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The Secret of Sacrifice

What is this great breath that strips the flower of the soul down to white spirit bones?
Eight shafts of jewel-song in praise of the One.

True spiritual freedom lies on the far side of a door labelled ‘sacrifice’. It is a door that many approach at some stage upon their spiritual journey but one which few people try the handle of and even fewer generate the strength to push open against the weight of their own fears and doubts. In my experience of watching those who do try the fateful handle, there are three types of motivation which seem to be at work in some combination.

The first arises out of desperation, despair or disgust. This motivation tends to arise in the life when all else has been tried and has failed. The individual comes to the door as a last resort and they are not happy about it. They are only sure of one thing – they cannot go back. If they are conscious they will have burned their own bridges behind them. If not they may find that the circumstances of their lives seem to have conspired to leave them no option. In the latter instances they often have self pity as well as desperation and the self pity is baggage which must be let go off before they can pass through. They need to experience more ‘decentralisation’ which takes the focus off themselves. The motivation of desperation is sufficient to get them to try the door and perhaps even pass through it. Unfortunately they find that it is not a single door but a ‘way’ that requires the continuous practise of ‘giving up’. Once the original pressure has eased then the motivation to continue subsides and progress forward is made in bursts that coincide with the reawakening of the experience of desperation interspersed with occasional experiences of the second motivating energy.

The second motivation arises out of ‘love’ or the recognition of the deep connection between human beings. It lies behind the sacrifices parents make for their children or soldiers for their country. Individuals who approach the door out of this motivation have a greater sense of joy which sustains them more than the first group. The joy comes from the experience of conscious participation in an expanded sense of ‘self’. They are motivated by the benefit to others that arises out of their sacrifice and in the higher sense this develops into true service – ‘the spontaneous outflow of a loving heart’.

The challenges for those who walk the path of sacrifice this way centre around the development of wisdom as a result of disillusionment. Joy at the benefits derived by others from their sacrifices can be interspersed with feelings of ‘burn out’ and ‘grief’ that their sacrifices sometimes are for nothing and even on occasion are counter productive and hinder the growth of others.

As their wisdom develops they are likely to experience more of the third motivating energy. It is difficult to describe this third energy as it is the secret of the true nature of sacrifice – and must be experienced to be understood. It is not a ‘motivation’ in the sense of the first two – motivation requires a ‘self’ to be motivated to acquire some benefit from the direction it takes.

The secret of sacrifice is that it leads, not to the development of the ‘self’ through the growth of some quality like compassion or wisdom, but to the annihilation of the ‘self’ whether that be the personal self or indeed the transpersonal self. In the first two cases, sacrifice is viewed as a ‘loss’. Something is always being ‘given up’ albeit for a higher purpose or in alignment with a greater principle.

Those motivated by the secret of sacrifice do not experience this sense of ‘giving up’ and therefore need no other motive to help them overcome the natural human tendency to want to ‘hold on’. The sacrifice itself is the motivation and it is experienced as ‘gain’ and not ‘loss’. They let go of their ‘selves’ like a man takes off a heavy cloak when the sun comes out. They require no recognition and no benefit, perceived or otherwise to the collective. Of course such a benefit inevitably does occur but it is as a byproduct of their sacrifice and not the cause of it and often remains unrecognised by them. They are experiencing the ‘bliss’ that is the jewel hidden in the heart of sacrifice and a taste of spiritual freedom – not freedom for the self but freedom FROM the illusion of ‘self’. They walk upon the way of sacrifice needing no encouragement to do so and grateful for the opportunity - opening door after door, each one leading to greater and greater annihilations of the very ‘self’ that is journeying until ‘nothing remains but bliss’.
Integral Vision

The word “integral”, derived from the Latin “integer” or “whole”, is now commonly used to denote the emerging worldview.

Indeed, a global vision that honours the whole, as well as the distinct parts that make it up, could be deemed not only desirable, but necessary.

Many have used the term and contributed to the ‘integral’ thoughtform, but among contemporary western writers the work of Ken Wilber probably offers the most comprehensive and accessible articulation of this vision. (For an overview of the subject, Wilber’s book, Eye of Spirit, is an essential read. Published by Shambhala, 1997.)

Key Elements of the Integral Vision:

- It recognises the One and the Many
- It is all-quadrant
- It is all-level
- It is timeless and evolutionary

The One and The Many

The vision is both inclusive and discriminatory. It seeks to include all perspectives, appreciating their distinct features without ascribing them equal value. By starting with the assumption that all approaches to truth (including this one) are true but partial, the Integral Vision seeks to locate often contradictory realities within a more comprehensive worldview.

While the Integral Vision recognises that the One is beyond our understanding, it also recognises that the many ways we attempt to comprehend and relate to (and as) the One have a significant effect on our individual and collective experience and behaviour, and therefore must not be overlooked or omitted from a truly integral worldview.

All Quadrant

The Integral Vision seeks to integrate the various primary ways of perceiving reality:

1. Subjective (inner consciousness)
2. Objective (outer form & behaviour)
3. Individual
4. Collective

(These four are shown in the diagram on the top of page 2.)

The essential thing is that each of these primary pairs must be included in a model in order to comprehensively appreciate any particular event. Suppression or overemphasis of any one quadrant can result in pathology.

It may be useful to remember that the four-fold cross is a universal symbol throughout many cultures and religions, and, in various ageless wisdom traditions, the cross in the circle is a symbol for the earth. (This arrangement is slightly different from Ken Wilber’s, in order to align with other models.)
All-Level

If ‘all-quadrant’ relates to horizontal integration, ‘all-level’ addresses a vertical dimension of integration. Both form and consciousness, individual and collective, express through different stages or levels of evolutionary development. Each level expresses in the four quadrants, but has features that distinguish it from the one before, and, the one after it.

As an example, we might note the differences between the vegetable, animal and human kingdoms. Further, within humanity itself we can see the differences between pre-conventional, conventional and post-conventional thought, and the type of cultures and behaviours associated with each level. By recognising these different stages, the integral vision can appreciate the distinct gifts and liabilities inherent at any stage and avoid a one-size-fits-all worldview.

Development from level-to-level is termed ‘transformation’, while development within any level is termed ‘translation’. As with the quadrants, suppression or over-emphasis of the developmental process can produce problems.

Timeless and Evolutionary

While recognising the sequential development of form and consciousness in time and space, the integral vision also recognises that there is one essential divinity that both pervades all of creation and yet remains outside of it. Whether or not we achieve unity in our diverse expression, we have in reality never left unity. Nothing ever happened! And we are that nothing.

What Next? What is Necessary?

With these 4 key elements in place, where the integral vision comes in for the most flak from the popular culture is in the recognition of developmental levels. They are often perceived as linear, hierarchical and judgmental.

Ken Wilber (pictured right) argues that the suppression of the vertical dimension in the politically correct approach of “let’s treat everyone/thing the same”, creates more problems than it avoids. He claims that the popular culture is reacting to the negative and pathological expression of hierarchy by trying to avoid it all together. (A term more acceptable to many is ‘holarchy’, coined by Koestler, which conveys a more spherical or less linear approach to the same developmental process.)

However, the true irony here (for the critics of the integral vision) is that the capacity to treat everyone as equal, is itself developmental and clearly not universal. On the other hand, those who focus only on the distinction between the levels, often miss the more fluid, permeable process of development that is seen when several levels are viewed together. Consciousness, like light, may perhaps best be understood as both quanta and waves.

*Time Magazine* recently declared Albert Einstein as the “Man of the Century”. In reading its abridged, theory-of-relativity-for-dummies article, I was struck again with just how difficult it is to truly comprehend...
The easy (and too commonly assumed) interpretation of the Theory of Relativity is that ‘everything is relative’, which is translated in sociological terms as, “every point of view is as valid, or developmentally the same, as any other”. As in physics and sociology, the search for a unified field theory, or “theory of everything” is still underway. Perhaps this century will see a deeper understanding in the ‘maths’ of both.

The real challenge for the integral vision is in the way that it translates into an integral culture. The vision is not new—it has been realised by sages and mystics throughout time.

What is new is that the vision is being grasped by significant numbers of individuals and the infrastructures are in place for them to be in contact with each other. And when they do connect, and connecting realise that they never were separate, then what? What happens when the focus is off the diversity and on the unity? What does a unified field suggest? What, at this level of development, is necessary?

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The Good, the True, and the Beautiful
Introduction to Integral Vision
From, The Eye of Spirit,
by Ken Wilber

To understand the whole, it is necessary to understand the parts. To understand the parts, it is necessary to understand the whole. Such is the circle of understanding.

