

Living our feelings, sharing our feelings with other people, is not an easy art. Yet we can learn to do it. However difficult it may be at various times in our lives, the depth of our realistic living depends upon learning to listen to our own bodies. Sharing our feelings with those we choose to be close to is the key to satisfying relationships and to the accuracy of all interpersonal communication. These simple awarenesses bring me back to the key point of this chapter: the combination of the wisdoms of the body with the wisdoms of the spirit in our practical conscious living is one of the very most important passageways into the future of authentic religion.



## Chapter VII

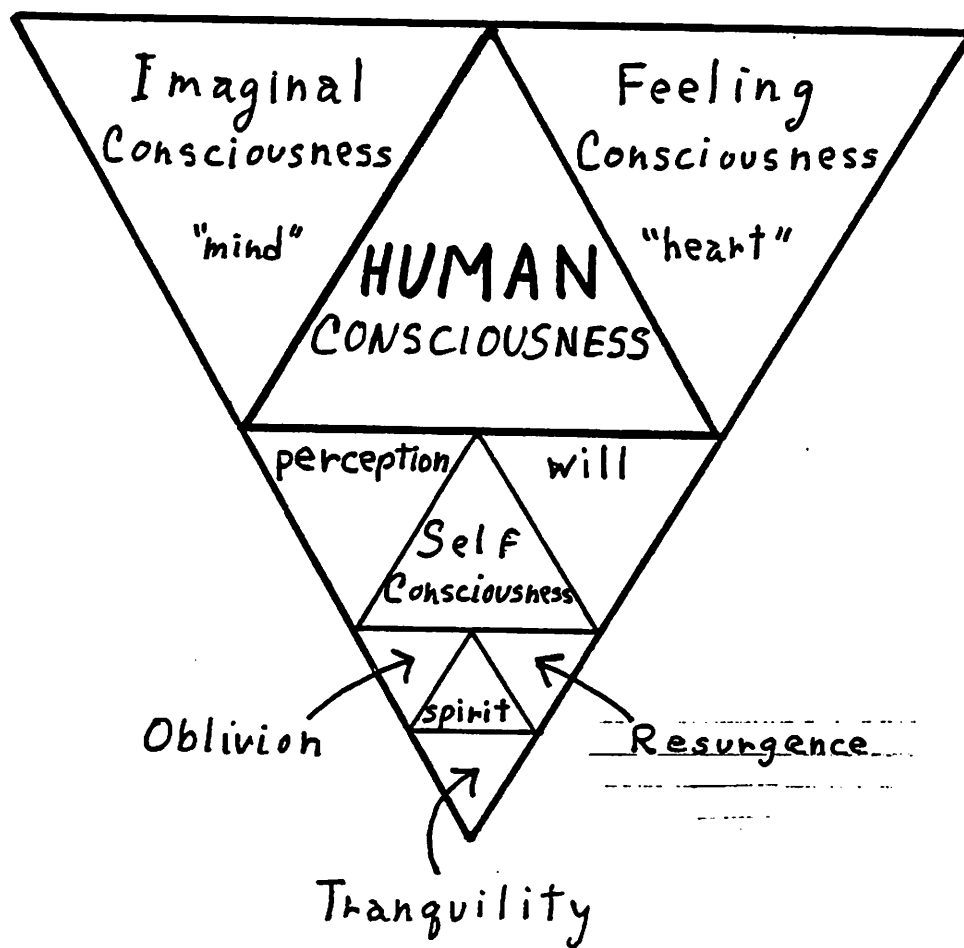
### A Contemporary Map of Spirit Consciousness

This chapter might be described as a summation of the discoveries of the classical religions, expressed in the new post-classical metaphors. This chapter is also the presentation of a psychological map of the spirit aspect of human consciousness. Charles Hampden-Turner wrote a book called Maps of the Mind in which he briefly described and diagrammed how a wide variety of classical and contemporary thinkers have mapped the world of interior consciousness.<sup>1</sup> Nikos Kazantzakis, D.H. Lawrence, Hermann Hesse, and other modern poets and novelists have also drawn some very interesting maps of the spirit realm. In classical Christianity, many fascinating maps were drawn, few more thorough than St. Teresa's Interior Castles and St. John of the Cross' Dark Night of the Soul. We can also discern maps of the spirit realm in the lurid poetry of classical India and in the sagacious wisdom of classical China and Japan. In fact, no religious heritage or era was without its maps of spirit consciousness.

The following map I prefer above all others, including many other maps I have drawn myself. I began a description of this map in Chapter Three.

#### Illustration # 10

I will now describe Oblivion, Resurgence and Tranquility in greater detail and give names to the various "countries" on these three "spirit continents".



## THE STATES OF OBLIVION

"Ah, it is very hard to change and be different.

It means passing through the waters of oblivion."

D.H. Lawrence, "Change"

"God, but it is good to have died and been trodden out,

trodden to nought in sour dead earth,

quite to nought,

absolutely to nothing

nothing

nothing

nothing."

D.H. Lawrence, "New Heaven and Earth"2

Death. Death is not simply the end of my life. Death is a quality of every single moment of living. Each moment passes away forever. Like the sound of a grandfather clock, my life is "tick, tick, tick, tick, tomb!" Death is a companion that walks with me on the entire path of my life.

Special events, like the death of a person close to me, or the loss of a valued possession, or the announcement of a terminal illness, may bring death to the forefront of my consciousness. If so, such a moment is an "awe-full" encounter with the oblivion that surrounds my life at all times. In such moments, oblivion exists as a state of being, a state of being conscious of my actual life.

At a time of facing personal death, people may experience many things: frustration of their desires, sorrow over partings, rage at a disappointing life, anger at particular people who disappointed them, fears that have to do with memories of previous times of pain or helplessness. All these things,

though wholesome and important, are not what I mean by the spirit experience of oblivion.

The following aspects of an experience of dying are what I mean by the awe of oblivion: stunned by the unyielding sternness of reality, sober terror over the inevitability of my own death, intense shock at the finality of non-existence, disorientation before the irrationality of such things. The question, "Why?" receives no answer from the abyss of mystery that opens its mouth in front of me. My fragile life, stripped of all my familiar modes of operating, seems absurd. I may also be fascinated over the sheer wonder of such a final boundary. And I may be intensely alert to the preciousness of the fleeting life that still remains. All these images and feelings connect me to the experience of oblivion.

No Escape. As the journey of consciousness proceeds, we enter even deeper awarenesses of oblivion. The oblivion experience grows into what seems to be a second world of reality penetrating each and every "when" and "where" of our specific daily living. Every "place" becomes a land of mystery. Every "time" becomes a moment of awe and wonder.

The prophet Amos told a story about a man who fled from a lion only to meet a bear. He fled from the bear, ran into a house, laid his hand against the wall, and a snake bit him. (Amos 5:19) The experience of oblivion, as consciousness increases, becomes like that. There is no place we can go to escape.

Where can I escape from thy spirit?

Where can I flee from thy presence? -- Psalm 139:7

The meaning of this ancient poetry begins to reappear when we see that "thy spirit" and "thy presence" point to a tremorous experience of mysterious

reality. In other words, the psalmist was saying, "How can I get away from all these dreadful awe-filling experiences of oblivion?"

If I climb up to heaven, thou art there;  
if I make my bed in Sheol, again I find thee.  
If I take my flight to the frontiers of the morning  
or dwell at the limit of the western sea,  
even there thy hand will meet me

and thy right hand hold me fast. -- Psalm 139: 9, 10

Up or down, east or west, everywhere awe meets me and grabs hold of me and will not let me go. Such intensity and constancy does not feel comfortable. I run away from it. But like the man racing in a field of tar, I am making no headway. The entire universe is haunted by the inescapable presence of oblivion. It's all around me everywhere; there is no place to go, there is no way to escape, and I'm absolutely vulnerable. I am caught in all my frailty and foolishness. The glaring light of reality gleams through all my proud explanations and arrogant behaviors.

Endless Void. The more conscious I become, the more consciousness I have to give up in the next step into oblivion. The stronger my spirit consciousness becomes the deeper is my pain in accepting the weaknesses my finitude always entails. If consciousness were measurable, a "ten" might be tempted to think herself or himself as some sort of infinite being when among mere "ones". But in the context of the whole journey of consciousness, a "ten" and a "one" are equal. Both experience the same amount of humiliation on their next step: total weakness, total death in the process of becoming something unpredictably new.

So this is what the continuing journey into oblivion is like. At the very time when I see more reality than I have ever seen, I have an experience

of blindness to what is really going on. At the very time when I am living a more meaningful life than I have ever lived, I have an experience of desert, a drying up of all meaning in my life. At the very time when I am sensing more authenticity than I ever have before, I have an experience of being alienated to the point of apostasy from what I know is real and good. It is as if all my confidence has suddenly become an endless sea of self-doubt. Such experiences have been aptly called the dark night of the spirit journey.

These deeply humiliating states of consciousness feel somewhat like the following experience: I have been a trusted and honored part of an intense group of colleagues, who, while I was away, change everything. I return to find I don't know what is going on. All the language is changed. All the definitions of success are now different. Nothing I have done or have become is worth anything anymore. I feel injured and deeply resentful. Why wasn't I told? Why wasn't I consulted? I wonder if I have been secretly excommunicated from the group.

This story is an apt metaphor for how real life always runs off and leaves me. And I, thinking of myself as a person of considerable strength and wisdom, find this ignorance hard to take. I sometimes think there must be something wrong with me. But this sort of suffering is not an illness. It is health. It is just what profound spirit consciousness is like.

The journey into oblivion also affects my active life. I have no choice but to expend my days in some manner. The more deeply I open myself to what is taking place in my life, the more intensely I experience the dread of being insignificantly engaged. The more I attempt to participate in the fullness of the world and its history, the more I sense the ineffectiveness of all my deeds. Furthermore, I begin to feel like a wanderer on the face of the earth, living in the spaces left for people who do not belong anywhere. All

my friends are only friends up to a point. The revolution I joined two years back is over now. The new revolution I am joining is not at home in the world and won't assure me a home in the future. Nothing is wrong with all this. It is just the normal suffering that goes along with increasing the depth of my realistic living. Finally, the very thought of responsibility for my deepest living is enough to make me weary. Sometimes my reading so strikes the edge of my struggle to be my deepest being that even my wide-awake mind and body grow tired with uncanny speed. Such weariness is not an illness. It is only a sign that deep action is being contemplated.

Intense action, in the midst of the hugeness and fullness of real life, is attended by a sense of ineffectivity, homelessness and weariness. If fulfillment means having a sense of success, roots and energy, then living the deep fullness of life gives us a sense of unfulfillment. We are always "on the way". We are never "there". The immensity of living always comes to us as a "greater distance to go". Such suffering might be characterized as being on a "long march".

The dark night and the long march are but two ways of talking about the spirit suffering that reaches its deepest point in what I will call the endless void. The endless void is the oblivion within oblivion. It is the experience of total non-existence happening to an existing ego. It is the emptying out of all temporal hopes and anxieties. It is the acceptance of total extinction. It is also tremendous relief. It is as if my whole life is a vacuum, a big empty receptacle cleaned out and ready for the fullness of profound living.

What poetry is adequate to describe this extremity? I once watched a Hindu family cremate the body of their father on a huge pile of wood. I watched as one of the men broke the skull with a club so it would not explode.

I was deeply gripped by the earthy drama of it all. Perhaps the endless void is like identifying with the small pile of ashes that remains at the end of such a rite.

#### THE STATES OF RESURGENCE

The ashes are beginning to burn.

FIRE appears in an empty hearth.

The cosmic cringe at the weakness of ash

Drove even the stalwart to sleep.

Yet only from ash will the fire arise.

The oblivion of strength is the spark.

The ashes are beginning to burn.

FIRE appears in an empty hearth.

Gene Marshall, 1969

Ha, I was a blaze leaping up!

I was a tiger bursting into sunlight.

I was greedy, I was mad for the unknown.

I, new-risen, resurrected, starved from the tomb.

Starved from a life of devouring always myself,

now here was I, new awakened, with my hand stretching out

and touching the unknown, the real unknown, the unknown unknown.

D.H. Lawrence, "New Heaven and Earth"<sup>3</sup>

Spirit Passion. Like the rising of the phoenix bird from its own ashes, the flames of spirit passion only occur on the other side of an experience of oblivion. Only when spirit suffering has reduced the old self to total ashes does a totally clear experience of spirit passion emerge.



The flame of spirit passion is a deep love for the real. It is a passionate attachment to the wholeness and depth of reality. It is a strange love that extends to all components of living, including dying and death. It is a love for mystery. It is a passion for both the dreadful and fascinating. It is a yearning for mystery and for fellowship with the full mysteriousness of reality. And yet it is also a reluctant yearning, for reality in its fullness is dreadful and demanding and overwhelming.

Reality is not me. Though I am part of and participant in reality, reality is more, by far, than anything I mean by "me". Loving reality is like a mouse in love with an elephant. It is a strange match. For all practical purposes, reality is infinite, I am finite. There is an unclosable gap between me and reality. Though I am closer to reality than my own breathing, I am also far away. My love of the real is constantly beset with a chronic sense of distance from the reality in which I delight. I am always yearning for reality as if it were somehow missing. I am thirsty with a thirst for reality that can never be quenched. I am longing for a union that never fully happens. I am on the road to a place that is infinitely distant. The longer I live with reality, the more mysterious it becomes. I never get used to mystery, for mystery moves on into deeper mystery and never quite feels like it used to feel.

