

Perspective

Nature, Violence, Consciousness, Sexuality & World Religion: A Roadmap (Part III)

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ABSTRACT

In this work, the author strives to provide the knowledge to empower individuals to resist the fallacious claims of religious imperatives and act to correct the diabolical mistakes of the past; to liberate human consciousness, replenish the Earth, protect the tree of life's diversity and safeguard the passage of the generations. If you are a scientist it is a comprehensive source-referenced research review. If you are religious it serves as important reading to understand the actual roots of your beliefs. Thus, this work may serve as a road map to exorcise the founding scriptures abetting violence and homicide in religious traditions. Humans since the dawn of history have used meditation, deprivation and visionary plants and fungi, to enter into internal conscious states that form an inner cosmology, complementing the external cosmology of nature and the physical universe. We need to accept that the pursuit of knowledge requires an attitude of social freedom for individuals to explore their own inner conscious states using visionary species and substances first hand rather than the second and third hand doctrines of prescriptive religions, and accept the lessons of nature in developing our notions of morality as a mechanism to reduce intra-social strife, to in turn achieve social and religious dominance over others.

Part III of this article includes: 8. Syncretic Monotheism and Cultural Evolution; 9. Insights and Contradictions of Vedantic, Jain and Buddhist Traditions; 10. Meso-American Religions of Blood Sacrifice; 11. Religious Violation of Nature, Sexuality, Morality and Consciousness; and 12. Towards a Resolution.

Key Words: nature, violence, consciousness, sexuality, world religion, roadmap.

8. Syncretic Monotheism and Cultural Evolution

Some of the most striking evidence for the cultural evolution of deity comes from existing syncretic religions that are nevertheless monotheistic and incorporate key elements of avowedly monotheistic religions in a creative way that mixes highly disparate beliefs in a way which is clearly the mark of cultural innovation. Both of the Alawites and yazidis incorporate descriptions of disobedience to the divine that fundamentally alter the entire cosmology of monotheistic belief. The Alawites have to undergo repeated reincarnation to regain their heavenly place, while the yazidis worship a remorseful fallen angel identified by traditional Muslims as Satan.

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Alawites consider themselves to be Twelver Shi'ite Muslims, although some Sunnis dispute that they are Muslims at all. Their doctrine incorporates Gnostic, neo-Platonic, Islamic, Christian and Vedanta-like beliefs. Their theology is based on a trinity - three emanations of one God: the supreme aspect, "Essence" or "Meaning", and two lesser emanations - "Name", or "Veil"; and "Gate". These emanations have manifested themselves in different human forms over several cycles in history, the last cycle of which was as Ali (Essence), Muhammad (Name) and Salman the Persian (Gate).

However in a Vedanta-like twist Alawites also hold that they were originally stars, or divine lights, that were cast out of heaven through disobedience and must undergo repeated reincarnation before returning to heaven. They can be reincarnated as Christians, or others, through sin, and as animals if they become infidels.



Fig 32: Yazidi women light candles and torches outside Lalesh temple during a ceremony to celebrate the Yazidi New Year. Inset: The peacock angel Tawuse Melek (Melek Taus).

Yazdani theology, of the yazidis consists of an absolute transcendental God (Haq) encompassing the universe, binding together the cosmos with his essence, which manifests as the *heft sirr* (seven angels or gods), who sustain universal life

and can incarnate in persons as avatars. These seven emanations are comparable to the seven Anunnaki aspects of Anu of ancient Mesopotamian theology. Anu is the high god of the heavens, king of gods, spirits and demons. He had the power to judge those who had committed crimes, and that he had created the stars as soldiers to destroy the wicked. He was one of the oldest gods in the Sumerian pantheon, in a triad with Enlil and Enki, gods of air and water.

The Yazdani emanations include Melek Taus ("Peacock Angel" or "King") who is also the ancient Sumerian god Dumuzi son of Enki and the main deity in Yazidi theology, and Shaykh Shams al-Din, "sun of the faith", who is Mithra. The Peacock Angel, as world-ruler, causes both good and bad to befall individuals, and this ambivalent character is reflected in myths of his own temporary fall from God's favor, before his remorseful tears extinguished the fires of his hellish prison and he was reconciled with God. This belief builds on Sufi mystical reflections on the angel Iblis, who proudly refused to violate monotheism by worshipping Adam and Eve despite God's express command to do so.

Because of the association with Iblis, some followers of other monotheistic religions of the region equate the Peacock Angel with Satan, which has incited centuries of persecution of the

Yazidis as "devil worshippers." Persecution of Yazidis has continued in their home communities within the borders of modern Iraq, under both Saddam Hussein and fundamentalist Sunni Muslim revolutionaries. In August 2014 the Yazidis were targeted by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant in its campaign to "purify" Iraq and neighboring countries of non-Islamic influences.

9. Insights and Contradictions of Vedantic, Jain and Buddhist Traditions

Hinduism is as an ancient tradition as the Judeo-Christian tradition and carries with it a long and uniquely complex history running from the mingling of the Vedas of the Aryan invaders with the older Dravidian planter cultures of Harappa and Mohenjodaro, with the archetypes of Shiva and Kali. This intermingling has been succeeded by diverse overlays of Vishnavite, Shaivite and Shakti traditions embracing many deities along with their many consorts, leading to the Upanishads, the Jains and the emergence of Buddhism as a second-generation universal religion, in a parallel with the emergence of Christianity out of the Hebrew religion. The critical difference is that Hinduism, while remaining an ethnic religion of a culture of diverse peoples, has retained its polytheistic diversity, although followers of a given sect may give devotions to one deity in a form of monolatry.



Fig 33. The goddess of the sacred grove, an early Kali manifestation, Shiva as Pashupatinath the lord of the animals, the sacrifice. Indus Valley 2000 BC.

In many ways the Hindu tradition acts as a mirror to tacit assumptions of monotheism, such as the falsity of idolatry. The fact that the deities are diverse and that they have an iconic form does not make them false or hollow deities, because the iconic form is merely a representation of a deeper underlying abstract, metaphorical and spiritual meaning. Moreover each of the diverse deities represent fundamental aspects of reality without discrediting their power or universality. This relationship has allowed all the diverse practices and practitioners of various Hindu traditions to coexist without having to resort to the divisive invective that has plagued the monotheistic tradition and marred its cultural diversity.



Fig 34: Krishna and Arjuna blowing their conch shells.

This is not to say that Hindu religion is innocent either, for we know the Bhagavad-Gita is an unmitigated incitement to holy war, with Krishna inciting Arjuna to kill his relatives.

The Lord said: My beloved friend! Why yield, just on the eve of battle, to this weakness which does no credit to those who call themselves Aryans, and only brings them infamy and bars against them the gates of

heaven? O Arjuna! Why give way to unmanliness? O thou who art the terror of thine enemies! Shake off such shameful effeminacy, make ready to act!

Arjuna argued: My Lord! How can I, when the battle rages, send an arrow through Bheeshma and Drona, who should receive my reverence? Rather would I content myself with a beggar's crust that kill these teachers of mine, these precious noble souls! To slay these masters who are my benefactors would be to stain the sweetness of life's pleasures with their blood. Nor can I say whether it were better that they conquer me or for me to conquer them, since I would no longer care to live if I killed these sons of Dhritarashtra, now preparing for fight.