We move from part to whole and back again, and in that dance of comprehension, in that amazing circle of understanding, we come alive to meaning, to value, and to vision:

The very circle of understanding guides our way, weaving together the pieces, healing the fractures, mending the torn and tortured fragments, lighting the way ahead—this extraordinary movement from part to whole and back again, with healing the hallmark of each and every step, and grace the tender reward.
The Prime Directive & World Government

One of the key components of the integral vision is something called the prime directive. This represents the guiding principle and ultimately ‘the bottom line’—in the sense of what really matters.

The prime directive is often defined as the good of the whole. The traditional problem with “the good of the whole”, however, is that there is real difficulty in agreeing about what we mean by “good” and “whole”, not to mention definitions of “of” and “the”! This is where integral vision is most useful. Much political debate and ideology can be understood by looking closely at the integration of the quadrants (as described in “Integral Vision”).

A healthy integration of all four quadrants is required for good government. That requires that individuals and political parties see integration as being of greater value than their quadrant or hemispheric view.

In New Zealand we have the opportunity to see whether this integration can occur under the MMP system. The division is most clearly seen between the so-called left and right, the collective and the individual. Simplistically, Labour represents the values of the collective, while National represents the values of the individual. There are also the north/south divisions in the parties, between those who favour the ‘inner’ or top quadrant (therefore emphasising the need to change consciousness through education), and those who favour the ‘outer’ or bottom quadrant (therefore emphasising the need to change behaviour through law and order).

In America, Wilber sees the division more between inner and outer with the liberals taking the view that humans (as consciousness) are basically ‘good’ and need to be given equal opportunity to develop, while the conservatives see human behaviour as basically ‘bad’, needing to be disciplined under law for the common good. One irony here is that the liberals often end up passing the most laws!

Another integration problem occurs between the different levels. (Recall that “levels” refer to the vertical component of integration, and the “quadrants” refer to horizontal integration.) For example, when identity is primarily centred in the body, physical survival and development (and collectively, the survival of my family or tribe) are seen as the most important thing (the prime directive). I may rationalise my behaviour, i.e. change my beliefs, to support my actions.

When identity is primarily centred in the emotions, my feelings and those of my emotional ‘family’ are the most important thing. My behaviour is motivated by my feelings and I will often sacrifice my physical well being for those I am emotionally attached to. I seek emotional peace and I am often torn between my beliefs and my actions.

When identity is primarily centred in the mind, my prime directive is the accumulation of knowledge and the promulgation and defense of my beliefs. I may sacrifice my physical and emotional well being for the sake of my ideas, and may often suppress or deny my physical and emotional states in order to maintain my beliefs about myself.

When my identity is somewhat freed from my own ego concerns and ideologies, the prime directive actually begins to be about “the good of the whole”. At this stage—an identity with relative freedom from ego concerns—the integral vision is a possibility. The ‘whole’ is an all-level (which includes those ‘above’ as well as ‘below’), all-quadrant affair, and the ‘good’ is determined by consultation with all the parts of that whole.

The prime directive is therefore crucial in the area of leadership and politics. History, and in particular the last century, has shown a development around the globe from governance by hereditary right or military might to governance by democratically elected representatives. This has released us from the overt tyranny of the few, but because hierarchical (holarchical) development is a fact of consciousness and form (rather than a sociological construct of those “in charge”), the dominance often just takes other forms, such as economic. We may be all equal in essence, but the unfolding and demonstration of that essence occurs in both horizontally and vertically diverse ways.

One downside of democratic process is that it tends to dilute into popular ‘wisdom’. If the majority in society are egocentric then they are going to vote for the “chicken in every pot”-type of politician, or a movie star, or someone whose ideology is close to theirs. As a result, we often get politicians who are focused on pleasing different sections of the public rather than ensuring the good of the whole spectrum. (It often takes a major crisis to bring the Ghandis and Mandelas to the fore). Governance, as a result, has largely fallen into disrepute.

Going back to Einstein for a minute, imagine if scientific theories were put to the popular vote. For example, let’s look at E=mc². Business interests might want the nature of space/time to be less fluid, more marketable. Black holes could be
outlawed because they scare people ... and besides, they could also be considered racist. And let’s not be so absolute here about the speed of light, ok?

As a whole, we accept these theories, not because we all understand them, but because we trust that there are a community of peers who will verify them by doing the math. (Most of us, that is—Stephen Hawking, in the *Time* article mentioned, reports he gets three or four letters a week that claim the theory of relativity is wrong.)

In politics, however, maths are not required to discern truth. Everyone can have an opinion (and anyway aren’t all opinions relative?) If we accept the ideas of the Integral Vision, however, we see that there are developmental processes underway, and that all opinions are not created equal. We may want to ensure that all opinions are heard, yet we will not agree that all opinions should have equal value in fostering “the good of the whole”. Perhaps there are such a thing as formulas for good leadership.

**What has happened to the art and science of governance?** Our trust in politicians, particularly in the western democracies is low. We don’t trust them with their own expense accounts, let alone the books of the country, to say nothing of a vision.

A positive result of this distrust of ‘leaders’ has been a reclaiming of personal power and a grass roots revival as people take back their naïve projections onto the political system. However, at the same time that ‘quantity of power’ is being spread, there has never been a greater need for the concentration of ‘quality of power’. Multinational trade, the internet, the ecological crisis and globalisation in general have made the issue of international law—and an enlightened and efficient body to implement it—critical.

**Some kind of efficient world government has been seen as necessary by global thinkers for decades.**

One of the key things that prevents a healthy move towards world government is the great and understandable fear in nations and individuals alike of the consequences of the willing surrender of some of their powers of self rule to a higher authority. The result of this fear, however, is that we may end up with a far-from-benign world governance, by default.

Hierarchy, remember, is a fact—not a construct: there are always smarter people with greater skills and capabilities, which allow them to amass resources and influence others.

The critical question is: “What is the prime directive that motivates them?”

Only a prime directive that has its roots in an integral vision is going to promote health for the whole system. And this requires that we find, elect, and give a mandate to those who are capable of holding such a vision and who have demonstrated their ability to carry it out in an international context. They must be able to genuinely cooperate with each other and be willing to consult and collaborate with people at all levels and in all quadrants. The result might be a genuine brotherhood of nations, motivated by common cause, rather than a collective of nations, motivated principally by self interest and expediency.

The problems with the United Nations are well known. The need for intrinsic reform and the difficulties involved in that probably make the UN a transitional, rather than a final form. Hand in hand with the development of a new, more suitable form, the development of consciousness is also happening with a number of groups working on a global charter or bill of rights and responsibilities.

The consulting process is going to take time. My guess is that we are probably still a decade or two away from world government. We probably need all of that time to educate and upskill ourselves on issues of power and restore some trust in the governance process. After all, somehow we are going to have to take collective responsibility for electing a group of representatives whose work will be no less than the creative cooperation with the evolutionary process operating through the form and consciousness of the entire planet.

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“**With all my heart I believe that the world’s present system of sovereign nations can lead only to barbarism, war and inhumanity. ... There is no salvation for civilisation, or even the human race, other than the creation of a world government.**”

Albert Einstein
Healing Through Time

If Time is the great healer, as they say, then how can we cooperate with it in its great work? Is it possible to take a more proactive approach—rather than sitting around waiting for Time to make a housecall? I am going to refer to this proactive approach as ‘fourth dimensional healing’ or ‘healing through time’.

One year I knew that I was going to have a tough time emotionally at Christmas: I had some stressful work projects on, and most poignant, it was the second year of not being with my kids. So, a month before, I sat down and wrote myself a Christmas card. When I opened it on the day and read what I had written, I wept in appreciation. I had made my own day! So I began to think about how the principle might be applied in other ways. Here are some ideas to help shake up the ‘present-centric’—those who are living only in the here and now.

**Intrapersonal**

Send little ‘time capsules’ forward ...

Before making a significant decision that will affect the rest of your life, you might consider writing down the reasons for the decision and the hopes you have for the future. For example, it might be some comfort to you as a seventy-year old, with no superannuation, to know exactly why you, as a thirty-year old, thought that putting all your money into emu farming was such a good investment!

Or, if you are into reincarnation, you might want to leave a few notes around, perhaps some map directions, along with your favourite bowl or crystal, to help your reincarnated self pick up the thread.

And back ...