Yet reality is my life. I have a passion to be real. I want to be closely in touch with reality, however new its sheer mystery, however intense the flame of increasing consciousness. Such passion is a fire that burns without my permission. I often wish it was not there. The feel of this passion is expressed in the words of this love song: "I don't know why I love you like I do, I don't know why, I just do." If the nature of loving a lover can be so

described, how much more so this passion for the wholeness of reality with all its utter mystery, pain, grandeur, and immense impact on my every moment of living. Yet my life has no place else to go. This consuming passion for reality is my life. I want nothing else. I delight in it -- however reluctantly. In the words of another love song: "You made me love you. I didn't want to do it. I didn't want to do it."

Secondly, spirit passion is an openness to reality, a trust of reality however mysterious reality may be. The flames of passion arise in the knowing that I cannot trust anything else but reality. This trust of reality appears to be built into reality itself. I don't have to drum up trust in reality. I don't struggle for it. One day I just believe that real life is worth living. In spite of all the suffering, estrangement, misdeeds and struggles, life as I have it is worth living. My significance equals that of any human being that ever lived. I don't want one moment of my life to go to waste. The need to be somebody stops screaming at me. I am somebody. I just believe that all my suffering, all my wonder, all my very specific living and dying are significant beyond measure. Such belief has nothing to do with believing doctrines or ideologies or any other type of beliefs. I am talking about discovering, in the depths of my self, my natural trust of reality.

Without such trust of reality, I will always twist reality into something I think I can trust. And I will similarly twist myself. Then as doubt enters into these delusions, I will openly despair over reality and over myself. Such despair will lead me to hate reality and hate myself. And I will further be consumed with anxiety that everything is getting worse and will never get better and that there is no way whatsoever out of this horrifying life. All this happens when I attempt to assure myself rather than noticing

within myself that I just believe that life is worth living, that I am significant, that my past is just my past -- reality holds no grudges against me, and that my future is open. Nothing stands in the way of my living boldly the reality that confronts me.

Thirdly, the flames of spirit passion are a power in my active living. In the movie, "Man in the Wilderness", the main character is left for dead in an open grave, his leg broken and his body mangled from his encounter with a bear. When he becomes conscious of his condition, he begins to crawl out to find water. I, watching the movie, heard myself saying, "Lie back down there. You deserve a rest." Then he catches a crawfish and eats it raw. He puts a splint on his own leg, hobbles after food, makes himself weapons, and eventually rejoins his companions -- who fear him and wished him dead. I experience along with him that strange raw passion for living. The other men in the film experience his power, too, and shudder at it. They also follow him as their new leader. This portrayal of a man's experience of total oblivion and of getting up from such oblivion to live a new, unfamiliar, and difficult life, reminds me that I also possess such power to overcome my anxiety over death and my anxiety over life.

Spirit passion is also the power to live with and deal compassionately with other human beings. I have been made aware of this power on those occasions when my public speeches had a strange impact on others. It is as if reality were providing an echo to what I say. The simplest witness out of my own life turns out to be LIFE as everyone is experiencing it. Even the hostile listener may realize that I have expressed something real that he knows even though he avoids knowing it.

I have also become aware of this power on those occasions when I have carried out some task which had, in all my previous experience, seemed

impossible to me. At the same places where I had been intimidated, I experienced the power to do what I deeply cared about. The same heavy responsibilities that had been crushing me were actually borne. Intense energy that I did not know I had, surged through me. It amazes me that the power to do the seemingly miraculous is a deep truth about my real life and every human life.

Spirit Care. Care is a second major component of those "states of awe" I am calling "resurgence". Care for my own self and care for others is a fundamental consequence of the existence of spirit passion flowing through my life. Such care is not a moral demand I choose. It is a state of being that chooses me.

(a) Care for Self. First of all, spirit care is experienced as I, myself, caring for myself. Many moments of living jar me into the awareness that underneath all my grumbling and suicidal tendencies, I do appreciate the fact that I am. In spite of everything, I am deeply grateful that I did not miss the chance to live my life and die my death.

When I was in high school, I drove my father's car to a regional track meet in Tonkawa, Oklahoma. I was driving home to Stillwater with three other members of the track team when an Oklahoma rainstorm came up quickly. For a while it rained so hard the windshield wipers could not handle it. When the rain let up, we resumed our speed on the wet road. As we went around one car, a woman leaned out of her car window and yelled, "You boys better slow down or you'll get yourselves killed." The road had hills and deep dips. As we came up over a hill, we found water clear across the road in the next dip. The car hit the water and I lost control of it. At that moment, the words, "You boys are going to get yourselves killed," echoed in my ears. "Is this it?", I wondered numbly as my attention was fixed on each detail of keeping the car sliding

smoothly. The car turned clear around on its wheels and slipped backward off the road into a six-foot drainage ditch. The back bumper was in the corn field and the front bumper was on the road siding. We opened the car doors over a small river of fast-moving water. As we slushed out through the soft mud, a wild disorientation consumed me. Am I alive? I am alive! I am ALIVE! I felt especially loved. In amazement I carefully avoided getting hit by passing cars. I was almost hilarious with gratitude for my frail existence.

I am often aware of this same gratitude -- like every time the airplane I am on lands safely. Even in the midst of a dull meeting, I can sometimes hear myself say, "How good it is just to be a human being here alive this moment."

Years ago, as I and those other three young men surveyed the world that we were alive in, the conditions were oppressively real. The car was in the ditch, I was going to have to face my father's anger and my mother's upset. I didn't know what to do next. The woman came by in her car and yelled again, "I told you boys you'd better slow down." I was alive all right, but in no other situation than that. The life I am deeply grateful for always comes to me in a given situation. I can't start over. There is no better universe next door.

I am part of life. What an unexplainable wonder it is to be part of life. I made it, on this planet, with a lot of other people and even though everything about life is strange and often disagreeable, I appreciate it. I do care. Each of us does. We just do care for our own lives and for the many small and large factors which make life real.

Care for myself manifests itself in specific living, but it is a deep state of my interior nature. It is the same state when I experience it today as it was when I was a teen-age boy. People in every culture from Australian

Aboriginals to modern Europe or China experience such care for self in the specifics of daily life, and each people speaks of it in the poetry of their own cultural heritage.

(b) Care for Others. Not only do I care, in the sense of appreciating my own being alive, but I also care for other human beings. It is not that I have been trained to care by my parents or my society. I just am concerned about other lives. My cultural training may even get in the way of my care. Such training usually helps me carry out my care. But care itself is not learned; it is released, discovered, allowed to flow from the well-springs of real humanness.

One day it just happens to me that I experience how very much I care for others. Perhaps I am reading my newspaper about how an old lady in a nearby park was killed by two young men taking her purse. Suddenly all the dull data about crime rates and low police salaries and citizen fear and apathy explode into a personal occasion of anger and disgust over the present state of things. I want a new kind of neighborhood. I want law enforcement to work. I want some kind of wholesome ordering of this urban chaos.

Or perhaps I am walking down a busy street, and I pass a wild-looking man, walking stiffly, waving his arms, and talking loudly to himself. Again, care breaks loose, yanking out of my memory the report that every fourth hospital bed is occupied by a schizophrenic. And furthermore, I am discouraged with almost all of our healing institutions. I want our society to do more about such intense and widespread suffering.

I have had the opportunity to visit some Asian, African and Latin American villages where people are without adequate nutrition, health care, modern skills or a vision of any possible change. Each time it is days afterward before the dull pain of such encounters surfaces in my life and reveals

to me that I care. It does not matter that solutions to such situations are difficult and long term. I care now. I do not wish to live in a total toleration of abject poverty. My care has nothing to do with moral obligations to do something, or join something, or donate something, or give up something. I just care. What to do about it is a totally separate issue.

"Love thy neighbor as thyself" is an empirical description of profound care. Only because that is true can the phrase also be an authentic command: be what you are -- care for self and others. When I pull back from my care of others, I become a narrowly focused person who is closed to much of my own experience. Similarly, a care for others which ignores care for self turns out to be a pride-filled practice of noble living which exalts myself at the expense of others and my true self.

Even though we all cover over our care with fear, bitterness, indulgence, apathy -- it is still true that people in every back corner of the world do care for the whole world. They often lack a relevant way to express it. When we say that someone does not care, we may simply mean that he does not conform to an ideal we have of the way we think he ought to care. Care is not any sort of ideal behavior. Real care is wild and self-motivating. When we define how care has to look and then expect it to look that way in ourselves and in others, we find that we have to whip up enthusiasm for it. Real care does not need to be whipped up. It is so powerful we do not quite know how to express it. It is so powerful that we flee from it, lest it lead us into a style of living that is too much for us.

In a modern telling of the ancient myth of Atlas, three boys are seeking their destiny. The third boy passed by silver and gold and finally came to where Atlas was holding up the earth. Atlas said he needed a drink of water

and a short break. After some reluctance, the boy was persuaded to hold the earth temporarily while Atlas was gone. The first five minutes were exhilarating, even though the load was very heavy. "I'm holding up the earth!" But when Atlas did not return in fifteen minutes, the boy became irritated.

"Where is he? I could have gotten six drinks of water by now. Perhaps he was hungry and had a quick meal. He'll be back soon." But after two hours, the boy began to howl with rage. "I am not able to do this much longer! Where is that guy? I have not been trained for this sort of work. There has been a horrible mistake." But he was, in fact, holding up the earth and he couldn't in good conscience put it down. After several days, his dull trapped feelings turned into a sense of almost hilarious absurdity. "How did I ever get into this? Why me? I am being laughed at. I am being ridiculed. I might have settled down for a quiet life somewhere and now look what has happened! I've got the entire world on my back." Still later, his whole life becomes a deep sigh. "Oh me! Atlas is never coming back." And still later, "It's up to me. I am it. I am Atlas, now."

Such deeply demanding care happens to very ordinary people in very ordinary circumstances. A secretary comes to realize that she is really in charge of what is happening to the whole office. A common worker suddenly sees that "the buck stops here", because there is no place to pass it. Not only do all of us stand on the shoulders of others, but we come to realize that we are shoulders on which others will stand. I take the baton and run my lap. I find myself "out beyond" all those I used to lean on. The ancestors are now counting on me to carry this task forward for the descendants.

One of the most accurate descriptions ever written of such care appears in J.R.R. Tolkien's <sup>The</sup> Lord of the Rings. In this story, Frodo, a small hobbit,



is deciding about taking the magic ring on a dangerous journey to the Mountain of Doom.

"All the council sat with downcast eyes, as if in deep thought. A great dread fell on him, as if he was awaiting the pronouncement of some doom that he had long foreseen and vainly hoped might after all never be spoken. An overwhelming longing to rest and remain at peace by Bilbo's side in Rivendell filled all his heart. At last with an effort he spoke, and wondered to hear his own words, as if some other will was using his small voice. "I will take the ring," he said, 'though I do not know the way.'"<sup>4</sup>

Spirit Freedom. Freedom is a third aspect of the states of resurgence. Spirit freedom is an empirical reality like the states of care and passion. What goes on in human life that we can call "spirit freedom"? Is there such a thing

- as:
- (1) freedom from my old images and freedom for creating new images?
  - (2) freedom from my old patterns of suppressing my feelings and freedom for expressing my feelings?
  - (3) freedom from my old perceptual viewpoints and freedom for new perceptual viewpoints?
  - (4) freedom from my old commitments of will and freedom for new commitments of will?

Or, putting all four of these questions into one question: is there such a thing as freedom from my old finite self and freedom for the creation of a new finite self? Obviously, I am answering this question, "Yes!"

I, the ego, might be called the "becoming self" -- the entity that has become what it is through my life time of relating to my environment and to my own functioning. My becoming self is the self that has developed since childhood into a particular personality, a particular accumulation of relationships with life which are fleshed out with all my skills, wisdoms, patterns,

commitments, and familiar behaviors. Spirit consciousness is that immensity of self out of which new "becoming selves" are born. The "spirit self" includes the freedom to become a different becoming self. The spirit self does not become, but simply is. It is a constantly changing flow of awe occasioned by the actual flow of reality as a whole. It is freedom. It is care for all that has being. It is spirit passion. It is the consciousness of oblivion. It is my "Great Self", the self I actually am, even though I behave most of the time from some very limited pattern of personality I have built up over the years. The spirit self is my unrealized potential even when I, the becoming self, might be thoroughly shocked and terrified of my own experience of the spirit "me".

Christopher Fry in his play, "Sleep of Prisoners", has his characters pronounce the word, freedom, FREE DOOM!<sup>5</sup> There is a ~~deep~~ insight in this pun. Spirit Freedom only exists on the other side of death. Until the old ego has entered into oblivion, there is no spirit freedom; for ~~each~~ choice is determined by the set of the old ego. Perceiving options, having choices to make, struggling to make concrete decisions -- all this goes on in the life of the self which is still bound to being itself, as well as in the life of the self which is free to choose to become a new self. The experience of spirit freedom is more than the experience of choosing. It is the experience of choosing a new self. It is the creation of a fresh departure in living that breaks with the patterns that describe the old self. Such freedom is an intentional embracing of death and an intentional embracing of new birth. It may be exciting. But it is also always dreadful and frequently downright terrifying. In other words, spirit freedom is always a state of being in awe.

In William Dale Jennings' powerful short novel, The Ronin, the title character, a great swordsman, become finally disgusted with his whole life and throws his precious sword as far as he can throw it, crying out, "I did it."

And thereafter he does something entirely different.<sup>6</sup> "I did it!" These three words stand out for me. I am the one who has been doing my life even though I have been unconscious of it. I thought I just was what I was. I thought other forces had made me do what I do. What a dreadful and exciting moment to see that I have been doing it and that I can start now doing something else.