Lord Shri Krishna said: Why grieve for those for whom no grief is due, and yet profess wisdom? The wise grieve neither for the dead nor the living. There was never a time when I was not, nor thou, nor these princes were not; there will never be a time when we shall cease to be. As the soul experiences in this body infancy, youth and old age, so finally it passes into another. The wise have no delusion about this. Those external relations which bring cold and heat, pain and happiness, they come and go; they are not permanent. Endure them bravely, O Prince! The hero whose soul is unmoved by circumstance, who accepts pleasure and pain with equanimity, only he is fit for immortality.

However the justification is very different from the simplistic moral imperative of waging holy war to force onto others submission to the one 'true' god. Krishna is telling Arjuna that you can commit holy war even against your own kin, because all material lives are transitory and only the immortal soul within us is eternal. Thus we can even martyr ourselves in our pursuit to kill our opponents because all sentient beings are reincarnated, as their eternal souls pass through transient living bodies.

Hindu tradition is guilty of throwing its widows on the funeral pyre in a patriarchal cult of homicide and a host of other extremities, from the devotees at Puri throwing themselves to be crushed under the wheels of Jaganath's juggernaut, to human sacrifice to Kali. That said, the Vedantic tradition contains some of the deepest insights into the nature of conscious and spiritual reality so far discovered on the planet.

The story of Vishnu, the sustainer, in deep meditative repose, dreaming the universe out of Brahman, the unchanging reality amidst and beyond the world - *sat-cit-ananda*, or being-consciousness-bliss - springing as a lotus out of his navel, overlooked by his complement and consort, Lakshmi, the goddess of love, and good fortune in life, is a penetrating insight into the nature of the conscious and material universe.

Fig 35: Vishnu dreams the universe through the navel lotus of Brahma, overlooked by Lakshmi.



The earliest Upanishads date from 900 to 600 BC. The fundamental concern of the Upanishads is the nature of reality. They teach the identity of the individual soul (atman) with the universal essence soul [Brahman]. Because they are the final portions of

the Vedas, they are also known as Vedanta, - the end of the Vedas - and their thought, as interpreted in succeeding centuries, is likewise known as Vedanta. Once again we see the strong emphasis on killing and being killed being just part of transience, while the eternal atman residing within us, communed with through abandoning oneself to deep meditation, is the same eternal self beyond joy and sorrow that is both at our inner source and the deity which pervades the universe:

Death said: "The word the Vedas extol, austerities proclaim, sanctities approach - that word is Om.

That word is eternal Spirit, eternal distance, who knows it attains to his desire.

That word is the ultimate foundation. Who finds it is adored among the saints.

The Self knows all, is not born, does not die, is not the effect of any cause, is eternal, self-existent, imperishable, ancient.

How can the killing of the body kill Him? He who thinks that He kills, he who thinks that He is killed, is ignorant.

He does not kill nor is He killed. The Self is lesser than the least, greater than the greatest. He lives in all hearts.

When senses are at rest, free from desire, man finds Him and mounts beyond sorrow.

Though sitting, He travels; though sleeping is everywhere.

Who but I Death can understand that God is beyond joy and sorrow.

Who knows the Self, bodiless among the embodied,

unchanging among the changing, prevalent everywhere, goes beyond sorrow.

The Self is not known through discourse, splitting of hairs, learning however great;

He comes to the man He loves; takes that man's body for His own" (Katha Upanishad 1:2)

The earliest scriptural references to reincarnation date back to the Rig Veda:

Burn him not up, nor quite consume him, Agni: let not his body or his skin be scattered. O Jatavedas, when thou hast matured him, then send him on his way unto the Fathers... let thy fierce flame, thy glowing splendour, burn him With thine auspicious forms, o Jatavedas, bear this man to the region of the pious... Again, O Agni, to the Fathers send him who, offered in thee, goes with our oblations. Wearing new life let him increase his offspring: let him rejoin a body, Jatavedas.

The middle of the first millennium BC saw a rich radiation of spiritual traditions in India leading to the Vedantic tradition of religious philosophy, Jainism and Buddhism.

Mahavira the founder of the Jain tradition shared many of the same principles of renunciation and meditation but also contained ecological and social principles that define its uniqueness. He taught that every living being has sanctity and dignity and it should be respected just as we do our own - that we should show maximum possible kindness to every living being. That goodness comes from being respectful and truthful and gaining freedom from desires. He also preached social equanimity that the strong and the rich should not try to exploit the weak and the poor because it results in unfair distribution of wealth and hence poverty. That social peace, security and an enlightened society needs to come from within the goodness of people, because attempting to enforce virtue by an external and legal authority leads to hypocrisy and criminal intrigue.

Buddhism forms a cultural leap from the Upanishadic notion of the cosmic self, to a cosmology in which the atman is an illusion, because all forms of objectification are samsara, or illusion.

Rather there is just the cycle of birth and death causing sentient beings to suffer the entrapments of the grasping ego. By renouncing worldly desires and attachments that are the cause of suffering, one can reach a state of contemplation where one can escape the cycle of birth and death and become one with nirvana the Buddha mind or rather, no mind, since the still point of the turning world of transient phenomena cannot be objectified or conceptualized.



Fig 36: Tibetan Bhavacakra or Wheel of Life.

Key to this notion is a theme that is shared with the Vedantic and Jain traditions, namely that the consciousness of sentient beings is the central eternal reality and that nature and its diversity of natural life forms, from humans and animals to plants and bacteria, is just a collection of transient phenomena, part of the great cycle of reincarnation, with an overarching moral causality, in which those who behave ignorantly are karmically destined to be reborn as a lower life form, setting back their long journey to enlightenment.

Reincarnation, transmigration of the souls or metempsychosis is a notion that has pervaded aspects of both Western and Eastern cultures. It is an attempt to rationalize the notion of an eternal soul with the transient affairs of a changing world of mortal beings. Like the eternal

afterlife and Day of resurrection, it envisages an eternal cosmology extending beyond the visible physical world, however rather than a linear moral causality it has become a cyclic one.

Both these cosmologies have manifest problems of credibility of a purely mathematical nature. If the soul is eternal and reincarnation does not take place, as in the monotheistic view, heaven and hell will in the end become flooded with an essentially infinite number of sentient beings in a kind of multiverse in which everything happens and there is no real distinction. On the other hand, if reincarnation is the rule, we have to explain how an essentially fixed collection of eternal souls can be threaded through an essentially infinite number of transient incarnations, some of which may leave the souls so transfixed that all opportunity for moral growth might never occur.