If you have an emotional wound from childhood (and who doesn’t?) you could write to yourself with the exact words of wisdom and compassion that were missing at the time. (*Dear Bruce: That drawing of a fish is excellent! Very creative! ... In fact, I bet those three legs will come in handy.*)

**Intergenerational**

How much time do we spend sorting through all the unhealed issues dangling from the family tree, trying to find our roots and striving for our independence? Imagine being able to put on a video of your great grandparents and hear them talk about their lives, loves, ideas and dreams. Whether we know it or not, we all pass on a legacy far more substantial than just the material dimension, so why not do it consciously?

“Dear great grandson: In order to make a success of the family accountancy practise, I had to suppress my desire to become a poet so strongly that it might well take two generations or more to surface. So if you feel a sudden sonnet rising for no obvious good reason, stop a moment to capture it.”

We may want to consider writing to anyone, on any subject we’d like healed, at any time or place. Some very helpful planetary healing might occur if we all sat down and wrote notes beginning with things like: “To the generation cleaning up nuclear waste: ...”

“Dear Adolf Hitler: ...”

“An open letter to extinct species [fill in blank with creature of choice]: ...”

“Dear ‘family’: Oh, Why I thought introducing a fish gene into the family tree was a good idea ...”

Well, you get the idea. I don’t think it is ‘Time’ that heals. I think the healer has been, and always will be, Love. Its just that learning how to love, takes time.

To a Poet a Thousand Years Hence

*I who am dead a thousand years,*  
And wrote this sweet archaic song,  
Send you my words for messengers  
The way I shall not pass along.

*I care not if you bridge the seas,*  
Or ride secure the cruel sky,  
Or build consummate palaces  
Of metal or of masonry.

*But have you wine and music still,*  
And statues and a bright-eyed love,  
And foolish thoughts of good and ill,  
And prayers to them who sit above?*  

*O friend unseen, unborn, unknown,*  
*Student of our sweet English tongue,*  
*Read out my words at night, alone:*  
*I was a poet, I was young.*

*Since I can never see your face,*  
*And never shake you by the hand,*  
*I send my soul though time and space*
World Hunger

Hunger in the world persists. It is tempting to think of it as a really complex, at times overwhelming problem. It involves issues including overpopulation, distribution of resources, education and politics. It brings up strong emotions of despair, fear, greed and guilt.

And yet, world hunger, more than any other ‘problem’ may be the opportunity for us to experience our interconnectedness in an unprecedented way. When viewed from a global perspective the inequities seem glaring and the solution obvious. Consider these statistics:

- It has been estimated by the UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF that the total cost of providing basic social services in the developing countries, including health, education, family planning, clean water, and all of the other basic social goals agreed on at the World Summit for Children, would be in the region of an additional $30 to $40 billion (US) a year, two thirds of which would come from the developing countries themselves.

- In America, the National Institute of Health estimates that the annual cost of obesity related health care is 39.2 billion dollars. In addition Americans spend 33 billion dollars annually on weight-reduction products and services, including diet foods, products, and programs. Based on NIH criteria, 58 million or about one third of Americans are overweight. (I am using 1995 American statistics here because they are readily available. Obviously the combined figures for ‘developed’ countries would be much larger, and this is not a problem confined to America.)

- The Hunger Project estimates that some 10 million people die every year due to hunger related causes.

A causal relationship could be seen here, i.e. people are starving on the planet because others are eating too much. This view makes the ‘have too muchs’ automatically responsible for the ‘have nots’ and results in feelings of guilt and helplessness - not only do they have to live with being overweight, they now have to take responsibility for others starving.

**The radical idea is to entertain the reverse notion as equally true:** ie. People are eating too much on the planet because others are starving!

The Hypothesis

There is actually some good scientific support for this idea. In the 1930’s, a Russian called Sergei Speransky conducted some interesting, if unpleasant experiments on mice. In one experiment he divided a community of mice in half, placed them in different locations and proceeded to starve one group. The amazing thing that he found was that the other group began to eat much more even though they had sufficient food. It was as if some subtle sympathetic communication was at work. (He next started killing one group, and the other group began reproducing at an increased rate, but ... let’s leave that issue for another article on over-population.)

This idea has powerful ramifications. It indicates that there are deep connections at work between biologically-related beings, even though apparently separated by geographic or national boundaries. Perhaps the fact of our essential unity communicates itself unconsciously through our biology.

In the light of this idea, those with overeating issues could begin to view themselves, not as those majorly responsible for world hunger, but as those most sensitive and unconsciously sympathetic to it. Their weight issue is a symptom, then, of their sensitivity to humanity, not of their lack of humanity.

The balanced point of view is that many food related problems from starvation to overeating, anorexia, etc, may at least in part be attributed to the same underlying root - the lack of realisation of our essential unity.

Our illusion of separateness is the origin of fear, and the fear is what generates the uneven distribution of resources on the planet.

Many proposed solutions to the issue of world hunger also have fear or its offside, guilt as the driving force behind them and often result in a further division between the ‘giver’ and ‘recipient’ of ‘aid’.

It is the developed nations, where there is plenty, that the greatest contributor to illness and death is overeating. Those in the developed nations are dying just as quickly from overconsumption as those in the underdeveloped nations are dying from ‘under-consumption’. If we become aware of our relationship, our biological interdependence with the rest of humanity, we see that it is in each individual’s best interests to distribute food more evenly.
**Action**

The next step would be to allow the unconscious sympathetic response to move out of the body and become conscious by addressing it directly. Instead of spending money on diet and exercise programmes which do not address the underlying issue, that money could be used to respond consciously to the food needs of others. Instead of charity, money given becomes a real investment in human welfare, which directly impacts the health of the giver. Giving money to those in need becomes the new dieting programme!

This ‘radical’ view of the relatedness between hunger and obesity has the capacity to generate a partnership that recognises and acts on our underlying unity. If we are, at root, One, expressing through many diverse bodies on this planet, it may help us to remember that at mealtimes. When we hear that little voice inside wanting an extra slice of pie, we could ask ourselves, “Which part of Us is hungry?”
Suicide In Paradise?

If our modern ‘civilised’ western nations have a standard of living and quality of lifestyle that keeps our immigration officers busy turning hopeful arrivals away in droves, why is our suicide rate amongst young people so high?

Perhaps this is a question that deserves being lived with for a while. A question that asks us to confront the issue of true meaning in life and death.

Perhaps it is ultimately a spiritual question and one that needs even greater attention than finding someone or thing to blame or even spending more money on mental health research and job creation schemes.

A question that asks us to examine carefully with our minds and hearts the core assumptions that the belief system of our society is based on.

One of those core assumptions is that there is something wrong with those people who find themselves unable or unwilling to fit into society. A common view is that suicides and indeed those in our prisons, mental institutions or otherwise on the fringes of so-called ‘normal’ life are not making rational or valid choices and need help adjusting.

Underlying that view is the assumption that what everyone really wants is health, wealth and happiness and so if they are not pursuing these aims or are taking actions that have consequences contrary to these aims, then they are in some way mal-adjusted.

Often what appear to be self-destructive actions can best be understood as the result of another drive in human beings, one that is developmentally more advanced than the pursuit of material well-being. A drive, that if understood and listened to carefully, can mark the transition out of the search for means into the search for meaning.

The search for meaning has traditionally been addressed in religious and spiritual traditions. Paradoxically this search and the increased awareness that it brings, combined with globalisation has meant we are collectively demanding more than any one belief system or tradition can provide. Individuals are increasingly looking for a direct experience of spirit rather than having it stepped down through a particular philosophy, priest or psychotherapist.

Our lack of faith in one spiritual pathway has also left a vacuum in the education of our young people. Careful to avoid indoctrination by any one belief system, what is provided in the way of spiritual education is often watered down, politically correct and platitudinous.

Underlying most religious pathways is the belief and experience of the human soul — some part of us which is connected to a greater life and meaning than one ‘cradle to grave’ earthwalk. Whether this is understood as immortal, reincarnational or transpersonal is not as relevant as the experience of a greater contextual meaning to life. When we fall silent on the subject of the human soul; when spiritual awareness is treated as simply a biological byproduct, then the soul does not go away but merely seeks to know and express itself even more fully although often more unconsciously and sometimes with destructive consequences to the biology.

The philosophical concept of the soul as a divine being with a life and history of its own is widespread throughout different cultures and times on earth. In this framework it is the incarnation of the soul in animal form that creates human beings with our remarkable capacity for self-consciousness and self-realisaton. Ironically, it may be this self-consciousness, forgetful of it’s origin and misidentified with form which lies at the root of many suicides as well as the widespread fear and denial of death in western societies.