Spirit freedom is always some kind of sharp corner in the course of living. It may be a seemingly small thing like admitting something rather than denying it. But that is a sharp corner. Each small step of change away from an old habit of living is a sharp corner. Such small steps are leaps into the unknown. Spirit freedom is an act of immense courage. Someone standing alongside me at such a moment may not see this clearly because they have not been the person I have been. They may say, "Well, it is about time you gave up so and so and started doing so and so." Clearly, it is one experience to watch someone else change and quite another experience to be myself in the full agony and excitement of elemental change.

Spirit freedom is self-transcendence in the sense that it leaps beyond the self I am and have been and into the new and unfamiliar future of becoming literally a different me. Spirit freedom teaches me how totally fragile my selfhood is. The entity I am is the construction of all my previous choices to relate to the factors of my environment and my potentialities to cope with and change that environment. Now, in the moment of spirit freedom, I experience myself choosing to modify the entity I am. All my talk about "finding out who I am" or striving to "actualize myself" suddenly seems a little foolish.

For such self discovery is merely a prelude to the real issue: what self will I now, at this moment, choose to become? Self discovery has taken on a whole new meaning: the discovery that I am freedom. Alongside the finite entity of my particular network of self-relations appears the "Great Self," the "Spirit Self," the Self which is freedom.

Spirit freedom is also a liberation from passivity toward the external factors that comprise my fate and a freedom for creative participation in the determination of fate in general. My life, and the life of humankind as a whole, is determined (that is, fated) by many factors. The natural environment, sun, rain, earthquake, storm, drought, animals, insects, birds, trees, ozone layer, the whole ecology of the planet, human society, all determine my life. Being born and having to die are two of the most obvious ways I am determined. Spirit freedom does not stop the fate of being determined. It adds an additional determiner to the network of determining forces. My freedom, in some finite measure, determines how all the other determining factors will determine me and my impact upon the environment in which I am an active agent.

The discovery of this dimension of spirit freedom is like being elected president of the world. I am actually able to respond to everything and therefore I am response-able for the outcome of everything. The amount of power or impact I may be able to mobilize for each factor in my world may be minimal or it may be amazing. But in either case, the response-ability exists. Even if I can accomplish little, I can do what I can do as an example for others who can perhaps do much more. I can do. There is no excuse. This entire world is my house. I am its architect. I am its builder. I sustain it. I destroy it.

The world has many builders. I am in conflict with other freedom-bearing beings over the outcome of each factor. But this in no way lessens my freedom;

it only provides the context in which the fruits of my freedom are limited or perhaps augmented by the power of others. Whatever be the situation, I have no one to blame for anything. I am inclusively response-able for the outcome of all things. Dreadful freedom!

Finally, spirit freedom is freedom from all images of good and evil and it is freedom for a disciplined life of creating an ever-expanding understanding of the good of realistic living. I have phrased this sentence very carefully in order to avoid misunderstanding on this often misconstrued dimension of spirit freedom.

Good and evil, right and wrong, all statements of value, all statements of principle, are invented by human beings just like automobiles, cloth, bread, and atomic bombs. Spirit freedom exists in the consciousness that I am the inventor of good and evil. My conscience is given to me by no outside authority. I create my own conscience. True, my society created a conscience for me (several, perhaps) and many of my peers expect me to honor that conscience, but I may propose a new conscience for myself and for my society as well. Insofar as I live by society's conscience without choosing it for my own, I am not experiencing spirit freedom. I am a "robot" of my social training.

Spirit freedom is disciplined commitment to the good of realistic living. Spirit freedom is absent whenever such commitment is lost. Illusions destroy freedom. Rebellion against the goodness of reality destroys freedom. Spirit freedom is the most radical obedience -- obedience to the way life is. When I deny my reality, I become unfree.

Here is one of the key paradoxes of life:

Freedom is only freedom to be free.

The freedom to escape freedom is called "bondage."

I can be in bondage to an old self, or to society's norms, or to a false reality. Freedom only exists on the other side of DOOM -- the oblivion of the old self. Freedom only exists in the presence of reality -- the always mysterious reality that produces awe. So whenever I have lost touch with reality -- with awe -- I am in some sort of bondage.

Spirit freedom always happens to us as a deliverance from bondage -- into a strange wilderness -- deliverance into the wilderness of having to reconstitute ourselves, deliverance into the wilderness of having to rebuild our environment, deliverance into the wilderness of having to invent good and evil in obedience to the good of realistic living.

Freedom, Care, and Passion describe the states of being that comprise the resurgence of humanness that appears on the other side of the experience of oblivion.

#### THE STATES OF TRANQUILITY

Ah no, I cannot tell you what it is, the new world  
I cannot tell you the mad, astounded rapture of its discovery.  
I shall be mad with delight before I have done,  
and whosoever comes after will find me in the new world  
a madman in rapture.

. . . .

Sightless and strong oblivion in utter life takes possession  
of me!

The unknown, strong current of life supreme  
drowns me and sweeps me away and holds me down  
to the sources of mystery, in the depths,

extinguishes there my risen resurrected life  
and kindles it futher at the core of utter mystery.

D.H. Lawrence - "New Heaven and Earth"<sup>7</sup>

In the midst of the most sober awe of oblivion, the deep silence of tranquility will sometimes appear. In the midst of the most flaming passion of resurgence, the deep stillness of tranquility will sometimes appear. Tranquility is both a deep acceptance of oblivion and an active enlistment in the vocation of resurgence. Death and rebirth, oblivion and resurgence, these are the yin and yang of spirit consciousness. Tranquility is the appearance of another quality of awe, bubbling up at the very place where the tension between perpetual dying and perpetual rebirth becomes extreme.

Incomprehensible Peace. Tranquility is first of all a state of peace. In this deep state of peace, one has a sense of being without any problems. It is easy to think that I have problems. Perhaps my wife and I are having a fight. Perhaps my children are deeply troubled and I feel inadequate to help. Or I am stuck in old patterns I can't shake. Or my colleagues misunderstand my ideas and undervalue my work. Yet these are not "problems" that prevent me from living a full life. My life is a long list of such things, each of which tempt me into the illusion that I must live in gloom until this problem is solved. Incomprehensible peace is the ability to see that problems do not exist. All my "personal problems" are merely opportunities and challenges.

When I am working hard for something I care for and things are not working out, panic and hatred may seem to be inevitable. Yet this state of problemlessness does happen. If it does, I have a strange sense of ease and rest right in the midst of my frustration, my passionate care, my urgent responsibility,

the opposition of others. If I remain captured by the illusion that I have some serious problems, I find hatred of life growing up at the very places where I care the most. When problemlessness happens to me, I am content to live with and deal with my real life.

Unexplainable Certitude. It sometimes happens that a strange light breaks over everything. In spite of the finitude of all my knowledge, I am deeply assured that I know what life is about. Light shines over all my past and over all my future.

This state of being is like the lifting of a thick fog. "On a clear day you can see forever," says the song title. Everything was in a muddle. But now, at such a moment, I just know, even though it is hard to say what I know. The colors of the trees and flowers and buildings look brighter. I watch people; I listen to the news; I read a book; I see a movie; and I surprise myself with insight into the meaning of everything. It is as if things came together in my sleep last night. Some illumination happened to me like a flash of light way beneath the level where mental effort even functions. I see where I used to be blind. I am absurdly assured. I didn't figure this out. Such wisdom came from nowhere. I still realize that I can never trust all of my intuitions, but it now seems to me that I can trust reality to keep me real; therefore, I can trust myself after all.

Unspeakable Joy. What does it mean to be happy and realistic at the same time? What does it mean to take real delight in the full agony and glory of realistic living? We often live our lives in a fog of unhappiness, crying out, "I could be happy if I had:

1. A little more money
2. Better health
3. More esteem from certain people



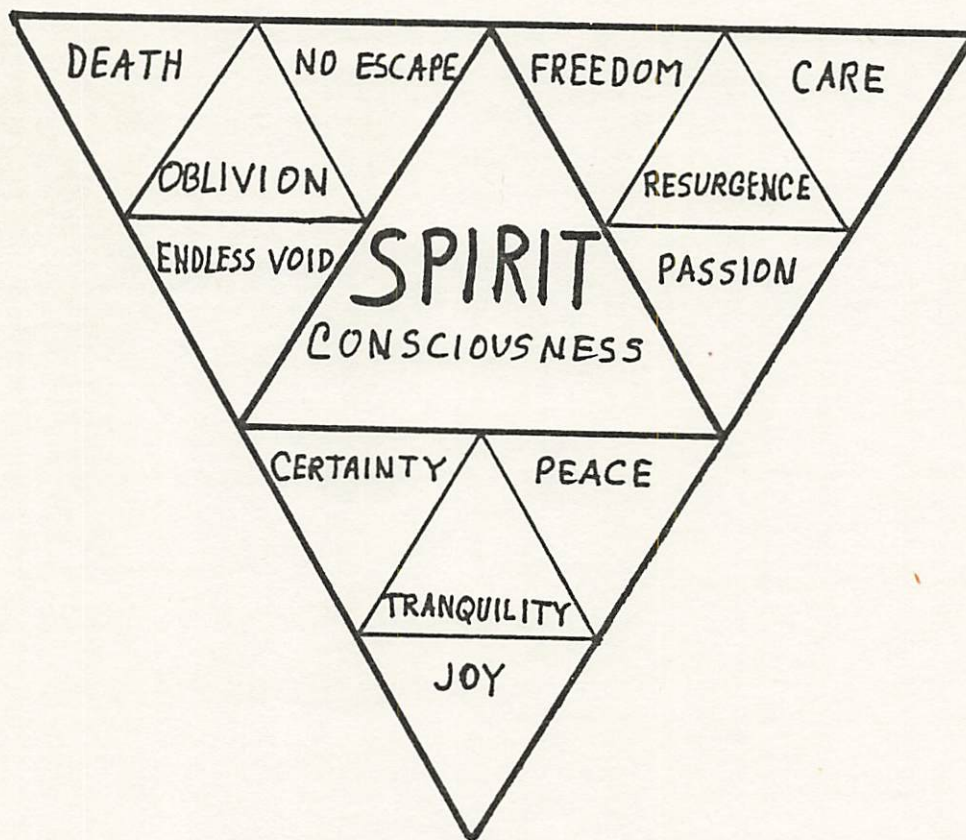
4. A wife who was not so x, y, and z
5. Children who were less this and more that
6. More time for a, b, and c
7. More this or that in my personal strengths
8. More noteworthy achievements."

Each of us has his or her own specific list. But such a list presupposes that I am unhappy. Yet no one of these items in my real life acutally makes me unhappy. If I experience myself as happy and someone asked me to list all the things that make up my happy life, the list would contain the some items. If I am happy, I am not happy because some of the specific items of my life are working well. If I am happy, I am happy in the midst of all the specific items of my life. Every mundane and trivial thing is not really trivial; it is filled with reality. If I delight in the real, everything is part of my happiness.

Stoic resignation to the status quo is not implied by this surrender to reality. Change is part of real life. Altering life in order to have more of the things I want for myself and others is not impossible or immoral. But life can never be made perfect. Insisting upon our unrealistic expectations is the source of our deepest unhappiness. A surrender to our real limits and our real possibilities undercuts the bitterness and resentments that result from such insistance.

I sometimes say, "Reality is too hard for me." But reality is not too hard. We are made for it. Fleeing reality is the truly unbearable life. Reality cannot be fled, so my attempts to flee lead to despair. Reality cannot be willed away, so I am anxious if I try. The deep truth is that I want it real, even if it is not easy. Real life is happiness.

When I am living this paradoxical happiness, my heart dances on in the midst of sorrow or gladness. Everything seems a gift to me: the rainy day, the work, the unwelcome interruptions, the simple pleasures, the workmates. My life is full and running over with aliveness. Everything is worthwhile. If I must die at this moment, I would die a happy death.<sup>8</sup> I would not want to miss even this dread moment of my life. I would play my last cards in an absurd exhilaration. My life and my death have an unassailable dignity. I am surrounded with happiness.



## HOLISTIC CONSCIOUSNESS

Probably, the details of the above description are not so important as the overview. For our concluding contemplation of spirit consciousness, here is a diagram that orders and names the states of being described in this chapter.

### Illustration # 11

All these components of spirit consciousness plus all the other aspects of consciousness exist together as one living whole. Overemphasizing one, neglecting another, leads to some kind of unreality.

For example, an emphasis upon tranquility without an adequate emphasis upon oblivion and resurgence will result in what I call indulgent mysticism. The great bulk of popular religious movements fits this category. They are indulgent because they pursue happiness and fulfillment without adequate attention to the necessity of depth personal change. It is easy to understand the appeal of an offer for a quick and easy solution to human fulfillment, especially one that entails no alteration of my old familiar patterns of living. The tragedy of this attempt to skip over oblivion and resurgence to quick bliss is that it simply does not work. All the quick bliss turns out to be just as quickly gone.

Or again, an emphasis upon oblivion without adequate emphasis upon resurgence characterizes the many forms of ascetic quest for nirvana. Here, release from the past self is sought with great energy, and the lucidity and soberness about that process is sometimes commendable. But something very important is sacrificed -- namely, the significance of daily life and the significance of participation in the great sweep of history.

P Or again, an emphasis upon resurgence without adequate emphasis upon oblivion will result in what we might call sentimental do-goodism. A passion for reality and a care for other lives is intended, but realism is missing. Engaging others at the point of demanding their radical change will be feared as harmful, or tactless, or impolite, or harsh. The virtue of severity is missing. True spirit wisdom never forgets that the process of dreadful dying to our old selves is an essential part of wholesome living for each and every person at every stage of life.