Buddhism, particularly in its Tibetan form, extends the cycle of life into an ornate cosmology of samsara, consisting of heaven, human and animal worlds, purgatories and hell surrounding the human cycle of birth and death. Reincarnation can now occur into any one of six realms, one of which is the human realm as we know it, complemented by the god or deva realm of heavenly

bliss; the jealous god or demi-god realm, more pleasant than the world of men, but plagued by jealousy for the devas; the animal realm plagued by strong emotions and ignorance; the hungry ghost, or *preta*, realm, where urgent desires can never be satisfied; and a hell realm where anger becomes like burning fire until the 'soul' is purified. In all honesty we should admit that this entire cosmology is an illusion. It is clearly a purely subjective world-view, since the human and animal realms are both part of the natural world, but are pictured incorrectly as distinct. Although Buddhism is nominally atheist in terms of a creator deity, the world becomes populated with heavenly beings such as devas and *dakinis*, and beings which devotees worship in the same manner as deities, such as Kannon the Goddess of Compassion, so it is also polytheistic.

So although we embark on a deep journey of meditative exploration of the conscious existential condition in the Upanishads, in Buddhism, this is harnessed to a moral causality as inflexible as the moral imperatives of monotheism and as fantastic and unnatural as the illusory heaven, hell and purgatory of the Day of Judgment. Although overcoming attachments that trouble the ego is fundamentally sound psychological sense, the Buddhist cosmology, makes no sense naturally and is another manifestation of patriarchal mind-sky religion in which nature is subjugated to sentient consciousness, to become mere grist for the mill wheel of sentient beings.



Fig 37: Left: Buddhist heaven Pure Land of Bliss is a highly ordered paradise of unending meditation. One big puja. Right: Buddhist hell, Shrine at Amanohashidate, Japan, is tumultuous demonic chaos.

There are many other possible conscious incarnation patterns that could be experienced as more fluid versions of the reincarnation principle. A more fluid theory, which I would call 'topological reincarnation' goes as follows: Our individual incarnate consciousness is a constrained dynamic of universal consciousness effectively bonded into to one organism in the form of a bundle of associations to do with the ego and survival of the organism. As the bundle of the individual consciousness becomes loosened as these constraints are released through meditation, visionary states or near death experiences, the dynamic of individual consciousness begins to merge with universal consciousness. We experience this merging with cosmic consciousness as *moksha*, *nirvana* or *samadhi*. Effectively individual consciousness merges with cosmic

consciousness at death. The cosmic soul is eternal. Individual consciousness is an outgrowth from it so is of immortal origin but responding to a transient incarnation.

There is no wheel of moral causality. We do not become reincarnated as insects. In fact we don't become reincarnated at all but merge with the totality of being. There is a state of cosmic consciousness which extends throughout space-time and is at some level aware of us and especially as we become aware of it. Moral rules become superfluous, because, once one realizes how individual consciousness flows with cosmic consciousness, we have no need or desire to pursue selfish ends, because our brief time in incarnate existence is our chance to make the world a better place. It is this opportunity for cosmic consciousness to witness reality and help bring it into fullness of being that IS our life experience of doing this.

Although Jainism reveres all living creatures and many branches of Buddhism, such as Japanese Zen, stress closeness to nature and communion with it, in the attainment of satori - seeing into one's true nature - perhaps when viewing a lotus, or a cherry blossom, in a temple garden, both essentially treat all life forms simply as sentient beings of equal value regardless of their ecological rarity or value or the differing implications for the diversity and robustness of life's future. When faced with a weasel threatening a rare bird, their world views remain a mind-sky one of two reincarnating sentient beings of equal value, failing to comprehend that the tree of life's diversity hangs in the balance for the bird and that protecting it, even if it means controlling the burgeoning population of its invasive predators, is of paramount importance to the future of life.

10. Meso-American Religions of Blood Sacrifice

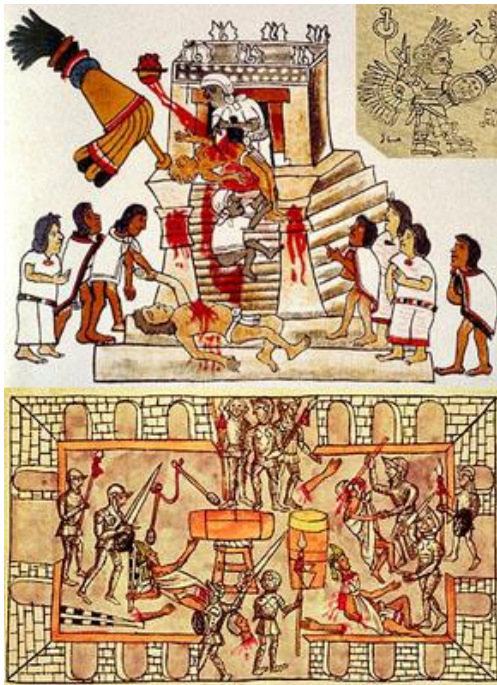


Fig 38: Above: Huitzilopochtli and blood sacrifice Codex Magliabechiano Below: Conquistador massacre of the heathen musicians Diego Duran. Magliabechiano.

Despite Christianity's own fields of blood stemming from God sacrificing his only begotten Son in the crucifixion, continuing with mass martyrdom, crusades, and the endless Eucharistic consumption of Christ's flesh and blood, the conquistadors, in the face of wholesale Aztec sacrificial practices, were dismayed and driven to barbarism, repressing even simple musical celebrations with dismemberment, when to the conquistadors chagrin, the Aztecs perceived in their conquerors' religion, the same blood-thirsty imperatives as their own. This gives us a final insight into the deranged imperatives of prescriptive religion.

In Aztec cosmology, death was necessary in the

perpetuation of creation, and gods and humans alike had the responsibility of sacrificing themselves in order to allow life to continue. This worldview is best described in the myth of the five suns in which the first four were destroyed until by an act of self-sacrifice one of the gods caused a fifth and final sun to rise where the first humans, made out of maize dough, could live thanks to his sacrifice. Humans were responsible for the sun's continued revival. Blood sacrifice in various forms human and animal were conducted including auto-sacrifice through self-mutilation. The priest (*tlamacazqui*"giver of things") made sure that the gods were given their due in the form of offerings, ceremonies and sacrifices. Human sacrifice was practiced on a grand scale throughout the Aztec empire. At Tenochtitlan, the principal Aztec city, according to Hassig (2003 *El sacrificio y las guerras floridas Arqueologia mexicana* XI: 47) "between 10,000 and 80,400 persons" were sacrificed over the course of four days for the dedication of the Great Pyramid in 1487, although some have claimed this gross scale of sacrifice was made more humane by the use of intoxicants and hallucinogenic species such as sacred mushrooms.