As Rilke writes

*Lord, we are more wretched than the animals who do their deaths once and for all, for we are never finished with our not dying. Dying is strange and hard if it is not our death, but a death that takes us by storm, when we’ve ripened none within us We stand in your garden year after year We are trees for yielding a sweet death But fearful, we wither before the harvest.*

If life is not the opposite of death but something greater that encompasses and transcends it, then this collective withering, this backing away from death, is also a backing away from life. Separated from our source of spiritual life we feel increasingly insecure and begin to fill that insecurity by acquiring material resources and becoming neurotic about surviving. This collective neurosis then becomes normalised as ‘human nature’ and underpins the thinking and behaviour which governs society.

Into this rather poisonous illusion come the souls of our children bringing with them the seeds of remembrance that could reconnect us with our source.

The strong ones blaze forth ignoring the illusion and retaining a measure of connection to the power, love and creativity that are uniquely the expression of soul quality.
The less strong reject the illusion but can’t remem-
ber what to replace it with.

The majority fall under the spell and become normal well-adjusted humanity.

It is the middle group which are most in danger because of their deep feelings of isolation. Unable to fully embrace this world and yet unable to access and express the other they are often plagued by self doubt and remain rather childlike in their emotional life.

In general, society’s response to these people as young adults is to try and ‘ground’ them by encouraging them to enter more fully into the illusion. They are encouraged to get ‘jobs’ or take up activities which are often doing quite meaningless things and add to their feelings of despair.

Some bury these feelings and make the adaptation but keep the void inside them to surface under pressure later in life.

Others exhibit increasingly rebellious or dependent behaviour.

Some start moving towards death consciously, others more unconsciously through increased risk taking.

The point is that many of these people are in a spiritual crisis. What will help them is a movement towards the soul, not a movement away: an encour-
agement of any creative outlet they may have; help to find work that has meaning for them and often work that serves humanity in some conscious way; support for and a healthy normalising of their doubts about the quality of living around them.

Above all, information on the nature and the poten-
tial of the human soul. When their connection to the soul has been affirmed and strengthened, then they can be encouraged into the experience of living that Kabir calls for:

Jump into the experience while you are alive!
Think…and think… while you are alive
What you call ‘salvation’ belongs to the time
BEFORE death
If you don’t break the ropes while you are alive
Do you think ghosts will do it after?
So plunge into the truth, find out who the teacher is
Believe in the great sound.

We are at the cusp of an age - the old traditional forms of spiritual education are no longer serving and the new are only just beginning to emerge. The ageless soul-based wisdom teachings are clothing themselves this time around in a new language - the language of energy. This language bridges science and religion, art and psychology. It crosses racial and national boundaries and links the deep subjective experiences of human consciousness with the objective realities of our external environment.
The Path of Daring

As we gradually move from the Piscean, Sixth Ray, and familiar energies, to the Aquarian Age, Seventh Ray and the energies of an emerging order, a new question is being asked in the spiritual community.

One does not now hear so much, “How can we contact spirit?” – the paths are relatively well known and marked out by many religious and spiritual traditions during the last two thousand years. But we do hear, “How can we understand and apply spirit?” – as mankind has recognised that the way in which we ‘unpack’ our understanding of spirit has considerable impact on our political, economic and philosophical systems.

Understanding Spirit allows us to sort out the seeds of truth from the dogma. Increasingly however, the question is being asked, “Having somewhat contacted and understood spirit, how do we then express spirit in our individual and collective lives?” It is this question which calls for a new ‘yoga’ or path of union.

Hatha yoga controls the physical body, Bhakti yoga purifies the emotional and Raja yoga focuses and develops the mind and integrates the threefold personality as a vehicle for soul.

The expression of soul life through the personality, however is the focus of Agni Yoga.

Agni Yoga means the yoga of fire, or the path of daring.

Agni yoga is practiced by the soul, not by the personality, and therefore requires a shift of identity from personal habits to a Soul-filled identity. This is the path that results in the ‘externalisation’ of the inner being on the outer planes of existence.

In a planetary sense, it results eventually in the externalisation of the Hierarchy, considered as the spiritual government, and the anchoring on earth of the Fifth Kingdom, that of conscious souls. This kingdom is epitomised for us by the Christ. Having journeyed to the Father or Spirit aspect, He seeks to express that spirit ‘on earth as it is in heaven’. Our souls, as aspects of Christ, seek to do the same. It is not ascension the soul seeks at this time, but descension – the demonstration of Life More Abundant upon the physical plane.

The energies of the new, Seventh Ray, are demanding the spiritual community ‘walk their talk’ and demonstrate through living example the presence and power of the soul. It could be said that it is not the material focus of the masses that prevents the recognition of the fifth kingdom on the planet, but a lack of courage on the part of the advanced members of the human family.

One of the tasks before those who guide humanity is to turn the disciples around and direct their consciousness out into the world rather than in towards the inner world, so that they become “relaying channels of light” rather than “delaying points of selfish interest.”

What are the hallmarks of an agni yogi, someone trying to walk, as a soul, the path of daring?

Fearlessness
This is not the suppression or denial of fear, but the anchoring of the identity in the part of us that is deathless. We may be theoretically aware that we are immortal, but if we were to conduct a ‘spiritual audit’ of our lives, how often do we actually act as if this were the case?

Fearlessness is the recognition and realisation that there are no environments or circumstances in which the spirit of man can be defeated. This realisation allows one to take risks in a world that seeks security and the minimization of risk as a primary goal in ‘making a living’. To risk poverty (not to make a vow of it, but to accept it as a potential consequence of action based on a higher principle); to risk not being liked; to risk one’s own precious accumulations of beliefs about reality – this is a step taken by the Agni Yogi.

Simplicity
This is not the simplicity of ignorance but the quality that is developed by winning through complexity to a recognition of what really matters. It is the simplicity that results from a life based on clear spiritual principles that have been tested and refined through practice. These principles order the life and allow for resources to be used efficiently in serving a higher purpose than accumulation for its own sake.
Beauty

This is not the outer attractiveness of form, but the harmony created when the inner and outer worlds are functioning in unison. The result is grace – that spiritual nourishment that penetrates all the worlds revealing the essential divinity and usefulness of each component part.

These hallmarks are developed through the acceptance of spiritual responsibility.

Once the spiritual energies are contacted and that contact is maintained through meditation, contemplation or prayer, then the attempt is made to understand the nature of the spiritual plan through the wisdom teachings.

Once the plan for our planetary evolution and humanity’s role in that plan is somewhat understood, then the conscious acceptance of a role within that plan is the next step. This acceptance and the resulting life of service is what is meant by ‘spiritual responsibility’.

Spiritual responsibility requires the maintenance of a point of tension between what an individual or group is capable of and what is needed. This tension is like the tension in a violin string – too much tension and the string snaps, not enough and the note doesn’t sound at all. It is the ‘note’ sounded by a soul under tension that attracts the inner and outer resources needed to carry out the responsibilities accepted. We are at a time when the spiritual strings of the planet are being tightened and we are asked to carry a higher point of tension. A tension which will allow an increased inflow of spiritual energy.

Maintaining a point of spiritual tension is an art and a science. Entering the path of daring requires that we leave what I call the Café on the Edge. The Café on the Edge is a transition point between understanding spirit and expressing spirit.

During the early stages on the spiritual path there is a tendency to overestimate one’s capabilities. Once a glimpse is seen of what is truly required, however, there can be a tendency to underestimate. We stand on the edge and wonder whether … actually, it might be someone else’s karma to jump. We sit down for a minute to catch our breath and decide that … maybe we should have a cup of tea before jumping. Then we need to build a little shelter – just for the first night of course, because tomorrow we are definitely jumping. A week goes by and we have built a little Café on the Edge where we serve lattes to other potential jumpers.

Pretty soon we have added a bookshop and have evening talks on the fine art of jumping. Of course we do intend someday to actually jump. However, maybe it will have to wait until after we have the franchise on a chain of Cafés on the Edge up and running. And so the world waits for the great Jumper who will Jump for us all.

In this fantasy it is easy to forget that the spiritual kingdom will anchor on earth ‘through humanity’ and not ‘for humanity’. The quickest way for this externalisation to happen is if we deconstruct the fence of rationalisations we have built along our own cliff, close the door of the coffee shop, walk to the edge, and gracefully take the first great step upon the path of daring.

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“It is not because things are difficult that we do not dare; it is because we do not dare that they are difficult.”

Lucius Annaeus Seneca
Radical Idea:
The perceived global environmental crisis may be as much a sign of humanity’s evolving spirituality as it is an indication of humanity’s rush to Armageddon.