Another kind of imbalance can result from neglecting the whole realm of spirit consciousness. Emphasizing imaginal consciousness, feeling consciousness, perception and intentionality to the neglect of spirit consciousness is a characteristic of many contemporary philosophies of life. Frequently, we encounter strongly conscious therapists, social revolutionaries, or secular thinkers who rigidly reject the whole realm of spirit depth. Since this attitude blocks out the dynamics of change at the deepest levels of human life, such philosophies always lead to tyranny of one form or another. It may be the tyranny of the skilled mind over the mentally slow. It may be the tyranny of the emotional adept over the emotional novice. Eventually, the tyranny will emerge in some kind of social form in which the "more conscious" lord it over the "less conscious." "More conscious" usually becomes stabilized in some theory or ideology with which the "more conscious" resist becoming still further conscious. The learned cease to learn (at certain crucial points) and the learner is prevented from ever teaching certain "counter-revolutionary" insights. Everything becomes stuck in some rigid pattern like party and people, therapist and patient, trainers and trainees. As I said, this is inevitable whenever spirit consciousness is de-emphasized. Oblivion, resurgence and

- 100 -

tranquility are the great equalizers. On these three journeys, everyone is at the same level -- namely, a person of finite consciousness who is dying to that particular consciousness and building a new finite consciousness. The fellowship of spirit consciousness is a fellowship among equals.

On the other hand, emphasizing spirit consciousness to the neglect of imaginal consciousness, feeling consciousness, perception and intentionality leads to a contempt of the natural body and creates an illusory spirit consciousness. Authentic spirit consciousness exists only in the midst of our earthly biological wholeness. A flight into an "out-of-body" experience is actually a trip into some obscure corner of our own bloody brains. Actually there is no such thing as an "out-of-body" experience. All consciousness is no more and no less than some truly amazing function of the human body. There is no need to hypothesize a "spirit body" which descends into our "material body" and there struggles to return to its pure spirit realm. There is no pure spirit realm. There is no pure material realm, either. There is just one realm. All philosophies which posit a metaphysical dualism: (1) create an illusory understanding of spirit experience and (2) depreciate the wholesomeness of some or all of the following: flesh, body, feeling, nature, brains, mental function, society, historical process, ego, perception, will, personality, sex, intimacy, community -- the list is long.

Experiencing spirit is mixed inseparably with all aspects of our living. Furthermore, spirit consciousness is a positive energy that enriches imaginal consciousness, feeling consciousness, perceiving, and willing. The whole person is a spirit person, and the authentic spirit person is a whole person.



## Chapter VIII

### Personal Vocation and Social Responsibility

Sometimes an exclusive emphasis upon individual salvation and individual morality has characterized our inherited religions. But this is best understood as a narrowing of the larger picture to the personal and thus excluding the social. Some type of social ethic was an outgrowth of most classical religions, and we should expect the religion of the future to have a strong emphasis upon social responsibility. I believe we will see a union of the personal and the social. I believe we will see our own intensely personal experiences of reality as the living roots out of which our socially comprehensive thinking and action can grow. No more will we be asked to confront an authoritative system of oughts and duties. We will participate in creating our own realistic imperatives as an outward statement of our own inwardly felt and chosen authenticity.

#### PERSONAL VOCATION

The entry into this confusing, and yet exciting, subject can best begin with the question of personal vocation. "What am I going to do with my one life?" Given the vast changes in society, given the constant changes in my own perspectives -- what am I, being the person I am, in the society I am in, seeing what I see, passionate about what I am passionate about, going to do with my life?

The popular idea of vocation is basically this: having a career, a job, or an occupation. All of these concepts, as normally used, point to a means of fitting into the present social order in such a way as to make money, build a secure future, and, if possible, do something interesting. This view of vocation totally avoids the question of social responsibility. It answers the

question, "What am I going to do with my one life?" with a basically conservative and often cynical answer, "Fit in somehow and enjoy myself if I can."

Personal vocation, as I wish to redefine it, has many dimensions: (1) acquiring skills or expertise as mathematician, plumber, teacher, homemaker, or other specific fields of social function, (2) selecting the place, the reason, the purpose of my particular focus of action during my years on this planet, (3) choosing a mate or perhaps choosing not to mate, (4) choosing to raise or not raise children, (5) joining associations of friends and work colleagues, (6) taking care of my own person -- physically, intellectually, psychologically, spiritually. All of these and more are part of what I am doing with my life. All of these are part of my vocation. However, each of these aspects of my vocation is a fragmenting involvement unless some kind of "inclusive context for realistic living" undergirds all these components of vocation and unites them into an "overall life thrust". This "overall life thrust" is my personal vocation. My vocation is my whole life!

My "inclusive context for realistic living" is a somewhat consistent array of rational models in process of continual change. This whole book is an example of such models. My "overall life thrust" is another somewhat consistent array of rational models in process of continual change. Being a writer of a certain sort is one of several components in my own "overall life thrust". I also talk to myself about being a contemplative researcher who is focused upon the total transformation of global society and especially its religious forms. These are bare-minimum illustrations of a large fuzzy picture that I have of my overall life thrust -- a picture I am constantly changing in its particulars and, less often, in its overall quality.

Each person's "overall life thrust" will be unique to him or her. Persons living and working together will have many common elements, but each person is



still actually building his or her own life thrust and choosing the companions with whom he or she is sharing a common life thrust.

In the wisdom of both the Old and New Testaments of the Bible, realistic living begins with this very broad context for personal vocation:

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself."

Luke 10:27

Translating these words into our modern metaphors they simply say:

Love reality with all your interior and exterior being.

And love your "human others" as you love yourself.

This second commandment, said to be "like unto the first", can be broken down:

1. Love your self in a realistic manner.
2. Love your mate as you love your self.
3. Love your community as you love your mate and your self.
4. Love your planet as you love your community, your mate, and your self.

I have broken "neighbor" down into "mate, community and planet" in order to introduce these three distinguishable areas of commitment to realistic living. The love for my own person is a necessary presupposition to understanding love for another person or love for my society. The nature of realistic love for myself defines what realistic love for others means. Person, mate, community, and planet -- these are four major components of realistic living. An "overall life thrust" which is rooted in commitment to realistic living must consider carefully each of these four arenas.

And what does "love" mean? In this context love is not sexual or emotional attraction. This "love" is passion for reality, and in that context care for self and others. I discussed in the previous chapter the sort of passion and care which is essential to human spirit consciousness. This "love" also

means an ongoing commitment of the will to freely-created action which is appropriate to this passion and care. So this love is both a passion and a choice to act. It is the choice to be committed to self, mate, community and planet.

### I COMMITMENT TO MY PERSON

Commitment to my own person means a firm belief in my own worth. Commitment to my own person means a discipline of action that moves away from my negative thoughts of myself, and my inflated thoughts of myself and moves toward realistic visions of what I can be and do and know. I am a limited, yet very great, potentiality to function in my situation. If I want to increase my realization of that potential, I need to become conscious of the internal and external dynamics of my own person. I need to learn how to get more awareness, more performance, more fulfillment from being the being I am. This is a unique task. No one else can do it for me. I certainly need help from others, but I must seek the help I need and choose to use it.

Commitment to myself means a deep respect for my own body as well as my own mind. It means a willingness to risk increasingly deeper consciousness of what I am and what I can do. It means launching out into the dread and fascination I experience in my own elemental depths. This means some kind of personal discipline, probably including reading, journal keeping, exposure to art, diet, exercise, travel, frank conversation, and religious exploration. It means planning and purposeful growth in the directions most meaningful to me at this time in my life.

In this planetary period of history, we are not becoming less in awe over the individual person. The more we become planetary people externally, the more we experience the true depths of our own interior persons. We can no longer stop

at becoming wise about the Western discoveries of humanness or the Eastern appropriations of humanness or African humanness or American Indian humanness. We are being challenged to become wise about humanness itself -- world-wide and history long. And such wisdom is not merely exterior information, but fresh interior experience of the potentialities of my own most personal life. I, the individual human being, am as amazing and wondrous and unfathomable as the entire planet.

## II COMMITMENT TO MY PLANET

There was a time when each member of the human species was committed at most to a tribe. He or she hunted and gathered food for the tribe. Children were raised for the tribe. Fighting was done in defense of the tribe. Each person expended his or her life within and for the tribe. Commitment may have extended to lands, trees, animals, and the tombs of the dead; but even these were, in a way, tribal realities.

With the birth of civilization, tribes were banded together or broken up and the commitment of each person was expanded in scope. One lived in an agrarian village which was part of a broad cultural, political, and economic system. One now raised grain and children for the civilization. One went to war for the civilization. Ten or fifteen percent of the population lived as part of some aristocratic group. These upper classes painted, sculptured, invented, governed, raised sons and daughters, for the civilization. The laws of the civilization were obeyed and the celebrations of the civilization were attended as part of this broad commitment to the civilization. Lethargy was overcome and work was done as part of one's commitment to being "civilized" -- that is, taking a meaningful place in the broad sweep of things.

In the last few hundred years another transition has been underway. The commitment of each of us has been expanded again -- this time to the entire

planet. We are now planetary people whether we wish to be or not. Loyalty to our nations has been a transitional phase of our emerging planetary loyalty. Sometimes nations sought to control as much of the planet as possible. At other times nations sought to escape from the control of other nations. But the planet was the emerging focus of commitment. World wars, the atomic bomb, and the atomic weapons build-up made the destiny of the planet an immediate practical concern for every fully conscious person.

Immense industrial activity has shown us how the whole planet is vulnerable to human pollution and how every part of the planet is dependent upon every other part. Everyday life for everyone has become planetized. Airports flock with every skin color, hair texture, and eye shape of human being. The big newspapers and television news programs report events from all over the world. We watch an astronaut step on the moon. We stare at photographs of the whole earth taken from outer space. We know that this fragile planet is our home.

There is no way to escape some kind of commitment to the planet. The truth is we now raise grain for the planet. We bring up our children for the planet. We must educate our children for a planetary life. If we care for health, we care for the health of the planet. If we produce goods, we produce goods for the planet. If we sell goods, we sell goods to the planet. No work or expenditure is without its planetary meanings.

In any era, criminals, unjust holders of power, and others can refuse to be committed -- whether to a tribe or to a civilization or to the planet. But today such refusal needs to be seen as refusal to be committed to the planet. Whether in self-conscious commitment to our planet or in lack of commitment to our planet, we are now all planetary people. A full commitment to realistic living does not exist when the whole scope of our planetary life is ignored.

### III COMMITMENT TO MY MATE

"In the beginning . . . male and female . . . created He them." The ancient wisdom of every classical heritage contains the awareness that the relationship between man and woman is somehow profound, certainly unavoidable, and filled with the elementary mysteriousness of life itself.

Union with my own biological reality and union with the opposite sex are deeply interconnected. Falling in love, sexual union, building an enduring closeness, taking a mate -- such participation in living leads into the deepest levels of living and wonder. All our folk wisdom witnesses to the truth that a good marriage makes him a better man and her a better woman. The intense nature of many courtship struggles shows that overwhelming values are at stake in the choice of a mate. Successful couples tell about the years of painful movement into an ever deeper experience of living. This elemental human journey usually begins with dating a number of persons and moves on to intense closeness with one person. A long term commitment to a mate is the even deeper level of this same human journey. "The two became one" is poetry that points to an actual experience of deep commitment to realistic living.

The power of such experiences are frequently seen; however, we often overlook the significance the mate relationship has in the whole picture of realistic living. Having a mate is not just something one does as a social custom. The outward form of mating is not the same as deep interiorly experienced commitment to a mate. Having a mate is not something one does for the sake of the community. Mating stands by itself as one crucial fulfillment of humanness. The wholesome consequences a good couple brings to the life of a community and to the lives of other individuals is a by-product. But, in the first instance, having a mate is not for the sake of anything else. Having a mate is for the sake of having a mate. Mating is one of four basic pathways into the depths of living

and into the wonder of reality.

The deepest levels of the mate relationship have been obscured by our rigid patriarchal patterns and by the tyranny of moral oughts and rational objectivity over the passions, desires, and feelings of the human body. True intimacy between a man and a woman is both rare and intensely disturbing when it begins to exist. The intimacy we often long for, turns out to be the place where men and women begin to feel loved enough to allow to come to the surface their deepest injuries, hurts, angers and defensive patterns. Few of us are skilled at dealing with such awesome energies. The result is an amazing amount of domestic upset and sometimes violence. Some suburban police forces report that 80% of their calls are about domestic squabbles and/or batterings. Some researchers on battered women and children say that one out of three homes has been the site of at least a few occasions of beating or abuse. These are but the extreme illustrations of a general lack of intimacy skills. Potentially, intimacy is a powerfully healing environment. Both men and women want it and need it. But we are all of us still novices in our ability to pass through the many dark-nights of a healing intimacy into the health, maturity, life energies and profound pleasure that wholesome intimacy can release.

#### IV COMMITMENT TO MY COMMUNITY

By "community" I mean those relationships that constitute my immediate experience of social reality. It includes my children, my parents, my brothers and sisters, my friends, my work colleagues, my neighbors, those I help and those who help me, all the way out to my casual acquaintances. When my community is healthfully functioning, it is fulfilling all three of these functions in my life.

(1) It nurtures me as an individual person.

(2) It enables me to nurture other individual persons.

- (3) It enables me to participate in the creation, maintenance, or replacement of the social forms that pertain to me, my mate, my community and my planet.

As a child, my experience of community is almost entirely that of being nurtured. As a youth, I begin to experience nurturing others and working within and upon social forms. As an adult, I need to experience all three of these functions of community in some sort of adequate balance.

When community is operating primarily toward nurturing and being nurtured, it has the look of a congregation of personal care, a school, a hospital, a therapy group, a circle of friends, a guru and followers, a recreation club, a family gathering. When community is operating primarily toward maintaining or changing social forms, it has the look of a work team, a guild of common action, a union of social concern, a service club, a league of visionary people, an association of artists or writers, a movement of socially awakened activists, a club of research. Let us name these two types of community: "community of nurture" and "community of action".