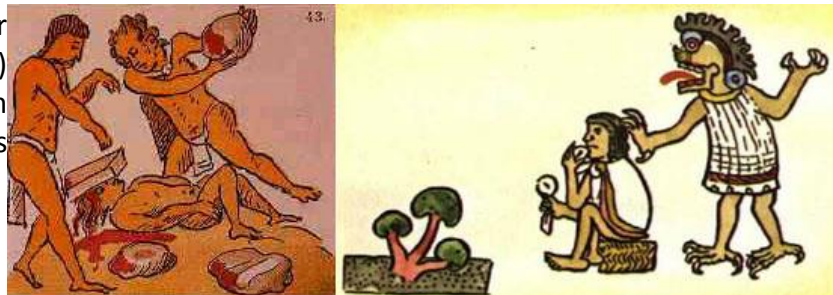
At an opposite extreme to monotheism however, the Aztecs practiced an extremely promiscuous form of polytheism, adopting the deities of previous and neighbouring cultures such as the more ancient Toltecs without distinction. In addition to their own warrior god *Huitzilopochtli* "Left-handed Hummingbird", the tribal God of Tenochtitlan, identified with the Sun, they had several principal pan-mesoamerican deities including *Quetzalcoatl* "Feathered Serpent", god of life, the wind and the morningstar; *Tlaloc* god of rainstorm, water, thunder and storm; and *Tezcatlipoca* "Smoking Mirror", shaman God, omnipotent universal power. In addition they had many diverse gods and goddesses of nature, fertility, creation, excess and trade, such as *Xochipilli* - "Flower Prince", god of happiness, flowers, pleasure and fertility, many of which could transform identities, just as priests and sacrificial victims would don the personae of the deities in ritual festivals.



Fig 39: Tlalocan (Tepantitla, Teotihuacan culture) and Mictlan (Codex Borgia).

The Aztec universe consisted of the Earth including the mythical origin of human beings, a nine-layered underworld of the dead (*Mictlan* "place of death") also inhabited by deities and mythical beings, and the thirteen-layered heavenly sky realm impenetrable to humans, except for the lowest layer. Existence was a cycle of birth, life, death and rebirth. The sun was believed to dwell in the underworld at night to rise reborn in the morning, so the human and divine existence was also envisioned as cyclical. The lowest layer of the sky was *Tlalocan* ("the place of Tlaloc") a paradisiacal realm of unending springtime, with an abundance of green foliage and edible plants of the region. After death the soul of the Aztec went to one of three places. Souls of fallen warriors and women who died in childbirth would transform into hummingbirds that followed the Sun on its journey through the sky. Souls of people who died from less glorious causes would go to *Mictlan*. Those who drowned would go to *Tlalocan*.

Fig 40. Left: Aztec stoning for adultery (Florentine Codex) Right: Sacred mushroom celebrant invoking the gods (Magliabeciano Codex).



The Aztec also practiced stoning for adultery. Friar Sahagun, one of the first conquistadors to chronicle *teonanacatl*, flesh of the gods, a genuine visionary sacrament, by ironic contrast with the purely symbolic yet bloodthirsty flesh and blood *soma* and *sangre* of the Eucharist, remarked of the Aztec sacred mushroom eaters:

'when they become excited by them start dancing, singing, weeping. Some do not want to sing but sit down and see themselves dying in a vision; others see themselves being eaten by a wild beast; others imagine they are capturing prisoners of war, that they are rich, that they possess many slaves, that they have committed adultery and were to have their heads crushed for the offence . . . and when the drunken state had passed, they talk over amongst themselves the visions they have seen' (Furst P "Flesh of the Gods" p7).

Yet, for all this, the after-life was not one condemned to eternal suffering for one's sins, as in the diabolical monotheistic cosmologies. The journey from the first level of *Mictlan* to the ninth was difficult and took four years, and the dead, aided by the psychopomp, Xolotl had to pass many challenges, such as crossing a mountain range where the mountains crashed into each other, a field with wind that blew flesh-scraping knives, and a river of blood with fearsome jaguars, eventually they could reach the uppermost level which was also identified with the paradise of *Tlalocan* the lowest layer of the heavens.

11. Religious Violation of Nature, Sexuality, Morality and Consciousness

We need to have a skeptical attitude to the claims of religions, paralleling the skeptical principle in science that requires one to demonstrate a phenomenon occurs, or a law is obeyed, in nature before a theory can be validated. Newton overturned the notion that moving objects always came to rest, showing conservation of energy meant conservation of momentum unless an external force was applied. Einstein found Newton's laws of motion broke down as we accelerated to the speed of light and the model of reality had to embrace relativity, and in succession, quantum theory. It is these changes of paradigm that characterize scientific discovery that we urgently need to apply to religious paradigms.

We have seen that a very broad spread of religions introduce ideas that are in frank violation of nature. The sabbatical creation for all its innocence and metaphorical beauty completely fails to accurately describe observable aspects of nature. Day and night are created as sentient illumination before and separately from the Sun and Moon, which are just set as lamps in the heavens after the plants are already in existence, complete with their seed-bearing fruit. This is fine for a flat-earth creation myth, but we now need to observe Paul's admonition to stop behaving like little children, and see reality face to face, no longer through the dark glass of end of days religious imperatives, but enlightened with scientific objectivity and subjective visionary experience:

When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child:

but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face:

now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known (1 Cor 13:11).

Indeed, if humanity is to be appointed as having dominion over all life, this is a position of responsible guardianship to cherish and replenish the Earth, to dress it and keep it in all its verdant living diversity and not rape the planet out of either our own short-term selfish expedience, or a misguided and coercive set of religious principles in which nature becomes a debased and defiled realm.

But the monotheistic traditions pursue an altogether more sinister violation of nature. They are desert religions, which despite harking back to the paradise of Eden and blaming humanity for the Fall, proceed towards a Day of Judgment in which the wholesale desecration and destruction of nature is envisaged as our cosmic destiny accompanied by a mass extinction of all life, not just human life and pretensions. Even if much of the polemic of Revelation is ascribed to be political polemic against heathen ruling powers, from Babylon to Rome, the entire cosmological thrust is triage to the point of genocide in the name of a vengeful god, and in the Christian context of his now become feudal lord of a son. At an extreme, a rapture is invoked, by traditional Christians and Gnostic heretics alike, in which the entirety of planetary nature and life, created either by God or the flawed demiurge, is discarded as a meaningless husk in the pursuit of heavenly redemption.