Key thoughts
• Our concept of ecology must expand to include the invisible dimensions of Earth: The mythology of Ouranus or Uranus, as well as Gaia.
• Environmental reforms need to be motivated by something more sustainable than fear.
• Our conception and attitude to ‘God’ has a direct bearing on our relationship to, and stewardship of, the natural world.

That we are in the midst of a global environmental crisis is nearly indisputable. At conference after conference we hear someone telling us that human actions on planet earth are unsustainable. Environmentalists tell us that the very survival of the planet is dependent upon humanity making immediate change. The direction of that change however, and the ways in which it can most effectively be brought about, are open to debate. Conventional wisdom says that the crisis is caused by too great a disconnection between human consciousness and the so-called ‘natural’ world. A mind-body split that can only be resolved by ‘reconnecting’ with our emotions, our bodies, and the land.

The radical view is that the crisis is actually the result of too little separation between man and his environment, rather than too much.

More specifically, the crisis is that human consciousness is caught part way through a dis-identification with the mental, emotional and physical bodies, and the crisis reflects a lack of transcendence.

I am not disputing that there is great value and healing in reconnecting with the roots of our collective journey in consciousness through the physical and emotional planes, but I am asserting that the overall direction lies — not backwards and away from mind — but forwards through the mind to the transmental stages of awareness. I call this ‘the Uranus assertion’ for reasons that will become clear later.

To make the distinction between the two directions more apparent, let’s take an example of Bob and Steve, two men in their late forties, both of whom have suffered mild heart attacks and have been informed by their doctors that they will have to radically alter their lifestyles if they want to stay alive.

Bob immediately takes the advice to heart and begins a restoration project. He reads up on the latest theories about cholesterol. He joins a gym and begins an exercise program, changes his diet, and gives up smoking. He begins to feel great and has more energy than ever. He makes more changes — revamping his business so that it is more efficient and profitable than ever. He decides to leave his wife and starts going out with a young attractive woman he meets at the gym. He buys a sports car, joins a drumming group and explores his sexuality. It is like he has a new lease on life and he feels great. Later, his business fails and his new partner leaves him for another man. A depression sets in that he can’t shake, and he resumes his old bad habits.

On the other hand, Steve does not react positively to the news. He enters a time of deep contemplation and a difficult re-evaluation of the meaning of his life. He confronts the inevitability of his own death that the heart attack foreshadowed. He spends time praying, and then takes up meditation and gets therapeutic help. His health does not improve immediately, and his
outer life activities are cut back: he loses his job and his relationships go through upheaval. After a long time of contemplative focus and review of his values, he begins to become active in his outer world again. He makes considered and far reaching changes based upon the principles he has discovered are most important in his life. He has found meaning and perspective in his life.

The key issue in this example is the way in which the two men deal with the reality of death. Steve accepts it as a sober warning, and allows it to deepen his life. Bob recoils from it and refocuses his energies on survival. At the end of two years from their heart attacks, a medical evaluation of the two men might show that Bob was physically healthier, but a psychological examination would reveal a different reality. Bob was still motivated by fear of death; Steve was moving forward into his life.

The fear of death may be an efficient motivator for rapid change, but not a solution for sustainable living. Dire warnings about the state of the environment can have a tendency to reactivate the survival fears that may ultimately be behind our careless behaviours in the first place.

We may rush to make changes out of that fear but the results will often be short-term and result in a contraction of the compassionate consciousness that is needed to make changes that are sustainable. Industrialised countries, suddenly aware of the consequences of their actions rush to limit and restrict the development of other nations along the same path; millions of dollars get spent on saving species past their evolutionary use-by date in the name of biodiversity, etc. But these acts are often coloured primarily by our own fear of annihilation. A similar pattern plays out in health systems where we desperately seek to prolong life at all costs.

Motivating people through fear works on the pragmatic view that humans are primarily motivated by the drive to survive (i.e., the same drives that dominate in the ‘natural world’ that we can witness at work on the Discovery Channel) ... Unfortunately there is a Catch 22 in this assumption:

- Humans are destroying nature.
- ... but humans are not separate from nature;
- therefore, nature is destroying nature.

To avoid confronting this, it is often suggested that ‘man’ has separated from the rest of nature, and that this separate but illusory sense of self (ego) is what allows them to abuse ‘her’ (i.e., nature becomes feminine, associated with the body).

The egocentric development of self consciousness is then often seen as the (male) culprit, along with science and technology, that alienates humanity from nature. The domination of the body by the mind then gets linked up with ideas about patriarchy and the gender wars. The result is a rather confused worldview that contains the same inner inconsistency that it sees in the outer world. Namely, it separates out a part of ‘nature’ by labelling it unnatural and blaming it, and wanting to ‘go back’ to a ‘more simple’ time.

This, in itself, is not an ecological view — it is an out-picturing of the mind/body split that has plagued western thought for centuries. In its most disfunctional form and as a reaction to the abuses of mind, this worldview advocates a rejection of mind and technology altogether. The tendency is to romanticise earlier periods of human evolution on the planet when a deeper participatory connection with the natural world was experienced, such as

“Many of the elevationist movements, alas, are not beyond logic, but beneath it. They think they are, and announce themselves to be, climbing the Mountain of Truth; whereas, it seems to me, they have merely slipped and fallen and are sliding rapidly down it, and the exhilarating rush of skidding uncontrollably down evolution’s slope they call ‘following your bliss’. As the earth comes rushing up at them at terminal velocity, they are bold enough to offer this collision course with ground zero as a new paradigm for the coming world transformation, and they feel oh-so-sorry for those who watch their coming crash with the same fascination as one watches a twenty-car pile up on the highway, and they sadly nod as we decline to join in that particular adventure. Spiritual bliss, in infinite measure, lies up that hill, not down it.”

True, much of the motivation behind these approaches may be well-intentioned attempts by some environmentalists and eco-philosophers to correct an obvious imbalance in the western
worldview. However, in seeing the negative side effects of human self-consciousness, they wage war on consciousness itself: they seek re-admittance to an earlier Eden — a pre-conscious unity that occurred on the emotional and etheric levels before the development of mind.

Those who promote a return to an undifferentiated oneness with the natural world often epitomise a retrogressive movement “back to nature”. They correctly diagnose the alienation, but prescribe the wrong solution. True oneness lies in the other direction — onward through the existential desert and out of the ‘natural’ world altogether. Or rather, let us redefine what ‘natural’ means so that we include the soul of the planet as well as its form.

The Gaia Hypothesis is a movement towards thinking of the planet as a living, somewhat self-regulating organism. Gaia has a physiosphere (physical matter), biosphere (biological life) and noosphere (mind)

While an expansion from pure materialism, however, this Gaia-based worldview is still materialistic from an esoteric perspective. The soul encompasses and expresses through mind, emotions and body — but it is not limited by them, and has a separate existence of its own.

In mythology, the spiritual realms of earth were represented by Uranos, the Sky God. There are different versions of the myth — the most popular is where Gaia, the Earth Goddess, gives birth to Uranus the Sky God.

In the first diagram the implications are clear. If Gaia dies, the game is up: the survival of the planet is therefore paramount. Where there is (physical) life, there is hope.

In the second diagram, Uranus and Gaia are seen as two aspects of the same underlying reality.

Creation myths are a powerful reflection of the way we see our world, and what motivates us, often unconsciously, into political action.

In order to understand the environmental crisis, I believe we must at least shift our worldview from the first to the second diagram. We must at least give the soul of the earth equal billing. And by the soul of the earth I do not mean the etheric, energy body, or the emotional life, or even the Jungian collective unconscious: I mean that consciousness and purpose which transcends the human kingdom altogether.

Here is a thought experiment. Contemplate seriously, for at least a few moments, the destruction of the earth. Imagine a meteor hits the planet and all life is destroyed (no space ships get away carrying the seeds of new life).

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Here is a thought experiment. Contemplate seriously, for at least a few moments, the destruction of the earth. Imagine a meteor hits the planet and all life is destroyed (no space ships get away carrying the seeds of new life).
Which of the three scenarios do you prefer? Why? Does it matter what the cause of death is? If humans are not motivated solely by survival needs, then what is it that does motivate us from a deeper level? Why would we care? If it matters, we are led to wonder, What is Uranus/Gaia trying to achieve during its life or ‘an incarnation’ of the earth? How might we find out and align with such a transcendent purpose?

And how do we correctly guage the ‘health’ of the earth in a way which includes the soul. If, to take a radical example, we only measured the biophysical signs of, say Ghandi during the middle of a hunger strike, we might get a very distorted view of the ‘health’ of the whole being. While his body may be in crisis, I suggest his Soul was very healthy!