Everyone needs community of both types. If I am without an adequate community of nurture, the full potentiality of my personal life never comes to flower, and whatever potentials I have developed during my earlier experiences of community become stale. I need to belong to community that is attending to me and intending to help me with my own deepest needs. Without an adequate community of action, I never experience a sense of intense participation in the wholeness of the human adventure, I never do anything that connects me to the needs of the whole planet. My commitment to the planet stops at the level of an interior empathy. Such merely interior caring spoils or dies from lack of exterior embodiment. I need to belong to communal action directed toward the whole planet. I need a community of action as well as a community of nurture.



These two types of community may be two aspects of the same group of people. In the agricultural phase of civilization, the village, for most people, served as both nurture and action community. This gave simplicity and wholeness to community life. In industrial, urbanized civilization, people are finding it necessary to belong to several different communities to satisfy all their needs for community. Some communities, like a study group or a circle of friends, function only for nurture. Other communities, like a labor union or political club, function only for action. Some communities may provide both nurture and action. But the overall result of this pattern is a large degree of fragmentation for most people. Only a few people belong to one community which is sufficiently strong enough to integrate all the other community participations into a meaningful whole. And many people have no community of sufficient depth to rescue them from almost total isolation. The sober truth is that only a very few, if any of us, belong to community life that is adequately fulfilling all of the essential functions of community in our lives.

Perhaps the greatest unsolved problem in our century is this vacuum of adequate forms for community life. Our commitment to be our authentic personhood and our commitment to build an adequate mate relation increases our need for more adequate community within which to be nurtured. From the other side, our commitment to our planet increases our need for a more adequate community within which to act effectively. These considerations serve to illuminate how central adequate community is in human existence. Commitment to my immediate community is clearly as crucial an arena of commitment as the other three. Person, mate, community, and planet -- each adds a dimension to the overall commitment to realistic living that is not covered by the other three.

#### HOLISTIC COMMITMENT

Obviously these four areas of commitment interact with each other --



enriching each other -- depending upon each other. In some particular period in my life, I may need to emphasize one of the four in order to move forward toward a more balanced living of all four commitments. When I was a youth, I placed the greater emphasis upon the preparation of my own person. In a certain period in my late forties, I pulled back from an active life and spent considerable time rebuilding the mate-relationship aspect of my life. Other periods of my life were more focused on building community and on contributing something to the general society, mostly through my teaching. Yet in all these periods, all four of these areas of commitment played some part. I am now clear that I seek some sort of wholesome balance of all four and have been unconsciously doing so for a long time. All this has led me to believe this general rule: If we are committed to realistic living, wholeness is the context within which we must give each of these commitments their respective emphasis. An unconditional commitment to realistic living drives toward wholeness.

And this wholeness is not found through reducing the four arenas of commitment into one of the four. Suppose someone attempts to make the mate relationship into the whole and thus reduces community, planet, and self to secondary priorities that must always yield to the claims of the mate relationship. The intense pleasure and deep aliveness of a really successful mate relationship might appear to be adequate as the central meaning of my life. But what is it really like to believe and act on assumptions like the following? (1) My work in the world is only for the sake of supporting and pleasing my spouse. (2) My participation in community is only for the sake of nurturing my mate relationship. (3) My care for myself is only for the sake of satisfying my spouse and being satisfied in that relationship. Acting on such assumptions leads to disturbing consequences for the whole of my life, including my mate relationship. If care for my own self does not take place for the sake of maximizing my own actual personhood, then the

unused potentials become a backlash of dissatisfaction and restlessness that renders me less than the person my spouse actually needs. If I am becoming something new only for the sake of my spouse, I am not becoming all that I need to become to be truly and fully myself. Similarly, if my participation in my community and in the work of the planet is only for the sake of my mate relationship, I have robbed my participation in my community and in my work on this planet of its own seriousness.

Also, the commitment to the planet might be conceived as the whole in which the other three were merely supportive parts. From this point of view, a good mate relationship is only meaningful if it helps me succeed in my work on behalf of the planet. Similarly, commitment to community is seen as only for the sake of getting more done in my projects of serving the larger society. And even my commitment to my own person becomes nothing but becoming a better global servant. Such a view reduces the fullness of all these commitments, including commitment to the planet. For the planet is only one of four fundamental contexts for realistic living. Community, mate and self are each equally important. Any global revolutionary program that ignores this will fail to promote the nurture of community life, mate relationships and personal growth for their own sakes. These neglected arenas will become time-wasting problem areas and in the end destroy the global program.

Thirdly, it would not be difficult to show how an exclusive emphasis upon commitment to my community would end up in a tragedy similar to that of Jim Jones and his community in Guyana. However deceived, these people sought community. But, rather than expand their commitment to the planet, they went off to live by themselves. Rather than include commitment to their own persons and to their own mates, they were willing to commit suicide together. This is an extreme example, yet in the life of any intense community, we can observe some persons who sacrifice their true selves on the altar of the community.

Finally, let us also notice how an exclusive emphasis upon commitment to personhood turns out to be as ridiculous as making muscle-building the whole meaning of my life. If the only commitment I have is to maximizing the excellences of my own person, I become in the end a muscle-bound prig who never uses his personal muscle for anything but muscle-building. Unless an individual is being stressed outwardly toward a mate, a community, a planet, the potentials of that individual will not be actualized in a wholesome way.

Reality is a wholeness, including planet, community, mate, and person. A commitment to realistic living is a commitment to wholeness. I cannot ignore or exclude part of reality without twisting my relationship to every part of reality.

My personal vocation, my "overall life thrust," is the specific form I give to my commitment to planet, community, mate, and person. My vocation of loving reality becomes concrete in each of these areas.

#### SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

This term, as I am using it, refers to our commitment to the planet. And I want now to discuss more thoroughly the nature of our commitment to the planet when the holistic commitment to realistic living is the undergirding passion.

First of all, the ongoing living of my commitments to my own self, mate, and community inform me what it means to be committed to every self, every mating, every community on the planet. If I do not begin with my commitments that are near to me, I become abstract and patronizing in my commitments to realities that are far away. I, for one, have had my fill of abstract ideologies on how to serve the planet. Whether communist, capitalist, humanist, Christian, Islamic, Jewish, Buddhist, or whatever -- a moral or historical law superimposed on my own sense of reality and demanding obedience at the cost of my own intuitions, thinking, and personal integrity is something I choose to oppose. And it is not my aim in this chapter, or this book, to create a new

ideology or a new morality.

Morality and ideology are both natural human functions and there is no escape from them. But both are cultural phenomena, finite creations like all other rational constructions. There is no absolute morality -- no absolute ideology. The morality of a culture is nothing more than the operating consensus of that culture on which codes, rules, principles of justice are most beneficial. And this consensus is in constant process of being restated. Social revolution in morality is an ongoing as social revolution in economic and political forms. Revolution in ideology is also perpetual. The crime of the Soviet Union and many Marxists the world over is ideological woodenness. But ideological woodenness is also the crime of most non-Marxist conservative politicians and most conservative religious leaders, and most conservative scientific philosophers as well as most of their liberal critics. I sometimes think that the most radical social position on earth is a simple belief in the relativity of all ideological positions.

If what I am saying could be called an ideology, then I am recommending an ideology that affirms the constant re-creation of ideology. Such an attitude toward ideology is consistent with all that has been said about the future of religion. If the real is the good, then there is only one ought: I ought to be realistic. That is, I ought to be what I am and who I can become. I ought to be open to ever more reality concerning who I am and what I can become and what the world is and what the world can become. All this means that I ought to be open to changing -- to seeing the world change -- and to changing my ideology and morality relative to living in the world responsibly.

However, such changing does not mean acquiescence and passivity to the injustice, ignorance, and hatred I see in the world. By "changing" I mean changing toward more realistic living. This makes me an active opponent of unrealistic living. Even if I err on what is realistic and what is unrealistic,

I can risk action. I can create my ideology on reality and my morality on realistic living. And I can do so with full consciousness that these creations are not absolute but vulnerable risks toward greater realism. And they are open to being perpetually changed by me. This is social responsibility.

The social history of the planet is always in motion. Some part of the population of the planet become aware of that motion ahead of the rest. And some part of those aware people perform fresh responses that are more realistic. They can be said to do so on behalf of all the rest of the planet's human passengers. This part of the whole population who respond realistically on behalf of those who are as yet unconscious or unwilling to respond, are the socially responsible part. They are so because they respond. Obviously, there are some people who are awake and responsive in some areas who are asleep and unresponsive in other areas. The membership of the socially responsive part of humankind is mixed and constantly changing. And who all the socially responsible persons actually are is unknown to any particular person. No one has the absolute perspective on realistic living. Each of us, who are committed to realistic living, is in a constant scramble to discover what realistic living actually is. Those of us who are so scrambling are the socially responsible.

Such social responsibility, when it is being effective, takes on the form of these two interrelated tasks: (1) awakening others to greater reality -- which includes helping them through the doorways of their despair into the real world and through the paralysis of their anxieties into surrender to realistic living, and (2) the building of healthy social fabrics which embody these fresh responses of realistic living and which support the awakening to ever greater numbers of people. Only these two activities, operating together, generate a movement of social forces strong enough to effect a lasting change. Working only with individuals will not do it. Social innovations alone without individual re-education and healing will not do it either.

Once these two types of task become clearly seen, a third type of task also appears: the task of being an ongoing presence of realistic living. Sustaining a movement of social forces always necessitates the creation of cores of people who remain dedicated through thick and thin, through the ups and downs and the many changes of perspective and personnel, through every opposition and obstacle until the more realistic "new" becomes the common sense approach of the ruling majority.

This picture of doing these three types of task provides a concrete description of being socially responsible. The socially responsible are physicians to despairing individuals -- calling them from illusion and contempt for reality into the joy of realistic living. They are engineers of more realistic patterns of social functioning. And they are a living presence of realistic consciousness and action.

This last task of being the ongoing presence of realistic living necessitates what I am calling a "religious" attitude. Spirit consciousness is one crucial part of being conscious of reality and hence of being realistic. That is, the realistic are those who are actively being their care, those who are creatively being their freedom, those who are courageously being their consciousness of dark nights, long marches, problemless living and realistic joy. Only those who are being their spirit consciousness are being fully realistic. Hence, the socially responsible are inevitably driven to be "religious" in this sense of the word. Furthermore, those who focus on being their spirit consciousness in an active way will find they are moving toward some form of social responsibility. In the deepest rivers of human nature, spirit consciousness and social responsibility flow together.



## Chapter IX

### The Role of Religion in Society

Some anthropologists might say that an ancient primate has turned the corner from pre-human to human when there is evidence of erect skeleton, large brain and tool-making. But I agree more with those who say that the key turning point was the birth of that uniquely human brand of consciousness. How can we picture the essence of this now-dim and distant beginning.

It was through the evolution of symbolic forms -- ritual, art, speech, icon, and myth -- that the primitive hominid took the leap forward into a new type of consciousness and began to move toward his amazing capacities for thought and technology. Susanne K. Langer gives a convincing argument that the first symbolic form was some kind of ritual.<sup>1</sup> Imagine a small group of hominids, their interiors bursting with something like dream fragments for which they have no use. Because of their unusual life with active hands and eyes their mental activity has reached such an overload of signals that attention begins to focus upon the replay of experiences the mind spontaneously produces. Communication between them, in the form of verbal noises and hand signals, has reached such a pitch that they have intense awareness of one another and of the responses that various signals require. But, as yet, there are no mental products that stand for objects or experiences. Signals that mean, "Do this right now," or, "Don't do that right now," are not the same as mental products that stand for living relations that are not immediately happening. But one day, let us speculate, this group of hominids performed for the third or the tenth time the same group movement around the body of a fallen companion. Suddenly the form of the group movement caught the attention of many members of the group. The form itself "went with," "stood for," "reminded of," the living experience of the death of a fellow. The words same

and form are underlined because this first ritual must be understood as a formalized action rather than spontaneous expressive action. The form may have been ever so simple at first, but the formal act meant something that all had experienced before. The form stood for the feelings that each had in his interior. The form stood for the exchange of looks between one another -- looks that were, with the aid of this form, capable of seeing beyond the eyes of the other to the feelings of an experience that was shared between them. This first ritual form was the first invention of what we now call human society.