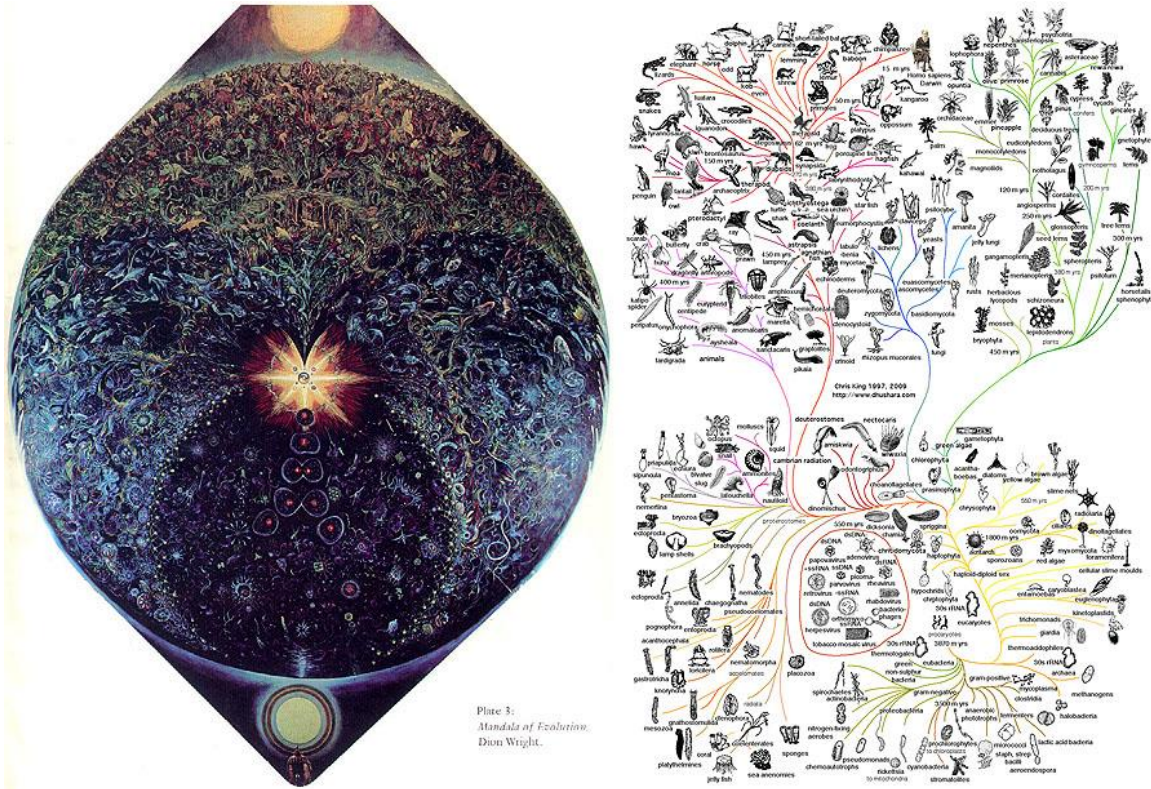


Fig 41. The evolutionary diversity of life as a mandala and as a tree of genetic variation.

This is the most complex and only conscious system we know of in the universe and our religions need to respect it as a primary source of inspiration and adapt to cherish and replenish it. The Tree of Life IS the evolutionary tree of genetic and species diversity - our most sacred manifestation. <http://dhushara.com/unravel/>

There are many forms of psychosis have been described in medical literature, from paranoid schizophrenia, through manic depression to psychopathic personality, but none of them hold a candle to the demented episodes that are sanctified as unquestioning works of God, from Judges through the Gospels and Revelation to the Quran. In any worldly setting humans despite their expedience and greed can identify crimes against humanity, or the wider diversity of life, and find them abhorrent, but in the case of these religious texts, somehow all standards of ethics and compassion for life are set aside. A good share of this is blindness towards bibliolatry. A refusal to admit that, if the prophets decried idol worship as empty and powerless, the same slavish clinging to religious scripture as divinely dictated truth, is equally empty and degenerate.

But there is a deeper fundamental reason for this and that is that religions are social systems of a very worldly nature which hijack the visionary experiences of their prophetic founders to produce totalitarian and coercive belief systems designed to pursue a moral imperative and sexist demographic agenda to ensure the dominance and ultimate supremacy of the religion. This classes religions as cultural epidemic diseases that live like pathogenic viruses on human cultures through their dynamics of coercive morality, reproductive control and evangelical expansion.

But these forms of moral imperative do not occur in the natural world in the way religions claim. If we accepted for a moment that the universe as we now know it has been created by a creator god of the entire universe, we have to accept that this deity has made everything, from black holes and galaxies to nature the way it is, and human nature the way it is, not the way the narrow morally jealous deity of the scriptures demands. On the other hand if we accept that the jealous god does have a moral imperative and has given us free-will just so that we can violate his own feudal order of submission, as slaves to his will, he gains nothing from this arrangement nor from punishing us in the fires of hell. So who or what does gain? What gains are the utopian agendas of the human purveyors of this coercive doctrine to the detriment of believers and non-believers alike.

Richard Alexander in "The Biology of Moral Systems" shows how morality, in both human and animal societies, evolves naturally as an evolutionarily stable strategy. Morality inhibits intra-social strife so that a society can become inter-socially dominant against competing cultures, provided there is sufficient 'altruistic' punishment (not directly benefitting the punisher) to maintain it. However this doesn't make morality universal, but rather just a local evolutionary phenomenon found in a given human or animal society. Nature still abounds with every kind of niche, involving predators and prey as well as parasites and hosts, in which both competition and cooperation are interwoven in a completely amoral way, except within social groupings possessing the trait of social morality. This is the nature of climax diversity and how life becomes rich and varied.

Morality is thus not a cosmic imperative, but a purely local phenomenon in evolving animal and human societies. We need to learn from nature how climax diversity arises in the enclosing circle of the biosphere to survive from here on. Clearly we accept the complementation of plants and the animals that feed on them, and by the same token, we have herbivores and predatory carnivores, which form a complex interacting system. Neither is the relationship of tooth and claw evil or detrimental to life as a whole. Without the carnivores to keep their population in check the herbivore prey would explode until they reached boom and bust famine by eating out their fodder plants and would likely become extinct. Diseases are likewise not plagues caused by God's wrath, but natural, albeit harmful parasitic life forms, which we may need to control or even try to eliminate to ensure our own health and survival.

Thus, when we turn to Isaiah's blessed age, the notion of the lion lying down with the lamb is the other side of the coin from Revelation's mass extinction. A complete violation of nature's necessity of tooth and claw to picture a deranged golden age that insists nature should become cooperative in a way that would be completely untenable for animal life, if we could only stop our human sinfulness and embrace peace.

*The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid;
and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead
them.*



Fig 42. Isaiah's peaceable kingdom (left) is an impossible dream, in violation of nature. Just as there are plants and animals, so there are carnivores and herbivores. Life evolves to climax diversity by filling the available niches. The lion hunting wildebeest (right), despite being an affair of tooth and claw, and painfully lethal for the victim, shows us that the wildebeest population also needs the lions. Without the lions, the wildebeest could multiply to the extent that they ate out the pasture resulting in famine and possible extinction. We need to derive our ethical and 'spiritual' understanding from these insights of nature, rather than subjecting nature to our religious delusions.

Inhibiting intra-social strife so that a society can become inter-socially dominant is the basis of all tribal and civic deities from Marduk to Yahweh. The gods are jealous so that the people will be fearful and faithful to their culture and not tear it down through internal expedience and corruption. Religions thus stabilized human societies. This made it possible for ever larger social groupings to remain stable and to gain dominance over their competitors, leading to all of the great wars of history as civilization clashed with civilization. This is why a great deal of the Old Testament rails against competing cultures and tries to steer Israel toward absolute faith in its totem deity, Yahweh even though its actual worship was more diverse than it admits.

As societies and religions evolved, so the gods evolved too, gaining features that better suited them to the changing course of history. Thus iconic deities gave way to more abstract deities, which possessed incontestable powers of omniscience and omnipotence. The notion of a god acting in history in apparently devastating ways that can see right through you and every move you make, but remain invisible so that you cannot see them to check or verify anything, is an especially daunting prospect, which most people will prefer to comply with than to transgress. Pivotal to the power of such religions is the secondment of all the affairs of the natural world to an ultimate destiny, in which everything you have done will be weighed up and held against you in an illusory afterlife, purveyed as so real and immanent that the best course of all would be to die as a martyr in the struggle for supremacy of the religion you believe in as both Christians and Muslims are want to do, so one finds in the Quran that belief in al-Llah is equated closely with belief in the Day of Resurrection itself because this is where the divine tragedy really plays out.