I am not saying that Earth (through humanity) is undergoing a conscious spiritual process through the current environmental challenges, but Earth may be undergoing a semi-conscious spiritual crisis, and it may be humanity just isn’t aware of it, and, like a child, believes it is the cause of inevitable or temporary change.

The conventional view is that humans have lost the evolutionary plot. We have separated ourselves off from the rest of the natural world and are destroying it out of an inherent selfishness and greed. What we therefore need, this thinking goes is a massive dose of fear in order to wake us up and take responsibility for the survival of the planet.

The radical view that I prefer is this. Humans are eventually (and therefore inherently) wise, loving and purposeful beings, in touch intuitively with the rhythmic life and purpose of the universe. We have been surprisingly successful in our development on this planet. That success is currently expressing itself in a period of powerful self focus and preoccupation. Many of the problems that humanity is causing on the planet are the result of being only part way through a period of transformation. The capacities resulting from the development of self-consciousness have yet to be offset by the benefits of developing transcendent consciousness.

Much of the human selfishness, greed and careless behavior towards the planet stems from fear generated out of a lack of realisation of our true nature and therefore is only exacerbated by increasing that fear. What we need is an empowerment from spirit to remind us of our true purpose and give us the courage to come to terms with our physical mortality. We do not need to return to nature (defined in its material sense).

Perhaps we need to finally break our consciousness free from nature altogether, and find NATURE, waiting where it has been all along, ‘above’, and within us.
SHAMBALLA

In Tibetan Buddhism, Mt Kailash is the most magical site on the earth, the abode of the father and mother of the world. The Hopis acknowledge it as the other end of the world backbone that sticks up as their Black Mesa. It is called Mt Kailash by the Europeans; Kang Rinpoche, or Snow Jewel by Tibetans; Mt Meru by Indians. It is the spiritual crown of the planet, atop the very northern-most sector of the Himalayas, in the most remote region of Tibet.

-Circling The Sacred Mountain

One year before the journey to Kailas, I had one of those dreams – you know the kind that reverberate through your life for years to come like a signpost on the inner journey.

In the dream, I was in a sanctuary and carefully unwrapping a sacred object on the altar. Inside was an octahedron shaped diamond that radiated blue white fire from its centre through each of its faces. Surrounding the diamond was a glorious sapphire blue aura that pulsed and danced with energy. Contemplating this I realised that it was my greatest treasure, and in that moment I heard an inner voice asking me to ‘put it in the fire’. I raised it up and watched with a mixture of grief and fascination as the centre of the diamond began to burn with an intense flame that eventually spread to the whole sphere. I awoke in tears but feeling strangely exhilarated.

Around the same time, I became aware of a deep calling to journey to Mt Kailash for the Wesak full moon in May 2000. In the esoteric teachings of Alice Bailey, the year 2000 is spoken of as the year of the Shamballic Impact where spiritual energy is released directly from the spiritual crown centre of the planet into humanity. This impact allows for the shattering of old structures of thinking (and the systems that are built on it) and the anchoring of new patterns. A spiritual infusion as it were. In Tibetan legend, Shambhala is a magic hidden country of highly evolved bodhisattvas (enlightened beings dedicated to serving humanity) who will one day liberate the planet into a new era of happiness.

Seekers from many different traditions associate the legend with the area around Kailash and have been making the sacred pilgrimage around this pyramid shaped mountain for more than a thousand years. To us it was a dharma journey – one where it is necessary to move through both an inner and outer landscape that are inextricably connected.

In researching the trip I came across the book ‘Circling the Sacred Mountain’ by Robert Thurman and Tad Wise published in 1999. It is an account of just such a journey made by nine individuals two years before. Thurman is a western scholar of Tibetan Buddhism and a friend of the Dalai Lama. On the trip he and his fellow travellers studied ‘the Blade Wheel of Mind Reform’ – an ancient form of tantric practise that cuts at the very root of the self-concept. Central to the practice is a deity called Yamantaka or literally, ‘Death Exterminator’ who represents the apocalyptic revelation of liberating wisdom in the Vajrayana (Diamond thunderbolt vehicle) of esoteric Buddhism.

Contemplating Yamantaka I had a similar feeling of grief and fascination as I had experienced in my dream so I decided to adopt him during our journey.

To understand Yamantaka and the Blade Wheel it is necessary to look at the subject of psychological or ego-death:

"Spiritual freedom and transformation of consciousness seem to depend on an ego death that involves letting go of a particular structure or sense of identity in order that a more encompassing, more complex sense of unity may emerge. Wilber posits the aim of evolution as the realisation of ultimate unity in Spirit, for which ego death is necessary.

"The release factor in this case is indeed a type of death; it is real dying to an exclusive identity with a lower structure in order to awaken, via love-expansion or transcendence, to a higher order life and unity. In this sense, such death-and-transcendence occurs at every stage of growth, matter to body to mind to bodmind to spirit. One accepts the death and release of the lower stage in order to find the life and unity of the next higher stage, and so on until either growth arrests and preservation alone sets in, or actual spirit is resurrected in the Great Death of final transcendence and ultimate unity."

-Shadows of The Sacred Mountain, by Frances Vaughan

At the centre of the earth, there stands a great mountain, Lord of Snows, majestic, rooted in the sea, Its summit wreathed in clouds, A measuring rod for all creation.

- Kalidasa (4th Century)
The two main deaths, which are of course rebirths, could be viewed as the death of personality and the death of the soul. The former occurs when the personal life of acquisition and activity begins to pall. Humans begin to take seriously the questions of ‘who am I?’ and ‘what is my purpose?’ An existential search continues through processes of disidentification with the body, emotions and mind to find the ‘soul’ within.

A point occurs where the transition occurs in identity from the personal self to the transpersonal. Instead of being a personality who has a soul or higher self, the identity shifts to the higher self, who expresses through a personality. It is often precipitated by a crisis of some kind where the choice is between action sourced in the love which is the true nature of soul or the fear and self-assertion of the personality.

This is a fundamental shift but the next major death is even more radical. While the first requires the release of a restricted identity for a more expansive one, the second requires the release of identity altogether.

Identity is plural — for there to be a ‘self’ there must be ‘not self’ and so duality and then multiplicity is inherent in identity. The only way to experience the non-dual ground of being, or spirit, is for there to be no-one to experience it. This is the meaning behind the Tibetan teaching that there is no ‘soul’ — that the idea of a self, even a higher self is an illusion. A necessary illusion — as the old adage goes “you have to become someone before you can become no-one” but an illusion nevertheless.

It is this preoccupation with a self that Yamantaka destroys and thus liberates the ‘self-conscious soul’ into the life of spirit. This is the paradox — what seems to be death turns out to be the conqueror of death.

It is said that when the gods see Yamantaka, he is so fierce that they lose control of their bowels! He is the end of gods and humans, for both are identity bound. Not an easy liberator to invoke! And of course, this ‘god to end all gods’ is himself an illusion — more like a gateway between the soul and the source.

The Blade Wheel practise begins where most disidentification techniques leave off — the diamond soul. We realise our deep identity within the ‘jewel in the lotus’ when we are able to transcend and include lesser identifications — the causal body, the personal self, the mind, emotions and body. Instead of resting in that identity, the Blade Wheel challenges us to go even deeper.

“...The diamond is that sense of a unique, absolute and substantial inner core, and when it spins around looking for itself it becomes a drill.

The ‘self’ that is the witness and observer of the contents of consciousness, now turns its attention upon itself and begins to unravel the core ‘knot’ of identity. The process intensifies, until the whole subject-object illusion begins to dissolve.

Then suddenly you feel you’re as open as the sky. Suddenly you can’t find the looker who wants to look, and you can’t find what the looker hasn’t found, and you can’t find the not-finding. You suddenly melt and become like empty space as if the wind is flowing through you...and then your absoluteness melts itself, like fire sticks rubbing until they kindle themselves into flame, like a diamond cutting through itself, like nuclear fission or solar fusion.”

As I began to work with these non-dual practices on my journey, the images from my dream became crystal clear. The ‘self’ I had been developing so carefully perhaps for lifetimes was fully grown. The fire at the centre of the diamond was the beginning of a liberating fusion process that, like the sun, would eventually burn up all traces of a self.

My experiences in the Himalayas and around Kailash gave me a taste of that ‘death’. Before each ‘nondual’ flash my ‘I’ became extremely jittery and then, at the moment of release, exhilaration, then the void and later, upon re-entering ‘self-consciousness’, deep amusement.