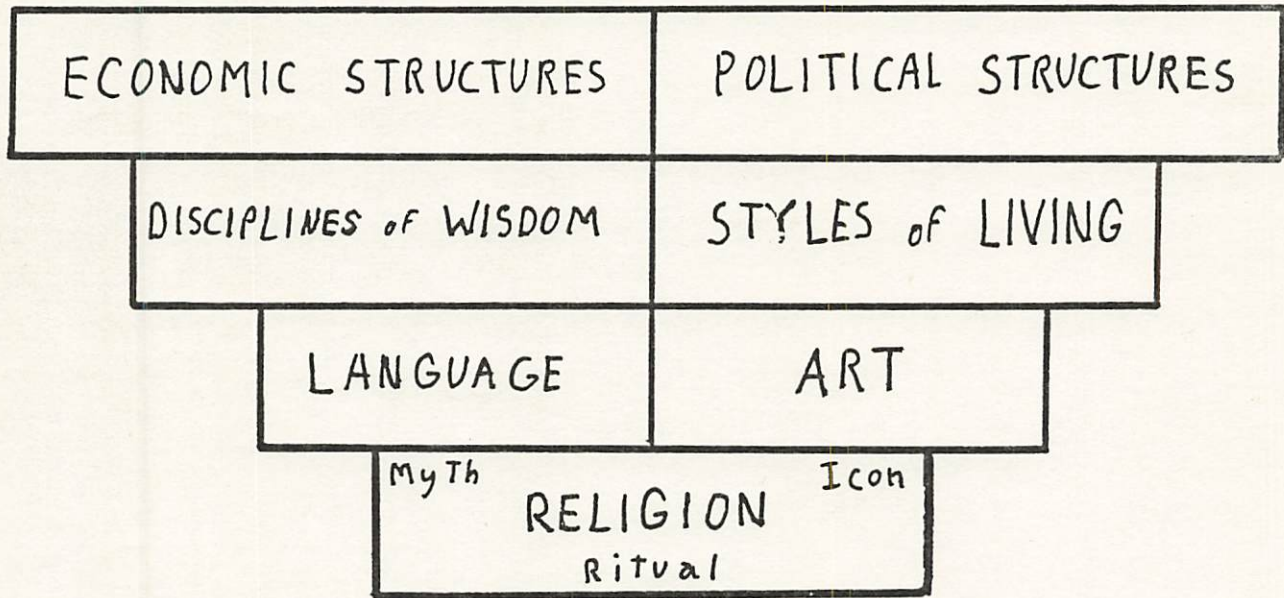
If such speculation is valid, ritual was the first social process, and with it, human consciousness emerged. Consciousness, expressing itself in symbolic forms, is the distinguishing mark of human beings. Hence nothing called human society existed before this first ritual. Ritual expanded into art and language. Art fed icons back into the ritual. And language enriched ritual with myth. All these symbolic forms developed together in a complex interaction, the relations of which could fill a library with research and speculation. The point, for this context, is simply that the symbolic forms were the first social processes. They expressed and held in being a new evolutionary departure -- human consciousness. With language evolved what we normally call thinking or reason. It should be noted that the non-linguistic arts might also be said to have a kind of conception or "reason". But it is from language that we derive the kind of thinking that we use in science, technology, economics and politics. All the social processes -- economic, political and cultural -- develop after human consciousness and symbolic forms have become operative. A grouping of apes has the natural elements that are transformed by human consciousness into economic, political, and cultural processes. But until consciously-created form is given to these pre-human processes by the human intelligence,



nothing we can call human social processes exists. An ape group has no economy, no polity, no ritual, no art, no speech. If any of these terms, or the word "society" is applied to an ape group, they mean something entirely different than when applied to humankind.

What then, is a social process? Any kind of humanly-invented form added to the environment in which conscious living takes place is a social process. Social processes became effective for human survival, even though the first rituals probably were curiosities with no immediate promise of aiding survival. But fairly soon social processes became an effective response to the challenges of nature. Humanly-invented processes related human beings together with wood and rock tools and weapons and the vegetation and animals they needed for food, clothing, shelter, art and play. These social processes then became part of the environment of humankind along with the natural processes. The natural processes became increasingly conscious to human beings through what we have come to call natural science. The social processes became increasingly conscious to human beings through what we have come to call sociology. The interior processes became conscious through art, religion, philosophy and psychology. All the humanities and sciences are elaborations of a social process that goes back to the beginning: shared thinking. Technology is another social process that arose alongside thinking. It is the social practicalization of thinking. Technology gave to the human species its power to dominate even the great cats and bears who were unchallengeable in the animal kingdom until human technology outfought them.

But let us return to our story of the first ritual. That ritual held human consciousness in being and that first ritual was a social process that contained within it embryonic elements of all social processes. Its gestures



evolved into dance. Its vocal noises separated off into speech. The leader of the ritual became a political figure. One might say that the entire array of economic, political and cultural processes are but one great ritual expressing human consciousness. It is also true that the overall ritual of society gathered into itself the many practical needs of the human species and thus enabled the conquest of the planet. The first ritual was the origin of a new species.

If religion is defined as these elemental social processes (ritual, elaborated with icon and myth) then the whole of human society can be pictured as built upon the foundation stone of religion.

#### Illustration #12

However, this basic role of religion is only being performed by a particular religion when that religion is indeed embodying a profound realistic consciousness which is giving meaning to all the other social processes. If a once-alive religion decays and ceases to do this task, then the resulting vacuum in social functioning is filled by something else. This is what has happened in our century. The classical religions are in decay. They are not the sustaining foundation stones of the presently-existing societies.

The current second-wave civilization is actually being undergirded by the energies of secular "quasi-religions" which have taken the place of the obsolete classical religions. I mean by "quasi-religions" such passionate meaning systems as nationalism, communism, capitalism, scientism, tribalism and cultural parochialism. The proper naming and clear defining of all these meaning systems is not necessary for my point. My point is that the currently functioning myths, rituals, and icons are rooted in strong commitments of this

sort. The star-spangled banner, the hammer and sickle --these are icons related to myths and rituals that have certain power to express people's passion to build, preserve, and defend society. However, these quasi-religious icons and myths are also in decay along with the second-wave institutions. But they are far more alive than the world religions in their classical forms.

Some nations, like the nation of Israel, may appear to be exceptions -- that is, examples of where a classical religion is undergirding a society. But such a view is misleading. In actual functioning, the nation of Israel is only another example of nationalism and cultural parochialism. Similarly, the Moslem nations who are so offended with Israel are not rooted in a classical religion either. They are only another form of cultural parochialism. The so-called secular nations and the so-called religious nations are actually two forms of the same thing -- obsolete second-wave institutions. A genuine re-appropriation of Islamic heritage or Jewish heritage or Christian heritage, in and through the post-classical metaphors, would reveal that a Jewish nation or a Moslem nation or a Christian nation is an obsolete idea which we can now do without. In my own vision of the "new Jerusalem," it will be filled with ex-Jews, ex-Moslems, and ex-Christians, all of whom appreciate the entire history of Jerusalem and of the planet.

The religion of the future -- religion which can undergird the development of third-wave civilization -- will first of all be manifest as a prophetic denunciation of all nationalism, all parochialism, all racism, all cultural or religious in-groupism. The religion that undergirds the civilization of the future will manifest a capability to unite people from whatever heritage into a common humility before the real awe-producing reality -- a reality which is

threatening us with nuclear holocaust, a reality which also holds out to humankind possibilities never before dreamed of, and a reality which is undermining the illusions of our shallow secular quasi-religions and our equally shallow backlashes into obsolete classical religion.

Perhaps the initial ritual of the emerging "religious life" will be a rite of passage -- the act of leaving all authoritative in-groups and joining the entire human race. The new religious person is the one who has left his or her religion, nation, language group, culture, philosophical club or ideology, race, class, and become an ordinary living and dying human being alongside every other ordinary human being. From this new perspective, all of our religious heritages can then be seen as valuable. And for each of us, this is especially true for the heritage that we know the best. But never again will personal identity be tied up with being a Jew, a Christian, a Moslem, a Hindu, a Buddhist. All of these heritages can be resources for realistic living. All of these heritages contain limiting and illusory elements. We do not need to make one of them of highest authority. Whatever is real is good. Whatever is illusory is evil. No other criteria for judgement is needed. "Religious authority," as that concept is used by those who are trying to operate with it in our post-classical era, turns out to be completely illusory.

I am not suggesting that we cut off our dialogue with the past. The rich resources of every culture on earth need to be preserved, for we all can learn from them. In a longer book on this subject I would like to discuss thoroughly how the black-African preoccupation with human vitality is a refreshing corrective to the European preoccupation with reason -- how each major geographical-cultural area has its own unique gifts, developed through its own unique emphasis on some aspect of humanness -- how the oriental cultures have been preoccupied

with finding the style of communal living that fits the WAY life really moves -- how sub-Asian cultures have been preoccupied with the lurid complexity of interior consciousness -- how Arabian culture has been preoccupied with fate and freedom -- how the ancient American cultures have been preoccupied with day by day succession and the wildness of eternal interruption.

The quality of our dialogue with all these heritages, however, must lead us into the future. The religious eras of the past are over. The future will be very different. One obvious difference is the existence of this global dialogue that all the cultural heritages are now having with each other. This has never happened before in human history. Marco Polo's dialogue with China was almost unique in his day. Today, all the great cultures are clashing together like giant cymbals. And every single molecule of each cymbal is vibrating. Every human being is suffering cultural shock.

The religion of the future will have to incorporate the awe of this world-wide experience. There is no going back to parochial one-dimensional religious in-groups. The religion of the future -- that authentic religion that can undergird third-wave civilization -- will not even be recognized as religion by many who are still locked in the "classical religion versus secular humanism" debates. The religion of the future will be as secular as grass and yet profoundly acquainted with mystery, awe -- the full passion of spirit consciousness. And all the "holy" figures of every heritage will seem more like our predecessors in normal living than like semi-gods who are way above us.

How can we begin even to imagine the role that such religion will play in the society of the future? When will we begin to create the rituals, icons, and myths that genuinely hold and express the profound levels of our conscious relation with the actual awe-producing reality that confronts us? Clearly, there can be no wholesome third-wave civilization without such nurture of our

spirit roots.

For more perspective, let us return to our story about that first ritual. Human consciousness itself, as an interior experience within the singular person, was born simultaneously with that first ritual. Like the old story of the chicken and the egg, it is not possible to say whether consciousness created the first ritual or whether the first ritual created consciousness. Symbolic forms grow out of human consciousness, yet there is no human consciousness without symbolic forms. Symbolic forms are objective and social and yet have the power to create consciousness in the interior of the potentially conscious human creature. However closely related, these two factors are distinct dimensions of humanness. Consciousness, as an experience within the singular human being, can never be reduced into a social process. And social processes, the common objective forms which a group of conscious beings practice, can never be reduced to singular interiority.

Finally, a third realm of humanness can be pointed out in our story of that first ritual: the interchange between conscious beings. The participants in that first ritual (or some of them) gazed into one another's eyes and saw a conscious being looking back. Even though they had no words or philosophy at the time to explore the complexity of a personal relation, the conscious ones must have known in the midst of the ritual that others also knew what they knew. This was articulated only by the ritual itself; but if the ritual did articulate consciousness, then the conscious ones shared their consciousness with one another. This interpersonal exchange of consciousness I am going to call "intimacy". Intimacy is the double gaze of conscious selves upon one another. Directly, I experience only my own experience of consciousness. But I experience the behavior of my wife who is experiencing me through my behavior. I am given a gift of consciousness by this other who, like me, experiences my

behavior and interprets its meaning. I experience my behavior from inside and outside. She experiences my behavior only from outside, but she uses her experience of her own interior to tell me about the meaning of my behavior and call my attention to my own interior experience. This interchange of consciousness is not a social process. Nor is it reducible to singularity. Intimacy is a third dynamic of humanness.

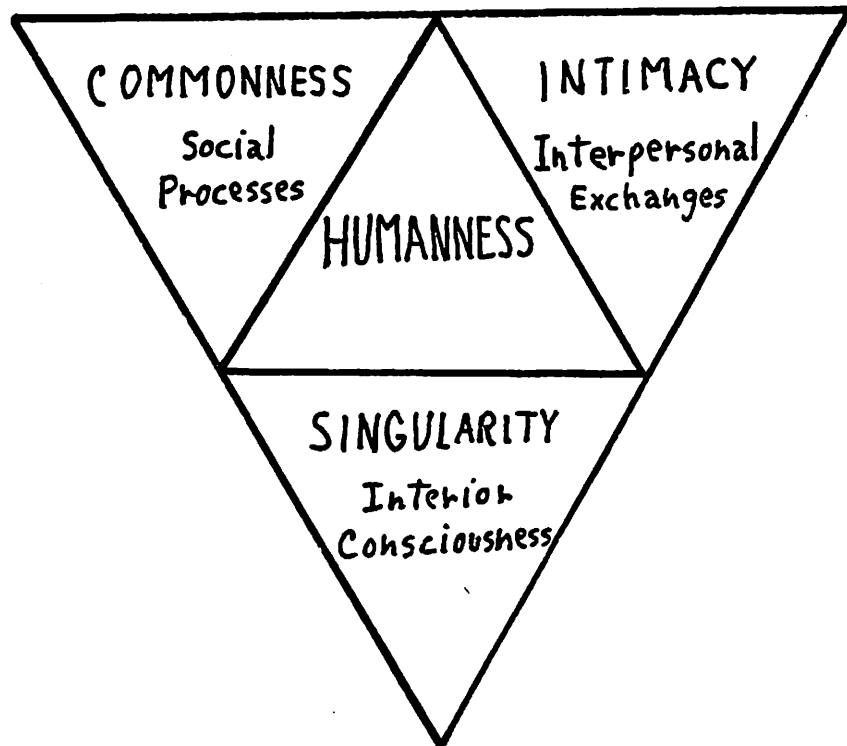
Intimacy takes place wherever groups of human beings are small enough to observe one another. Groups beyond 200 or so cease to be intimate throughout all their relations. Social processes can and do exist in groups of two or two billion. But intimacy manifests itself only where face-to-face contact is possible. When groups become quite large, social processes, rather than intimacy, carry the weight of social cohesion. It is interesting that primitive man split into two tribal groups when a group became too large. Pre-civilization society did not know how to function beyond the intimacy limit. Contemporary society is struggling to reconstruct healthy intimacy into a global commonality of complex and powerful social processes holding together billions of people.