This tendency finally gained full momentum when religions attached to a people, such as the Hebrew and Hindu religions became converted into global religions, such as Christianity, Islam and Buddhism. These now gained truly utopian aims, particularly in the former two, where the ultimate destiny becomes conquering the entire Earth. In the case of Christianity, the turn around came with Constantine realizing its potential as the state religion of Rome. In the case of Islam, Muhammad himself crafted the religion to achieve socially utopian aims by force of violence from the very beginning, as we have seen.

We have seen, throughout the Monotheistic religions, that women are subjected to male control, stoned for not having the tokens of virginity in the Old Testament, condemned as the devil's gateway to be seen and not heard in Christian traditions, veiled, sequestered and chaperoned and repeatedly stoned again throughout Muslim history, and thrown as widows on the funeral pyre in Hindu culture. This patriarchal affliction, which plagues all the major world religions, originates from very deep mammalian biological roots. While all women know their offspring are their own and are intimately involved in the continuity of life through the physical birth process, men fear their own mortality and are even more fearful of their paternity uncertainty in the face of women, who have always had to hedge their reproductive choices because of the huge investment they have to make, and mortal risk to their lives, in pregnancy, lactation and years of early child rearing. Consequently men have, from very early on, back to our founding gatherer-hunter cultures, tried to circumscribe female reproductive choice to their own ends, and more subtly have tried to define culture in their own image, seeking religious vistas which stress eternal conscious existence over the transient mortality of the flesh and the debased tooth and claw of nature. This cosmological bias manifests both overtly in forms such defining women legally as half the value of men, and by dire punishments such as stoning, and covertly in cosmological world views which look to an eternal subjective conscious after-life, subjugating nature and the passage of the generations to secondary or even brutal, beastly, contaminated or diabolical status.

All of these religions, at the same time, lay claim to all the higher virtues of righteousness and compassion while denigrating human nature as intrinsically flawed and sinful. This is a fundamental lie because human nature, based on our mammalian emotional repertoire, is as capable of original virtue as it is of expedient vice. The complexity of human society depends on a good deal of strategic bluffing in the form of Machiavellian intelligence to provide the many roles that enable a large diverse population to survive, so cooperation always coexists with clandestine defection and a good deal of tit-for-tat, but it is balanced by feelings of love and belonging that have enabled humans to coexist without undue destructive violence and emerge from small autonomous tribal bands to develop art, culture science, music and medicine as well as deeply penetrating philosophies about the nature of existence.

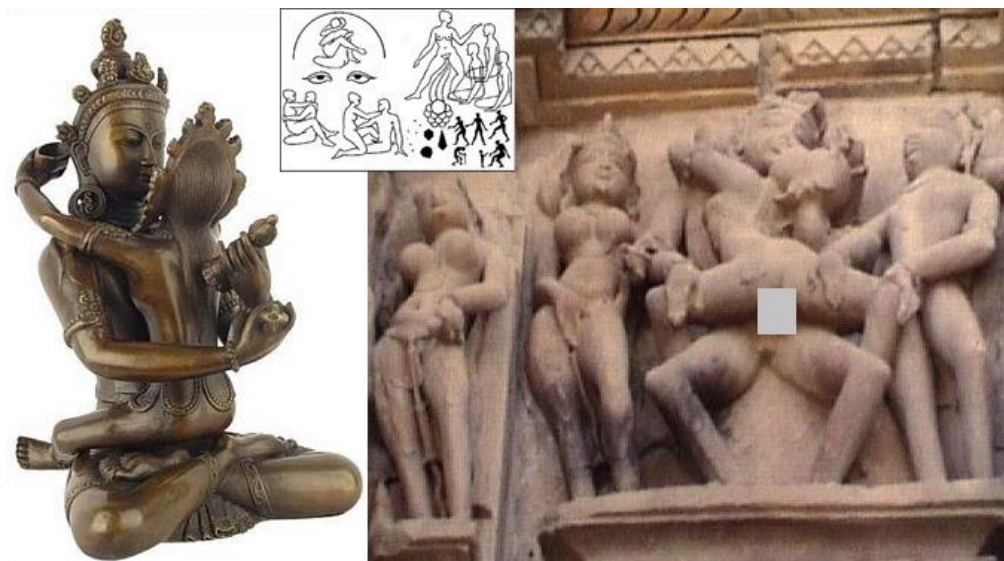


Fig 43. Left, Shakti and Shiva in sexual embrace, inset the Tantric cosmic origin, from intimate coitus to fragmented illusion, right *maithuna* at Khajuraho.

Indeed many of these creative aspects of culture may emerge from sexual love in the displays of prowess gaining the sexual favours of courtship and subsequent partnership, giving sexual concourse a central and sacred role in maintaining our original virtue, as the Song of Songs declares. Sexual courtship and the genuine indicators of fitness it invokes, from story telling and music to good hunting and devoted husbandry on the male side and astute social sensibility, coalition building and empathy and on the female side is thus the principal antidote to the sometimes self-serving manifestations of Machiavellian intelligence. Sexuality, far from being a depraved enticement is in fact the antidote to mortality the eternal religions seek, because mortality arises from sexual diversity, giving us and our offspring endless new varieties of individual perception and experience. The trade-off is that we are all different and when we die it is our offspring and the passage of the generations that is perennial and, in principle, immortal. It is thus little wonder that Tantric traditions have embraced sacred sex as recorded on the temples at Khajuraho and elsewhere, and that the Tantric cosmic origin is one of deep coital embrace between Shiva and Shakti, in which all the phenomena of nature ensue as samsara as the lovers pull back from cosmic union into the diversity of conscious observers witnessing the universe at large..

Central to the denigration of nature is the patriarchal notion that the mind-sky view is the key to eternal life and that all the phenomena of nature are transient and either illusory or flawed. Everything we have discovered about the existential universe to date shows it to be a unity of complementarities – of wave and particle and boson and fermion in physics, of female and male in biology and of mind and body in existence – as also expressed in the Tao of yin and yang principles. Thus the quest for eternal consciousness has its complement in nature which is perennially immortal and in which we as guardians of the passage of the generation have a prime responsibility to cherish and replenish it. Nature and the diversity and perpetuity of human and all life thus is, and must needs be, our holy grail and *raison d'etre*.