An amusement that reminded me of that quote by a sage whose name I don’t presently remember: “You are unhappy because 99% of everything you do is for your self — and there isn’t one!”
Soul Sex

**WARNING ADULT MATERIAL:**
The sexual relationship this article will feature is the inner one between personality and soul, not the outer one that is mainly concerned with body parts.

**KEY IDEA:** The most potent of all relationships is going on inside our own system, and it is a *menage a trois*. It is my contention that a huge part of the sex, power and relationship dysfunctions that are experienced in the outer world, is due to the ignorance or avoidance of the inner relationship.

The whole area of sex and relationship is an often obsessive focus for human attention and energy: witness the boom of (financially successful) websites, magazines and nightspots.

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**Horizontal Sex - Translation** or "chase and resist"
Intercourse between any two entities at the same level. Could be external (between two people), or internal (between aspects of the body/mind psyche, i.e. subpersonalities, left and right or male and female aspects of the self, etc).

**Key Point:** There is balance of power in the exchange (potentially if not always actually). Horizontal sex can be called "translation" in that it involves the complementary dynamics of agency and communion. Agency preserves the autonomy of each entity, while communion ensures the relationship between them.

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**Vertical Sex - Transformation** or, “Could you give me a hand up, please?” Intercourse between two entities at different levels. Once again, this relationship can be between external partners or involving internal dynamics.

**Key Point:** The power in the exchange is uneven. Vertical sex can be called “transformation” in that it involves the complementary dynamics of eros and agape. Eros is the desire of the lesser for the greater, and agape, the compassion of the greater for the lesser.

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These dynamics are often reflected in the stereotypical male and female dynamic, which is why I have called this type of relationship “chase and resist”. Too much agency leads to isolation of the parts and a lack of cohesion. Too much communion leads to merging into undifferentiated soup. Contemporary gender politics aside, these two dynamics tend to balance each other out over time to achieve points of relationship equilibrium.

The dynamics of transformation tend to play out in therapist/client, teacher/student relationships, which is why I have called it, “Could you help me up please?” The ‘erotic’ charge in such uneven power relationships can be used for transformation. All of the relationship dynamics, can, however, express dysfunctionally.
Soul sex is predominantly vertical sex

One aspect of soul sex involves relationship with its personality. While the soul and the personality each may have horizontal relationships, the intercourse between them is vertical and has a strong power dynamic: one is trying to control or influence the other.

During the necessary stage of personality development, the personal wishes will appear stronger than the soul’s. Over time the love and wisdom of the soul is experienced by the personality as being of a far higher quality.

This realization either comes to the personality through gradual understanding and integration of personal desires with soul intentions, or, more commonly, the personality becomes exhausted through the Sisyphean cycle of success and failure, happiness and grief, idealism and defeatism.

Anyway, at some point the personality (joyfully or reluctantly) surrenders to the more inclusive, higher will of the soul. This experience leads to personal transformation (and eventually to transfiguration, the full infusion of the personality with the soul).

All relationship dynamics are essentially threefold: two subject/objects and the one energy between them. The ‘in between’ energy, the force of attraction itself, is known by many names, but we will discuss it in context of the Goddess Aphrodite or Venus.

The myths surrounding this goddess can help us understand this energetic role in the affairs of humanity. Venus’ birth was somewhat unusual. Briefly, in Greek and Roman creation mythology, Gaia was the earth mother and Uranus the sky father. One of their children was Saturn who sided with his mother in the inevitable parental dispute. Saturn’s angst with his father led him to pull out his scythe and lop off the paternal testicles, which fell into the sea. Out of the resulting foam sprang Venus, goddess of love, beauty, and (you guessed it) sex.

A diagram is one way to represent these relationships less anthropomorphically. Some traditions view the earth as having seven ‘skins’, levels, or planes,
and the personality and it is this energy that we touch when we too, ‘fall’ in love.

The poet Rumi is a master in expressing the divine madness of her gift to us:

*The way of love is not A subtle argument
The door there is devastation
Birds make great sky-circles
Of their freedom
How do they learn it?
They fall, and falling are given wings*

So the Goddess Venus (with all her charms and indulgences) is literally the representative of the heavenly worlds on earth, and as such, she causes quite a stir.

What ensues in myth is a *menage a trois* of epic proportions, which gets reenacted over and over again in the psyche of human beings throughout history.

Her first suitor is Mars, the God of War (Ares). This love affair is a passionate encounter that allows the mind to connect with the emotions.

Unrestrained passion can be dangerous of course, and the two lovers lie overlong in each others arms, to be caught in bed by the rising Sun, who tells Vulcan (Hephaestus), Venus’ husband, who throws a net of fine links around the pair and displays them for all to see.

Out of the union between Mars and Venus comes Cupid or Eros, the energy of desire which can take us to the outer reaches of the tangible worlds, but can also fuel our ascent into physical worlds. The Venusian mind now responds to beauty and, looking out, reenchants the outer worlds, generating a desire for connection that is seen in everything from creative art to environmental action.

This ‘falling in love’ with the outer world cannot be bypassed and is a prerequisite for the later resurrection. The union with Mars connects the soul with the body and opens the heart. Beauty encounters the Beast, the soul grounds in the body. This conjunction is termed Kama-Manas is some eastern traditions.

Between them, at the midpoint of the human soul, is the winged Mercury (or Hermes in Greek mythology) the ‘messenger between worlds’ who balances the energy of both parents. The ‘fall’ of Venus into the material worlds as desire, and her resurrection as the soul, is celebrated in her dual nature as the morning star, Lucifer (Phosphoros), and the evening star, Vesper (Hesperus).

Her ‘fall’ is an act of great agape that ignites the energy of transformation between the soul and the personality which distinguish various states of consciousness. These planes are often shown as linear, but it is more useful to think of them as interpenetrating spheres.

Like creation myths everywhere, the upper appearing (outermost) realms are identified with Spirit (Uranus or, in Maori terminology, Rangi) and the lower (innermost) ones with Matter (Gaia or Papatuanuku).

From a non-dual type perspective, the planes are seen as a continuum or spectrum of energy rather than two separate realms. The link is the rainbow bridge, a link provided by the human soul (Mercury, or Tane) who is a child of both parents.

The three realms of Spirit, Soul and Personality, or form, each occupy three planes, which, in their overlap, span the seven. (Refer to the diagram to see these three circled realms clearly: Uranus/Spirit, Human/Soul, Gaia/Personality. Note Venus and Saturn are personifications of the energies that connect the higher with the lower spheres. Saturn connects the Soul and Spirit, and Venus connects the Personality and Soul.)

Particular planetary names can also be assigned to each plane to represent the types of consciousness functioning at each level. In the realm of Soul, we see that Saturn reaches up (overlaps) into the realm of Uranus with his ‘scythe’, and Venus drops down (overlaps) into the realms of Gaia.

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Her ‘fall’ is an act of great agape that ignites the energy of transformation between the soul and the personality and it is this energy that we touch when we too, ‘fall’ in love.

The poet Rumi is a master in expressing the divine madness of her gift to us:

*The way of love is not A subtle argument
The door there is devastation
Birds make great sky-circles
Of their freedom
How do they learn it?
They fall, and falling are given wings*

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the intangible ones (and thus awakens Psyche, the Soul).

Sooner or later however, the passion generated by Mars/Venus love is doomed to crash and burn in a very public way, often a necessary precursor to the development of wisdom.

It is easy to be tempted into avoiding this fall and yet it is only by entering this door of helpless surrender that we are paradoxically given our wings. The soul must be willing to fully incarnate before it is given its freedom.

Enter the next love affair: Venus falls for Mercury (Hermes), or rather, Mercury falls for her. The dynamics become clearer if we revisit the diagram of the planes of consciousness. Mercury is associated with the plane above Venus (Buddhi) and Mars the plane below (Astral). As the evening star she ‘falls’ in love with Mars. And as the morning star she ‘rises’ in love with Mercury. The first affair links mind with desire (kama-manas) to produce aspiration. The second links mind with intuition (buddhi-manas) to produce wisdom. The education of desire (Eros or Cupid) begins.

Mercury, as messenger of the Gods, is a great teacher of humanity and appears in many myths and traditions to provide sudden illuminating insights. He is also associated with the Buddha, just as Venus is associated with the Christ; the wisdom of the East meets the love of the West.

Out of the union of Hermes and Aphrodite is born Hermaphrodite, who embodies both the masculine and feminine principles. Once the two hemispheres of the brain are balanced through translation, transformation into the soul is possible. The divine hermaphrodite stands for the soul realised within the human consciousness; it can often be depicted as the halo of light around the head. We get glimpses of this union whenever we move through contemplation, prayer or meditation into the realms of revelation and insight.