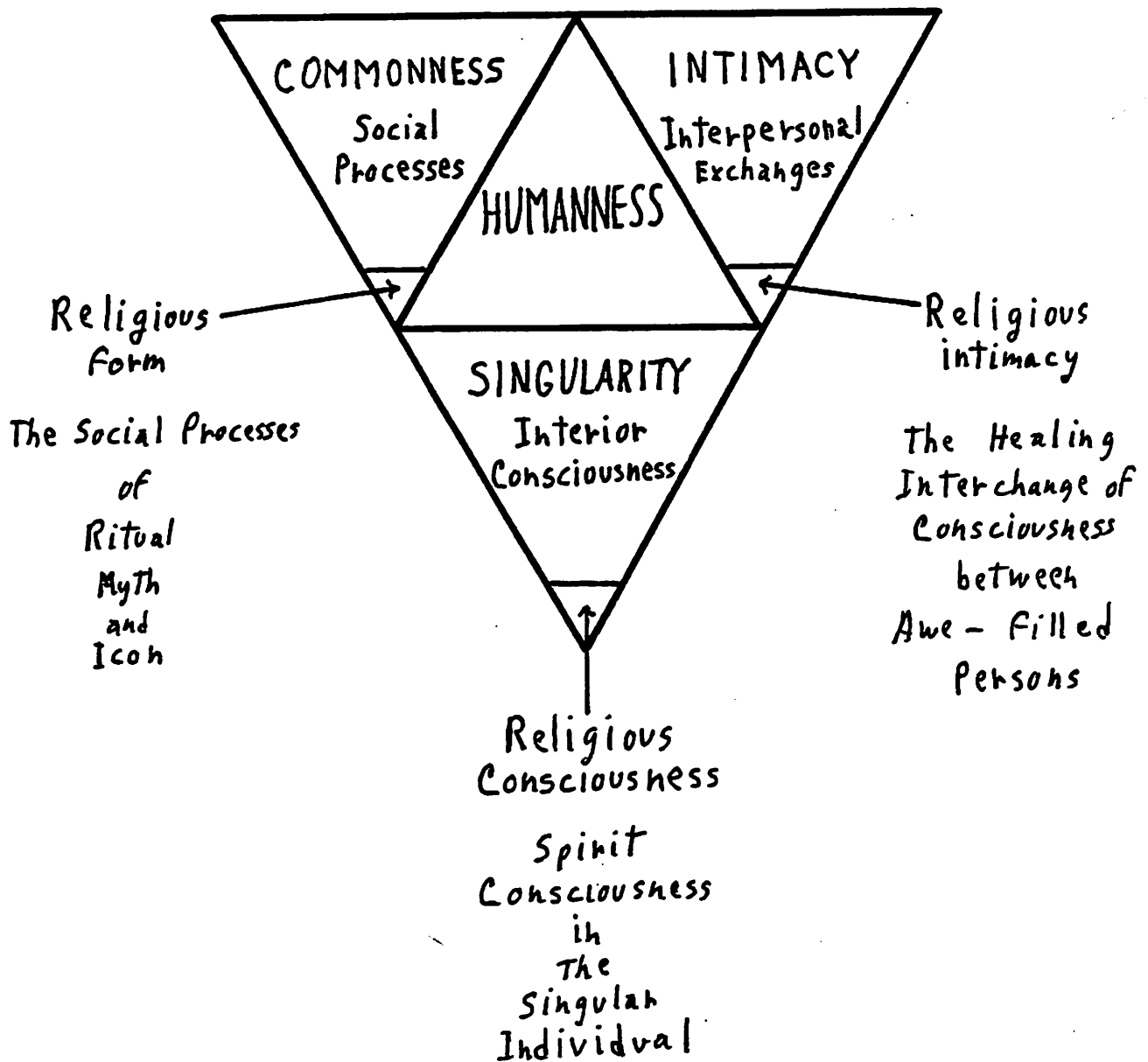
So what does humanness include? It includes at least these three inseparable yet clearly distinguishable realms: (1) The external forms of common social process. (2) The interior experience of singular consciousness. (3) The intimate interpersonal exchanges of consciousness. The following is a diagram of these three realms of humanness:

#### Illustration # 13

At the lower point of each of these three realms of humanness the







religious aspect of human life comes into focus. The following diagram pictures this and describes the nature of these three aspects of the religious dimension of human existence.

Illustration # 14

No one of these three aspects of religious living is complete without the other two. The social forms of religion -- ritual, myth, and icon -- are "dead letter," not authentic religion, unless spirit consciousness is filling them. Also without the creation of common social forms, spirit consciousness is wine without a wineskin to hold it. And the third aspect of the whole religious dynamic -- "the interchange of consciousness between awe-filled persons" -- cannot be reduced into common social forms or into singular spirit consciousness. Two or more human beings in intimate association is a phenomena made possible both by social forms and by singular interior awareness, but it is also a primal phenomena in its own right. Without religious intimacy the other two realms of religious functioning could never have come into being.

The philosophical elaboration of what I have just said probably deserves a whole book. But I want to say it briefly in order to focus our attention on this key practical point: ONLY IN INTIMATE COMMUNITY WITH OTHER SPIRITUALLY CONSCIOUS PERSONS are the new, workable, concrete social forms of religion going to be created. ONLY IN INTIMATE COMMUNITY WITH OTHER SPIRITUALLY CONSCIOUS PERSONS will my own spirit consciousness be raised to the point where I can participate in the process of creating adequate religious forms. INTIMATE SPIRIT COMMUNITY IS THE ABSOLUTE KEY TO THE FUTURE OF RELIGION AND THEREFORE TO THE SUCCESS OF THIRD-WAVE CIVILIZATION AS A WHOLE.

The healing of our deepest despairs, the awakening of our deepest unconsciousness, the restyling of our most conscious living -- these cannot come about without effective intimate fellowship. Each of us needs a few people in our lives whom we can trust enough to ask our deepest questions, to expose our most puzzling areas of unconsciousness and confusion, to receive wisdom from them even when we cannot yet grasp the wisdom in what they are saying to us. We also need to be trusted in this way by others. The communal life of the religion of the future needs to be such as to make these intimate relationships possible. It needs to be structured in such a way as to provide time and space for intimate relationships as well as time and space for the solitude of each person. On this basic foundation of "healing time and space" the other social functions can then be built. The wellbeing of the common action, the common thinking, and the common enabling structures of the religion of the future depends on the quality of our intimacy and of our solitude.

## Chapter X

### The Future of Religious Practice in Personal Living

By way of concluding my overview of this immense subject, I want to move now to something simple and personal. I want to translate a familiar bit of devotional literature from the classical metaphors in which it was written into the new metaphors described in Chapter Four. This is one small example of the kind of shift we have in store for us in our personal religious practice.

I have chosen a piece from Christian heritage because it is there that the full meaning of the old symbols is most available to me. But this sort of translation could be done for any heritage. I have also chosen a piece of heritage which has been seen as a model for devotional life. In Christian tradition, this prayer is understood to be the prayer of prayers -- the essence of what all authentic prayer is about.

#### Our Father, who art in heaven

"Father" is a symbol for both our place of origin and for that reality to which we belong and by which we are unconditionally loved. Sometimes the emotional power of the symbol, "Father," has been lost for us as we have revolted against patriarchal and authoritarian structures of life. The words, "Mother" and "parents," have also been cooled off by the great distances that today's generations experience. Even though our parents did the very best they knew to do for us, we are often at war with the patterns of our childhood. Sometimes a modern gestalt therapist will ask a client to dialogue with an imaginary "good father" or "good mother." This ideal parent is one who always says to us exactly what we need to hear to be a realistic, independent and self-reliant person -- exactly what we need to hear to know that we are accepted and

loved just as we are, not for what we have done or not done but just because we exist. Such a picture of being parented brings us in closer contact with the original emotion-laden meaning of the symbol, "Our Father."

And what reality does this prayer address as "Our Father"? It is not our known and familiar sense of reality that is addressed. It is numinous reality, awe-filled reality, dreadful and fascinating reality -- reality as reality really is in its wholeness.

Our Father is "in heaven" says the ancient two-story poetry. Looking at the stars, the sun, the moon, the expanse of the firmament reminds us of how small we are and how incredibly big reality is. "Up above" is an understandable symbol for the dwelling place of wholly mysterious reality. But "profound depths" would be just as good. It is not important to say whether the "locale" of the fullness of reality is up or down. What is important to say is that we are here on earth. "Heaven" means a place far away, someplace we cannot get to from here. The direction we must look to see "Our Father" is not "on earth" -- not among the things familiar to us and like us. We must look at and through our finitude, our ignorance, our weakness, our inability to "climb to heaven." Only in this direction will we see the fullness of reality.

"In heaven" means that the reality being addressed is beyond our finite scope, beyond our world of rational understanding, beyond our world of practical operation. When we know that our knowing does not reach the fullness of reality, we know that this reality is "in heaven" -- is impenetrable mystery -- the unknown, the real unknown, the unknown unknown that never becomes known but is nevertheless known by us to be unknown.

We do not need to go find such reality; such reality comes and finds us. We need only to be actively passive -- waiting intently for reality to come to

us. It is this sort of open, expectant, trusting attitude that is meant by addressing such reality as "our Father." This reality both gives us our real being and is active in the unending project of keeping us real. If being real is good and becoming unreal is evil, then reality -- numinous, holistic, awe-producing reality -- is our good father, our good mother, our good parent doing us only good.

Hallowed be thy Name

Allah, Yahweh, Brahman, Tao, all our names, including "God" and "Father", are not the name of numinous reality. The process of naming is the human process of relating to that which is named. Thus, these names are all names for our own relationship with that reality which, from the perspective of our limited consciousness, must forever remain nameless.

When Jacob asked the mysterious opponent of his all-night wrestling, "What is your name?", the reply was roughly this: "Why ask? I AM that which AM."

What does it mean to hallow the enigmatic name of the forever nameless? "Hallow" means to treat as holy. "Holy" means both "numinous or awe-filled" and "good or righteous." The forever nameless "I AM" is already holy. Our petition does not impart holiness, it merely expresses a desire of the person saying this prayer, "May that which is holy be holy!"

In totally secular language, this petition simply says, "We desire that reality be reality." And "reality" means not our ideas about reality or our familiar sense of reality but reality in all of its shocking, immense, onrushing, overwhelming, mysterious, powerful, unknowable, unavoidable impact upon our fragile existence.

Thy Kingdom Come

Simone Weil suggests that this petition is a "longing cry." And What does she mean by longing cry? This is her answer:

"It is as when one is in extreme thirst, ill with thirst, then one no longer thinks of the act of drinking in relation to oneself, or even of the act of drinking in a general way. One merely thinks of water, actual water itself, but the image of water is like a cry from our whole being."<sup>1</sup>

What is this water? What is this longed-for Kingdom? The Kingdom means a future state of the world in which the entire being of every human being is filled with the spirit expressed in this whole prayer. We could say that this petition is a longing cry that every human being be truly human. When we see plain and obvious evil, insane violence, and arrogant stupidity in the world at large, we might be moved to cry out, "Oh, that all were truly human." When we see the obvious incompleteness of our own journey toward being fully human, we might be moved to cry out, "Oh, that I were truly human."

Water! Thy Kingdom Come! And what is the truly human? In the previous petition, the truly human was described as the desire that the holy be holy. In this petition, the truly human is described as a longing cry that all human beings be truly human. The truly human is a person with the attitude described in this entire prayer.

Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven

In this petition, our consciousness is focused upon the specific events of time. Concerning the past, we know that whatever has happened, has happened. Saying, "Thy will be done" means surrendering to the reality of the actual past. If my house was burned down yesterday, then saying "Thy will be done" means willing that my house be burned down yesterday in exactly the manner in



which it actually was burned down yesterday. The reality of the past has given issue to the reality I am now facing. The transcendent reality whom this prayer calls "Our Father" was understood in the context of this prayer to be "almighty". Everything that has happened in the past is in accordance with the "will" of the "almighty Father"; otherwise, it would not have happened.

Our modern two-story literalists (who are also sentimentalists) have tried to modify the biting realism in this old manner of speaking by saying that God did not will some things to happen, but only permitted them. "After all," they say, "since He is our Father who loves us, He wouldn't want bad things to happen to good people like us." Following this line of thinking, some things that do happen cannot be exactly His will, because that would tarnish God's character. Such very popular thinking always fails to notice:

- (1) Who it is that is judging God's character.
- (2) Why an almighty God would have to permit anything if He did not want to.
- and (3) That the entire point of the original poetry was to allow reality to impact our value system rather than applying our value system to reality.

Praying "Thy will be done" means that I am choosing to let reality be reality and that I am choosing to affirm the goodness of reality as it actually is. The plain simple truth we are working with here is this: the past is the past; we can either affirm it and thus live affirmatively the reality we now have on our hands or we can hate it and thus hate the reality we now have on our hands. There is no doubt in my mind which of these two attitudes is being embodied in this ancient model for all prayer. However, a point of clarification is needed for those who always misunderstand "affirming reality" to mean

a feelingless, stoic, numb, getting-on with things. Affirming the past or the present does not mean ignoring our feelings of grief, sadness, fear, horror or whatever. These feelings are part of our experience of reality and they also are good. And only when we experience such feelings fully is our affirmation of reality complete.

When we think of those times in our past in which we were violated or in which we lost something precious to us, we do not automatically desire those happenings to have happened just as they happened. To do so, we have to give up certain attitudes, complaints, excuses, and hatreds. That is never easy. Or again, when we think of those times in our past which revealed to us how we have been weak and stupid and downright harmful to others, we are resistant to the very idea of desiring those happenings to have happened just as they happened. In order to do so, we have to believe that having the self that we were at that time thoroughly humiliated was a very good thing. It would not be surprising if the words "Thy will be done" got stuck in our throats for a number of months or years after such events.

"Thy will be done," when spoken with full desire, usually means the death of our old self. Rare indeed is the person who really believes that this ever-active reality which brings us again and again to such oblivion is "Our Father". Nevertheless, this prayer assumes that we can become able to desire the refreshing death of our stuffy old images and commitments -- that we can experience, not resignation, but relief and joy in the realism of this petition.