Fig 44. There are two known processes for generating complex adaptive structures in the physical universe: (a) de novo external creation by intelligent design and (b) genetic development of the organism in the context of biological evolution. The two processes are clearly distinguishable. Created structures such as the AMD 9080A series CPU (1) and the car made by a robotic assembly line (9) show manifest evidence of externally imposed design, by layered photolithography in (1) and modular assembly from independently manufactured components (9). Evolution of intelligent design (8) is sporadic, disjunctive and idiosyncratic unlike biological evolution, which displays exhaustive evidence of genetic relatedness in the form of evolutionary trees (fig 41), is historically integrative, and shows embryogenic relatedness developmentally (5) in which early embryonic forms of vertebrates all have the tails and many segments of fishes because they have a deep underlying evolutionary relationship, in which fishes became land animals. By contrast with intelligent design, genetic organisms are generated genetically from the molecular level (2) up. Protein and RNA folding (2) is computationally intractable requiring quantum processes. The structure of the

organism is developed through catastrophic bifurcation requiring interaction of the parts to form tissue layers and structures, from the invagination of the notochord to the eye (4). Development of brain wiring (3) is interactive, requiring successive waves of neuronal migration and subsequent cell-to-cell signaling to define pathways determining the layers and connections of the cerebral cortex (7). The structure of the organism (6) is fractal, with self-organization occurring on all scales from molecule to cell organelle (a) to cell (b) to tissue (c) to organ to organism. The lesson: Living systems display structural features inconsistent with intelligent design. If it walks like a duck, quacks like a duck, reproduces like a duck and develops like a duck, it is not intelligently designed, but evolved into its current form. The evolutionary principle is thus key to religions accepting and adapting to the natural world.

We also have a duty of honesty and integrity to weigh up the evidence presented by scripture and scientific investigation in terms of how much reliable information it has to give us about the world we live in. The sabbatical creation of Genesis consists of a single short poetic passage containing 3558 characters which amounts to 17790 binary bits. By comparison a typical scientific text such as 'Neural Science' by Eric Kandel and co-authors has a thousand times more or 23781150 bits. The human genome has 1000 times more than that or 6000000000 bits and a crude approximation to the brain on the basis of the number of synapses is 100,000 times more than that namely 8000000000000000 bits. Put on a scale of order of magnitude in powers of 10 we have the cosmic mantra Ōm 1, Genesis One 4, Neural Science 7, Human genome 10, Human Brain 15.

We can't afford to commit ourselves to literal bibliolatry and sweep aside the vast labyrinth of knowledge we now have of nature in all its genetic detail in blind faith to a short passage no longer than a poem, lyrically but metaphorically describing our origin from *tohu va vohu*. This was never its intention and is an idolatrous abuse of the scripture. It would not only be an act of scientific and spiritual irresponsibility, it would be an act of complete folly, falsity and futility. As Paul noted, we need to stop behaving little children and grow up and take responsibility for our place in the natural world, lest we waste it irreparably while fixated on the End of Days.

The claims that evolution is only a theory and that intelligent design is a valid alternative are a false doctrine in denial of the evidence from the world around us. In the genetic age, the sweep and passage of evolution has become a reality denied only by those of fixed and fearful beliefs determined to impose these on the world at large as part of their faith to their utopian doctrine. We now have a close picture of the genetic evolution, from the first life forms on Earth to Homo sapiens and our migrations out of Africa. We are closing in on the biochemical pathways that enabled life to emerge on the planet and have found evidence for these precursors across wide tracts of the galaxy. All the evidence we have discovered shows that life is a central manifestation of cosmology and that the evolution of intelligent life is the quintessence of expression of the laws of nature in interaction.

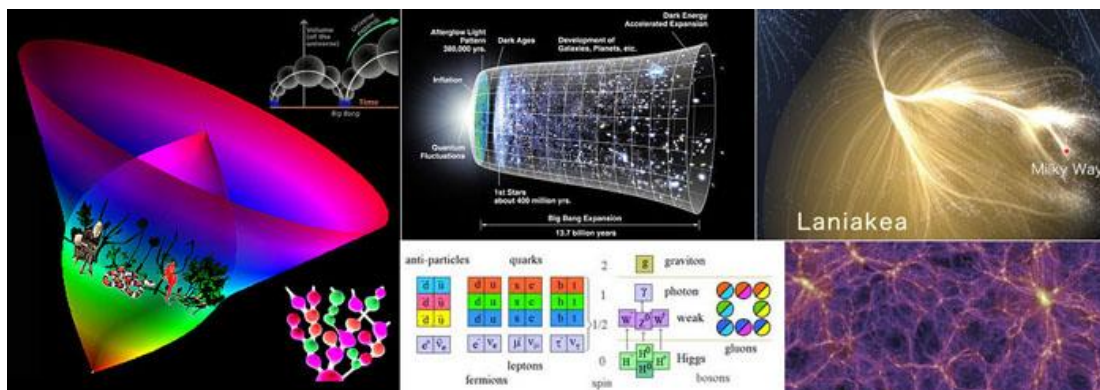


Fig 45: Left: Life as an interactive complexity climax of the forces of nature in interaction on the mature cosmic equator, with alternative futures of fractal inflation and cyclic big-bangs. Top left: The universe begins in a state of high-symmetry, in which the forces of nature were merged into one super-force and only quantum fluctuations pertained. From a mere instant after the big bang the ongoing universe, has been shaped by the dynamics of the four forces of nature, gravity, electromagnetism, the weak force and the colour force as expressed in the standard model (lower left) as a quantum relativistic process. The dynamics of galaxy and star formation evolve dynamically. Top right: Our galaxy's location in its super-cluster shows evidence of dynamic flow under the effects of dark matter (lower right). The standard model and the super-theories under development extending it are based on mathematical principles of internal symmetry and symmetry-breaking. The universe is full of inscrutable physical principles that are inconsistent with the simplicity of an externally imposed intelligent design at a given point in time.

None of the evidence about life's emergence, evolution, or the development of the organism, is consistent with creation by an external agent. The same applies to the laws of nature and the structure of the universe at large. The universe is a dynamical entity in which the cosmic origin appears to be a state of symmetrical unity in which the four forces of nature have merged to become one superforce and the only fluctuations were those caused by quantum theory. From then on, the evolution is dynamic, proceeding according to the laws of nature.

The only way a dynamic universe could be created by an external creator to knowingly invoke the life circumstances of each of us, is to specify an initial condition for everything at a given point in time, which will then unfold under the laws of motion. But a creation in the big bang at the beginning that determines the whole universe as it is now is impossible because there isn't enough information in the initial state of the big bang to determine all the succeeding events over space-time in the fully-fledged universe. To make matters worse, the laws of motion are quantum laws containing the uncertainty principle, which overturns Newtonian determinism. Evolution is likewise uncertain, as it is dependent on these very quantum events in the form of mutational changes to the genetic scheme. Even if God created the big bang, there is no way to determine how evolution proceeds once it gets going, unless God is endlessly playing dice with the universe to bias the odds at every quantum event. There is no evidence for intelligent intervention in the probabilities of quantum uncertainty. The "spooky action at a distance" that

caused Einstein to declare - "I can't believe that God plays dice with the universe" has nevertheless become a reality in the form of quantum entanglement between particles. The lesson of quantum entanglement however is that the uncertainty of the quantum is related to hidden correlations between all the wave particles of the universe because they are all mutually-entangled in the cosmic wave function. Again, if ongoing intelligent design were functionally intervening in mutational evolution, we would expect to see evidential signs of this, but there is no evidence from evolution that such an idiosyncratic intervening process is occurring.

If neither the evidence from living organisms, nor from the laws and phenomena of the physical universe displays any signs of systems which could or would have to be generated by intelligent design, rather than evolve generatively, this is a fundamental argument against an external third-party god acting in history being the creator of the universe.