Venus-Aphrodite is the Goddess of relationship, sacred and profane. Out of her two great affairs she births nothing less than the heart and soul of the world.

We need her energy on the earth rather desperately. Human development has reached the stage where the ego has managed to proclaim itself king by all but isolating itself on the mental plane. In this neurotic fantasy, the personal self withdraws into an illusion of safety, repressing and dissociating from both the physical and metaphysical passions. Unresolved power dynamics get projected out into horizontal relationships.

The development and consolidation of a personal rational self through translation on the mental plane has been evolutionary, but its self perpetuation through alienation and inflation is not. What we need is more transformation.

What we need is more vertical sex... even though this “up and down” movement can be dizzying due to the unavoidable result of transformation being a movement away from material security. It demands a movement up, away from the comfortable desire realm. Falling or rising in love always demands that we be willing to be out of control. And control is the ego’s stock in trade.

In western culture we have repressed the downward five pointed star (the sign of the devil). While this ‘falling into desire’ is ultimately a transformative energy, rather than healthfully encouraging
the subconscious, playing out in obsessive sexual preoccupations or aggressive behaviour.

The ego has similarly repressed movement into the sublime. Genuine spiritual pursuit is labelled as a frivolous escape from reality (and it is an attempt to escape from the ego’s grip). The genuine needs to transmute or transcend get twisted into either egoic fear or aggrandisement.

Here are two examples from the egocentric disneyworld:

**Cyber Sex**: No need to genuinely encounter the flesh and blood passions of another human being. No disease, no emotional entanglements, no need to tell the truth. In short, no risk, no consequence and therefore no real chance of transformative change: the pressure is relieved, the fantasies enacted, and the status quo rules.

**New Age Spirituality**: Particularly those convenient belief systems and practices that separate spirituality from genuine sacrifice. Keep the mansion on the hill, but add in the abundance philosophy punctuated with giving a rational amount to charity. Keep the ego, but add the concept of immortality, as convenient. No guilt, no loss, no consequence, and, that’s right, no transformation.

What is disturbing is how the ego’s eviction of the Goddess from the world can become so normalised. Sometimes I think that chasing glimpses of Venus in the bottom of a bottle or the latest rave drug “Ecstasy”, or screaming the name of Aphrodite over and over in the strange language of mental illness, is somehow saner in the long run than the sterile retreat into the safe flatland of the egoic status quo.

However, dysfunctional pursuit of the Goddess is not necessary when she will come running whenever we are truly willing to be caught and transformed by her beauty.

**Self Help**: Here are some tips and vertical sexual aids. Just put in your credit card details now ...

**Tips**

1. Take two lovers: Don’t buy into the inner change vs outer action argument: make love to them both. Reach in with one hand and out with the other. Fall passionately for changing the world, AND transcending it, at the same time.

2. Appreciate beauty wherever you find it. And where you don’t find it, create it.

3. Dare. Risk reaching out. We are what we long for. We just don’t know it yet.

**Sexual aids**

**Meditation**: the best lubricant for vertical lovers. There are many reputable brands on the market these days, just use one regularly.

**More relationships**: Association is good for meeting outer horizontal and vertical partners. Organisations offer opportunities for inner and outer transformation; join one or start your own. Relate vertically: be a teacher AND a student.

**Transformational Talk & Toys**: Read, write, draw, create, put messages in bottles, play! Call out both names of the goddess of Love. Enter deeply into the silence and then make a song and dance about it! Oh, but remember, when you are being creative, keep a rubber* handy, because mistakes are part of the process!

* To those unfamiliar with New Zealand terminology, a rubber is an eraser. (A condom is a condom. Take precautions!)

For most of history, love has been considered a threat to the stability of the individual and of society, because stability was usually valued more highly than freedom.

- Theodore Zeldin
A Raid on the

I have been thinking about what is happening in the world as a collective ‘raid on the articulate’. There is a creative tension in the air – the type that every artist knows when confronted with the blank canvas. The kind of tension that can get one washing windows or cleaning out the knife and fork drawer – anything but sitting and giving birth to the unknown but half-remembered story.

Something is trying to speak through our collective psyche – call it the planet becoming conscious or the soul of Gaia if you like but something is afoot (– or a tongue or an eye). And this doesn’t just seem to be my private hallucination. More and more of the people I meet who have done somewhat of their individual ‘soulwork’ are experiencing a deep magnetic draw to come together with others as if they were part of some as-yet-unknown organ of consciousness.

These individuals don’t necessarily have that much in common – except for the fact that they seem to be responding to a similar call. And once they figure out that they are all awakening together, they begin the creative process of inquiry into who or what may have called them and for what purpose. And so begins their part of the collective “raid on the inarticulate”.

The natural system, cell or organ analogy seems to have a little more mileage in it, so I’ll drive it a little further. For example, imagine the blood cells in our body going about their blood cell business in their blood cell Consciousness: pick up blood, carry blood, drop off blood, fight alien cells……when all of a sudden (due to forces beyond their comprehension) their awareness fuses for a moment with the being whom they are a part of, who may be doing dishes, studying calculus, or meditating in a blissed-out state.

The immediate effect upon the blood cells is disorientation, confusion, and a general lack of capacity to focus on performing good blood cell tasks, for a while at least. But if some measure of integration occurs between the two levels of consciousness then capable blood cell operation resumes, in cooperation with this deeper awareness. At this point a new possibility may arise. Cells who share this same capability while performing vastly different functions can become connected like an ethereal body of intelligence that facilitates a greater integration between the indwelling entity and the physical body.

This analogy is useful for me in trying to understand what is happening globally. Humans, here and there and in greater numbers than ever before seem to be becoming sensitive to another order of consciousness that is trying to express through humanity itself. That expression will be clumsy and uncoordinated at first, like a baby first learning about its fingers, but slowly it will become more coherent. Perhaps we experience this?

I also relate this transpersonal story through a personal one:

Ten years ago I had a really good day. I knew something new had happened, and something old died away. My family was worried: a medical friend suggested that I was probably psychotic. But I knew deep inside me that I had taken a significant step towards sanity - the kind of sanity that would allow me as a soul to live in integrity on the surface of this bumpy old third rock from the sun.

For years I had been under pressure – a psychological pressure generated from the dislocation between my inner and outer life. That pressure had built to a crucial point of a tension – a tension that, one way or another meant deep change was necessary. Either my inner life was going to burst profoundly through the careful container of my outer life, or I was going to have to let go of my inner world altogether, at least for awhile.

It was death that triggered it – and the death of someone I had never met. That morning started badly, when the driver on my organic recycling truck called in sick, and I went out to spend the day toting bags of grass clippings, rose prunings, and rotten citrus fruit. The fourth bag ripped open as it swung over the side of the truck and dropped its entire contents on my head. With a decayed lettuce leaf on one cheek, and the heap of compost all about me, I sat on the kerb to take stock. It wouldn’t be exaggerating to say that it felt like ‘a low point’. Busy with my self-pity, I was definitely not in the mood for compassion, so when a silver-haired woman in a limegreen gown called out to me over her front fence, I handed her my ‘fuck off’ glower.

Fortunately for both of us, she was too far gone into sanity to notice. Her life had narrowed its focus into a cry for help, and once it had broken from her lips there was nothing to do but keep sounding it.
And so I imagine that Earth is going to have a ‘good day’ soon. Like those blood cells who are shocked into a realization that they are a part of something greater, us individual human cells may also realize that, and beyond — that we are part of a circulatory system, and that being we are a part of also has its consciousness, which isn’t dependent on ours. Sometimes I think I can almost hear the sound of the being who lives through this planet, clearing its throat, making space for the expression of something that is yet unsaid.

Whatever emerges, a feeble croak or a glorious song, no doubt it is some version of love, and the more it is sounded the more life on this planet will take on the shape and soil of it until the stones themselves begin to sing.

How long will it take — a decade or ten thousand years — perhaps as Eliot concludes, it is not our business. But we can sharpen our ears and come together to listen more deeply for the source of the song.

A new beginning, a raid on the inarticulate with shabby equipment always deteriorating in the general mess of imprecision of feeling, undisciplined squads of emotion.

And what there is to conquer by strength and submission, has already been discovered once or twice, or several times, by men whom one cannot hope to emulate — but there is no competition — there is only the fight to recover what has been lost and found and lost again and again; and now, under conditions that seem unpropitious.

But perhaps neither gain nor loss. For us, there is only the trying. The rest is not our business.