"Thy will be done" also pertains to the future. But here, unlike the past, the future is not already decided. To speak in the old poetry, "God waits to decide what the future will be until we decide." We do not control the future absolutely, but our freedom does participate in determining how "powers

beyond our control" shall determine the future. And this freedom of ours is itself "His will". Otherwise, we would not have this freedom, for "He is almighty."

Here again, let us not forget that these pictures of "God deciding" and "God determining" are anthropomorphic poetry. No person has stood at a place where some vision of a transcendent reality deciding and determining could be seen. In such poetry, we are speaking about our own deep experience of the nature of time. We are speaking of our experience of our own sheer finitude with respect to the course of history -- helpless to change the past, severely limited in our ability to determine the future.

In our stubborn rebellion from the way life actually is, we either want to be all freedom with no restrictions or all determined like a passive blob. But actually we are limited freedom. Our choices do change things. We do have responsibility. And we are determined. One obvious example of this is that we show up in life without having given our consent, and we have to leave life before we are ready.

Saying "Thy will be done" is a passionate surrender of our rebellion against being finite. As such, it is also an act of genuine freedom -- a release from anxiety, despair, and hatred -- an illustration of spiritual well-being.

Give us this day our daily bread

In this petition we are exercising our freedom in quest of our own personal needs. We are also acknowledging our dependence upon events beyond our control as to whether those needs will or will not be met.

In the first instance, "daily bread" simply means food for our physical bodies. We are the kind of beings who must draw our energy from outside ourselves. If that energy is not renewed on a regular basis, we grow weak and

incapable of movement. The energy derived from oxygen we need constantly. We also need -- from outside ourselves -- companionship, love, sex, mental stimulation, social order, respect, justice, and so forth. We also need food for our spirit lives. The nurture of our lives by other spirit-conscious beings is also energy from outside ourselves that we have no certainty of receiving.

This petition implies that we will use our finite energies to reach out for these daily needs. But whether or not we receive them is finally beyond our control. This petition acknowledges our radical dependence day by day for air, society, health, strength, the entire support for our fragile beings.

This petition is also a surrender of our security for the morrow. It does not ask for a lifetime guarantee for all our needs. It focuses upon the now of living -- living in time as a dependent being. We can just use so much in one day, and that is what is asked for in this prayer.

This petition implies a positive affirmation of the body and all its needs. There is no asceticism implied. No point is made that we should ask only for spiritual bread. Even though each of our areas of need is a potentially harmful indulgence that could warp our whole life, no point is made that we should deny ourselves all these potentially addictive goods. Neither material abundance nor material poverty brings us one step closer or one step farther away from the relationship with reality described in this prayer. This petition dramatizes what it means to walk the razor's edge between asceticism on the one side and the possessive lack of realistic detachment on the other. Saying this petition, we ask for our real needs for this one real day.

And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors

Simone Weil's comments on this petition have revealed to me the incredible

depth of the relationship to reality implied here.

"At the moment of saying these words we must have already remitted everything that is owing to us. This not only includes reparation for any wrongs we think we have suffered, but also gratitude for the good we think we have done, and it applies in a quite general way to all we expect from people and things, to all we consider as our due and without which we should feel ourselves to have been frustrated. All these are the rights that we think the past has given us over the future. First there is the right to a certain permanence. When we have enjoyed something for a long time, we think that it is ours and that we are entitled to expect fate to let us go on enjoying it. Then there is the right to a compensation for every effort whatever its nature, be it work, suffering, or desire. Every time that we put forth some effort and the equivalent of this effort does not come back to us in the form of some visible fruit, we have a sense of false balance and emptiness which makes us think that we have been cheated. The effort of suffering from some offense causes us to expect the punishment or apologies of the offender, the effort of doing good makes us expect the gratitude of the person we have helped, but these are only particular cases of a universal law of the soul. Every time we give anything out we have an absolute need that at least the equivalents should come into us, and because we need this we think we have a right to it. Our debtors comprise all beings and all things; they are the entire universe. We think we have claims everywhere. In every claim we think we possess there is always the idea of an imaginary claim of the past on the future. That is the claim we have to renounce.

"To have forgiven our debtors is to have renounced the whole of the past in a lump. It is to accept that the future should still be virgin and intact,

strictly united to the past by bonds of which we are ignorant, but quite free from the bonds our imagination thought to impose upon it."2

If we are not willing to die to the past and to all we have become in that past, we cannot ask that the past not be held against us. We cannot expect part of the past to be cancelled: our debts -- and the rest of the past retained: the debts owed us.

The "forgiveness" asked for in this petition means liberation from the past. This "forgiveness" is very different from toleration or indulgence of ourselves and others. Indulgence is cheap forgiveness provided by ourselves to ourselves or to one another. Genuine forgiveness is both a stern and a merciful dynamic at the heart of reality itself. On the other side of oblivion, on the other side of the death of our specific ego that has developed in our specific past, there alone exists a liberation for our future. Genuine forgiveness happens only at that moment when our whole previous "world" has come to an end. If I have been a person who unconsciously "walks over" everyone in my life, forgiveness can happen only on that dreadful day when I see that other people are really there and that I am one big clod. Only at such a moment can we hear voices from reality itself speaking words of comfort to us: "You are accepted." "Your future is open." "Your past is wholly and entirely approved."

In this petition we ask for an open future and for deliverance from our bondage to the past. This petition is answered immediately if we are standing in the reality of our present situation, the only "place" where we can truly and fully ask.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil

No permanent state of spirit health exists. However amazing our spirit journey has been, we have nothing stored up for tomorrow. The attitude toward tomorrow expressed in this petition is one of fear. This fear is not a cowering.

It is consistent with the confidence already described. This fear is the genuine humility of knowing our dependence. This fear is the opposite of thinking we ever have our spirit life wrapped up. We possess nothing we may not lose.

Herein lies our most subtle and insidious "temptation": our propensity to turn our spirit consciousness into a chart, a construct, a theory we possess -- or to turn our spirit consciousness into an in-group we belong to, a vow we have taken, a decision we have made. True spirit consciousness is an immediate state of being. It can never become a secure and settled life. So our desire to remain spiritually alive is now expressed as fear.

And what is evil? Evil is any attitude toward life that is opposite to the attitude expressed in this entire prayer. This petition is a plea to the heart of reality itself for continual deliverance from a false sense of the holy, from contentment with the status quo, from our own narrow evaluations, from our illusions of material security, from any bondage to the past, and finally, from any religious pretensions that our spirit life is safe.

Our desire, in this petition, is that we not even be tested with any hard choices about continuing in the spirit life. There is no interest here in being heroic -- in having our mettle tested. The desire behind our fear is simple and direct: we want only to continue in the joyous life that prays, "our Father." Such radical humility is the quality of the concluding line of this prayer of prayers.

\* \* \* \* \*

So what does seeing this one classical prayer in a clear and contemporary light tell us about solitary religious practice in general? Basically it is this: if we are going to say "prayers" aloud (or in silence to ourselves) that have some serious meaning in our lives, then the words used must be immediately meaningful and capable of expressing the passion of spirit consciousness as we

actually do experience it.

The following is an attempt at rewording the "Our Father" to fit the transposition done in the previous paragraphs.

Oh mysterious reality, my "good Parent",

I desire your awesome reality to be the reality that is.

I long for all human beings to be truly human.

I desire my past to be what it is and, for the future, I surrender my own free acts to become consequences I cannot control.

I request my needs for this day.

I request release from my bondage to the past, from both what I owe and from what is owed to me.

And let not my commitment to realistic living be put to the test, but deliver me from all illusion.

Saying such words with their full meaning understood and in honest passion would be a valid exercise in preparation for actual living. Doing such exercises would shape our consciousness toward a readiness to respond in life in accord with the attitude described by this prayer. My work of praying does not assure that this attitude will be operative in my life. But my work of prayer is itself a response in accord with that attitude. And praying becomes an event that can and usually does change my life. This change will probably be one that I cannot foresee, but one which turns out to be a quality of personal living that is more realistic.

"Prayer changes things", not by pulling on the tail of a super-natural grandfather to give us something we want through some miraculous intervention in the natural order. No, "prayer changes things" by changing me, my whole attitude, my entire behavior, the consequences of my whole life on the destiny of humankind.



In the above rewording of the "Our Father", I used the singular "I" language because I believe that we have to begin with the "I" to recover meaningful religious practice. But if you or I find ourselves among a group of people all of whom are serious about praying in a new way, then perhaps this transposition would be better:

Oh mysterious reality, our "good parent",

We desire your awesome reality to be the reality that is.

We long for all human beings to be truly human.

We desire our past to be what it is and, for the future, we surrender  
our own free acts to become consequences we cannot control.

We request our needs for this day.

We request release from our bondage to the past, from both what we  
owe and from what is owed to us.

And let not our commitment to realistic living be put to the test,  
but deliver us from all illusion.

Such spirit intimacy with others will change things, will hasten the day when more human beings will be more realistic. The personal practice of religion in the future will include a wide variety of activities rooted in the religious heritage of the entire planet. But this transposition of this one prayer can serve to illustrate the kind of realism that we must insist on as we reconstruct our forms of spirit nurture to undergird the citizenry of the emerging new planetary civilization.

## AFTERWORD

A book on the future of anything is always incomplete. Nevertheless, we can act on the vision we have. If we do have fresh clarity on our social and religious vision, what do we do? Obviously we have to live within the second and first-wave fabrics of life that now exist. But we do not have to reform them or worry about their continuation. Nor do we have to tear them down. That will happen soon enough. I am much taken with the image of how the earliest mammals handled the huge and numerous dinosaurs. They remained small, raised their internal temperature, moved fast, protected their young, and ate dinosaur eggs.

What would it mean for us to eat dinosaur eggs? It means drawing increasing numbers of personnel and increasing amounts of human energy away from the old and into the new forms. The old second-wave society is producing dissatisfied people who can be transformed into third-wave styles and forms of living. Even though second-wave society has emphasized its machinery over its people, it is still true that people are the most important resource of any society. The machine-society has been training people to act like things -- robots who are very clever but do not really think, really see, really be, really create new directions. A robot creates only what a robot is created to create. Every time a robot becomes conscious of how dissatisfied it (she, he) is with second-wave society, or with being a robot, or with heading toward corporate doom, that robot is ready to be transformed into part of the rising third-wave organisms.

Where are these living organisms? Anywhere any of the crucial shifts -- economical, political, cultural, religious -- are actually going on. We need to build third-wave homes for ourselves, less within and more alongside the old

structures. By being very intense spirit-centered demonstrations of third-wave civilization, we will be able to eat a lot of exposed eggs and grow at maximum speed.

I believe that the future can be won for a humane third-wave civilization, but it will not be won in a way we can now predict. It is hard to believe that the huge second-wave structures of civilization will ever flee in defeat from anything. Nevertheless, relative to the future, all these structures are dinosaurs. And all the classical religions are dinosaurs as well. I think it is amazing and comforting to see that the only huge dragon-like reptile that has survived to this day learned to bury its eggs and climb trees. Most of the dinosaurs were just too big and too cold-blooded to handle the global shifts in temperature. Besides that, their eggs were being eaten in ever greater number. Most of them retreated to the water or became small and quick. Probably, the larger part of the dinosaurs evolved into birds and laid eggs in the tree tops. Anyhow, the mammals, who were ex-dinosaurs themselves, took over the earth.

## NOTES

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Also here are my reflections: The objective knowledge of science  
as Karl Popper so clearly points out, is not something in the interior  
world of personal experience nor something in the exterior world of  
environmental processes. Objective knowledge is a third world of  
cultural forms. Objective knowledge exists as a personal and social  
memory bank of human inventions. The individual researcher adds to

the memory bank, or perhaps criticizes and restructures it. Objective knowledge is a world of forms, very real, and in a very real process of being changed. The scientific method is a disciplined way for us to work together as a group on this memory bank of wisdom.

Are "facts" part of this objective memory bank of knowledge, or are "facts" something I perceive in the immediate environment? Facts are part of objective knowledge. That is, facts are creations of the human mind. Facts are always formulated within some hypothesis about reality. Then this hypothesis is tested by testing key facts against our immediate perception of reality. A fact that does not test out invalidates the whole hypothesis as universally applicable and challenges consciousness to create a better hypothesis and a better set of facts to test against immediate perception.

Science is not the discovery of the rational order of reality. Reality has no rational order save these hypotheses invented by the human mind. The scientific enterprise is a somewhat orderly way to build better and better pictures and formulae of reality. But it is also a journey into a deeper and deeper sense of the currently unknown within and surrounding our objective knowledge. Reality seems to have no end of resources for remaining beyond our knowledge. Our best scientists are those who have the humility to admit this. The objective knowledge of science is a product of finite consciousness. It is part of the unending human journey into that great sea of the unknown that will never become fully known.

These insights on scientific method and objective knowledge can help us to expand our consciousness of perception. Perception is

perception of both order and chaos within reality. Order and chaos have to do with mental images: images order reality, and chaos is ~~that~~ part of reality that has not been so ordered. Perception is also intuitive and emotional contact with reality. Such contact has nothing to do with order or chaos. Our feelings can connect us directly with reality without our having to "stop and think" about order or chaos. Then out of our feelings our psycho-mental nature produces quick overall images of our immediate experience of reality. We call this intuition. Then we stop and think about these intuitive pictures. As we think, we construct hypotheses of order and test these bits of order against our experience. Perception is this whole experience which includes feeling and intuition as well as thinking. The scientific method is only part of the thinking process. Perception is the inclusive dynamic.

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