12. Towards a Resolution

A major theme of this article has been that notions of god and the theistic cosmologies that religions evoke also evolve, as cultures evolve, in complete contrast to the notion of an unchanging 'true' god acting in history. Given this, we need to re-examine the notion of the creator deity. If both the universe and living systems show profound evidence of being dynamic self-organized structures, we need to look towards models of existential and spiritual reality which fit with the conscious and natural evidence we find around us, rather than trying to impose naive affirmative beliefs and moral imperatives coercively on reality at large.

The Song of Songs, the Upanishads and the Tao do give us hints of how a new spiritual mysticism might arise which is consistent with the natural universe as we now know it to be and with our emotional capacities both for fear, jealousy and anger and for encompassing love which overflows narrow genetic boundaries.

The Song of Songs reveals to us the germ of abundant sexual fertility, courtship and love at the root of the Tree of Life, tragically hidden since the Fall. In sexual variety lies the antidote to individual mortality in the passage of the generations, so restoring it to its sacred place completes the perennial philosophy.

Setting aside all moral notions about karma and reincarnation, the Upanishads attest that in the inner depths of our personal consciousness relaxed of its individual concerns for mortal survival lies a cosmic form of consciousness that is fundamentally the same as the integrated cosmic consciousness of the universe as a whole. This is not a third party description but a complementary first party subjective (consciousness) and second party objective (cosmos) description. It is this cosmic consciousness of the universe, which we all share, that deists naively and without due cause attribute to being the third party external agent they call God.

Likewise the Tao stresses that the nature of the experiential universe is one of complements: yin and yang as creative and receptive principles, female and male, egg and sperm, wave and particle, matter-forming fermion and radiation and force mediating boson, mind and body,

consciousness and the material world, and the prisoners' dilemma of cooperation and defection in the game of life.

Contrary to notion of original sin, altruistic morality is a natural product of social evolution. Humans possess original virtue in our emotional capacity for love of others as well as the defences of anger and jealousy, which extends far beyond narrow genetic boundaries. It is this original virtue that sustained us into the cultural era, long before prescriptive religions existed.

Finally nature itself shows us that cherishing and replenishing the Earth and its living diversity is ultimately the key to our survival as a species and that, despite our mortality as individuals, we gain our meaning and fulfillment in giving our lives to protecting the passage of the generations, as our ancestors and their ancestors have done, so that the thread of life remains unbroken to this day..



Fig 46: Left: Maria Sabina in reverie during a sacred mushroom (*teonanactl*) velada with Gordon Wasson. One needs a lot of care handling veladas. At this one in 1958, Maria told a young boy who was sick and seeking a diagnosis that the mushrooms prognosticated death. He fell down in despair and died a few days later of undisclosed natural causes. Right: Huichol yarn painting showing the *Nierika* or cosmic portal to the spirit world opened by peyote. The *Nierika* of Kauyumari, or Elder Brother Deer, through which the gods came, links the underworld with Mother Earth. Through it all life came into being. It unifies the spirit of all things and all worlds.

Humans since the dawn of history have used meditation, deprivation and visionary plants and fungi from *peyote*, through *ayahuasca*, the vine of the soul, to sacred mushrooms, *teonanactl*, cannabis, *iboga* and other natural visionary substances, to enter into internal conscious states that form an inner cosmology, complementing the external cosmology of nature and the physical universe. We need to accept that the pursuit of knowledge requires an attitude of social freedom for individuals to explore their own inner conscious states using visionary species and substances.

The science of consciousness research is beginning to explore these features, just as practitioners of the Vedantic and Taoist traditions have done over millennia in the past in their meditation, and as tribal shamans have done before them in vision quests on power plants and fungi. Each of us, as conscious sentient beings, has direct access to these realms. Consciousness is the first person account and the acid test is in the first person, not in third person tales of super-human prophets and miracle-workers. We do not need prescriptive religions to fully explore it for ourselves.

At the same time neuroscience is discovering how a variety of conscious mental states are generated in different regions of the brain in terms of their neural connections, their electrical activity and neurotransmitter dynamics. While the precise physics leading to the existence of subjective consciousness is still a scientific enigma, there is evidence the brain uses edge-of-chaos dynamics coupled with quantum entanglement in its processing in a way which may explain both why consciousness exists and why our personal experience of conscious free-will is valid. Subjective consciousness appears to have evolved in organisms to anticipate key immediate future events - threats to survival and strategic opportunities. The past-future handshaking properties of quantum entanglement may permit intuitive forms of conscious anticipation complementing deductive processes based on memory and past experience. They could also in turn provide the loophole for intentional will through quantum uncertainty of the ongoing instabilities in the brain state. This could in turn confirm that we are conscious sentient beings with voluntary control of our decision-making and behaviour. Given we do then have personal responsibility to act, we need to give primary focus to cherishing and protecting the future generations of humanity and the diversity of biosphere.

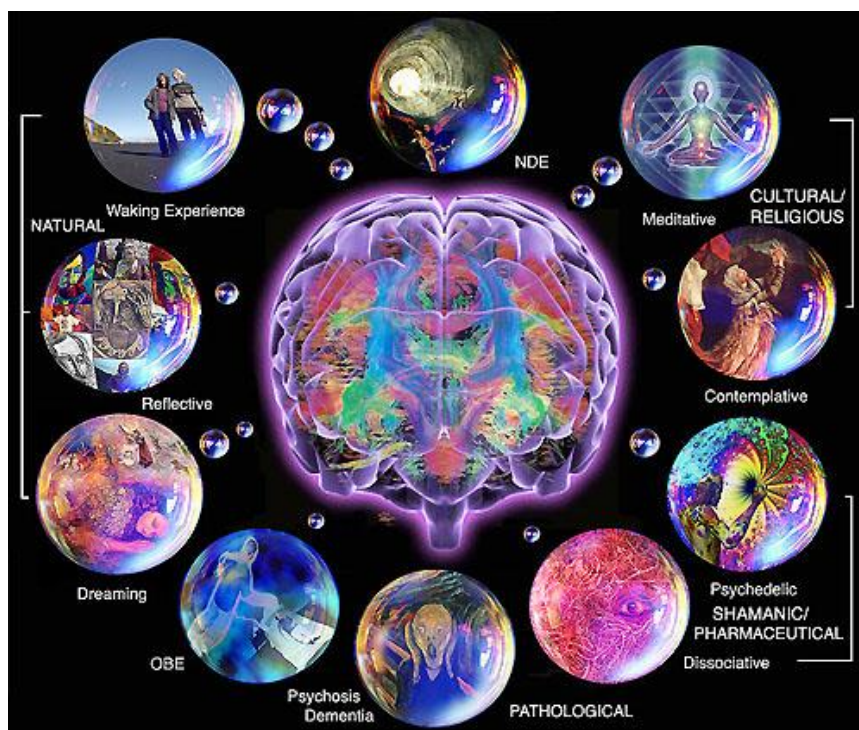


Fig 47. An envelope of mental states from 'The Cosmology of Mental States'
<http://dhushara.com/mental/>