PART TWO

GOD OR BABYLON

Table of Contents

Babylon and Renaissance....4
In Defence of Muppets....8
Saints and Sinners....14
The Meaning of Football....17
24 Hour Party People....24
Slaves in Babylon....26
Possession vs Absorption....28
The Raven and the Dove....30
Seeds and Soil....32
You Never Enjoy the World Aright....36
The Hierarchy of Heaven and Earth....40
Big Mystic, Small Shaman....44
Headlessness and Faith....46
The Trial....49
Stories....53
Patterns....56
Drug Patience....58
Have you tried turning it off and on again?....62
The Immortality Key....65
Persephone, Apollo and Dionysus....68
The Seal of Apollo....70
Shamanic Hippy Paganism....72
The Unbearable Lightness of Being....76
Gravity....77
Interstellar Love....81

Hollywood Love Confusion 89
Love in Babylon 93
Habits of Love 96
Love and Will 98
Unconditional Love 102
Antifragility 103
The Interests of Babylon 105
Cynical Clowns and Fearful Bores 107
Narcissism 110
Steppenwolf Syndrome 115
The Way Out 118
Faith Healing 120
Who Wants to Be a Saint? 122
The Nature Connection 124
The World, the Earth and the Heavens 127
The Word Made Flesh 132
Psychedelic Baptism and Psychedelic Communion 135
Apocalypse 137
Four Wise Monkeys 141
Drop Out, Tune In, Turn On 143
Risking Enchantment 145
In my Beginning is my End 146
Appendix 1: Flight Instructions 149
Appendix 2: The Clearing 161
Appendix 3: The Ray of Creation 166
Appendix 4: Reading List 169
Appendix 5: The Meditation 171

Babylon and Renaissance

"The [Babylonian] exile began with the destruction of the city of Jerusalem and its Temple and the ending of the Davidic monarchy in 586 BC. Following a failed rebellion by the kingdom of Judah against the Babylonian Empire, Nebuchadnezzar besieged the city of Jerusalem, and deported most of its inhabitants over the period 597-581 to Babylon. [...] They would remain in exile until the fall of Babylon to Persian king Cyrus the Great in 539 BC."

(Alister McGrath, The Great Mystery)

In the Christian tradition, Babylon has come to symbolise exile in an alien land where we don't belong. We are "strangers in a strange land". It also carries the suggestion of a corrupt world, a socio-political system of oppression and injustice. This is a central concept for Rastafarianism, for example. Some Jamaican immigrants to Britain after the Second World War felt this sense of exile keenly, and developed a negative view of their host country, which they experienced as a demonic web of petty, complicated bureaucracy and arbitrary laws, a "Babylon system". This then became associated in the popular counter-cultural imagination with the capitalist system, represented primarily by the most powerful capitalist country in the world, the United States.

In the original meaning given it by Medieval Christians, however, Babylon represented exile from our true spiritual home. There was a sense that, even safe in their own country

and in their own home, Christians don't really belong in this world. We are like pilgrims on Earth, temporary travellers en route to another, better world. This "other world" was variously called The New Jerusalem, The Promised Land, Zion, Paradise, Eden or The Kingdom of God. The longing for this true home, the deep spiritual home-sickness that it engendered was personal evidence that we really were in exile. As St Paul wrote, "here we have no lasting city, but we are looking for the city that is to come" (Hebrews 13:14) And as C.S. Lewis famously put it in Mere Christianity, "If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world".

In my thinking about our place in the world over the past few years, I have made extensive use of the Bhavachakra, the Tibetan Wheel of Life, which seems to me such a powerful depiction of the different ways in which we become spiritually lost. It consists of six realms, which can be understood as six different ego states: the Heavenly Realm (Devaloka), the Hell Realm (Narakaloka), and four other realms, the Human, Titan, Hungry Ghost and Animal Realms. We might say that during our brief sojourn on Earth, we find ourselves exiled in any one of these realms, populated respectively by Divas, Demons, Muggles, Muppets, Addicts and Victims. From this perspective, the Tibetan Wheel of Life can be understood as “The Wheel of Babylon”.

Things can seem hopeless, even bleak, as we survey the world around us with a critical eye. Babylon is strong. Sometimes it feels so strong that there seems to be no way out, as if it were the very fabric of existence, the creation of a malevolent demiurge perhaps, forming an underlying matrix from which it is impossible to escape. But as in the film The

Matrix, could there be a red pill that can pull us out of the Wheel of Babylon?

When I think of mainstream Western culture and its formative ideas and influences, I cannot help agreeing with Iain McGilchrist's pessimistic diagnosis in *The Master and His Emissary: The Divided Brain and the Making of the Western World*. Everything seems to point to the increasing disenchantment, mechanisation and dehumanisation you would expect from chronic left hemisphere dominance. The totalitarianisms of the twentieth century, the wars and genocides, the shallow consumerism of late capitalism, the utopian myths of progress, the mass hypnosis of the media, the existential meaninglessness of materialism, all point to the tightening of the grip of Babylon on people's hearts and minds.

But there is cause for hope. Starting in the fourteenth century in Italy, the European Renaissance uncovered the treasures of antiquity, which had lain almost completely forgotten for centuries. The humanities were born, invigorating Western culture through a rich education in the arts, rhetoric and philosophy. Plato and Aristotle, Pindar, Homer, Cicero, and a whole pantheon of classical authors were studied and used as a springboard for new insights into life and the human condition. Pico della Mirandola, Erasmus, Marsilio Ficino and others spearheaded the great cultural and spiritual movement that came to be known as Renaissance Humanism. The word "humanism" is derived from the Latin phrase *studia humanitatis*, which basically means "humane studies" or "liberal arts". It actually had nothing to do with "secular humanism", an invention of the twentieth century, which defines itself in opposition to religion. The original humanists

had a much broader and more liberal view of humanity, including religion and spirituality as central components of the human experience. The Renaissance humanists were almost exclusively Christians.

There is a lot of talk and excitement recently about a *Psychedelic Renaissance*, a rediscovery of the beneficial therapeutic and transformative effects of these miraculous compounds, which for decades have been demonised and criminalised as part of a wider war on drugs. The original pioneers, Albert Hofmann, Alexander Shulgin, Aldous Huxley, were actually initiating the rediscovery of a much more ancient tradition of the spiritual use of psychedelics (or entheogens) in the West, reaching right back to the Eleusinian Mysteries and earlier, in Egypt for example, as well as the shamanic traditions of Africa and the Americas.

Since the end of the nineteenth century and picking up speed in the 1960's, there has also been an enormous rise in interest in Buddhism, Hinduism, Taoism and other Eastern religions in the West. This has fed into developments in Humanistic and Transpersonal Psychology, the Human Potential Movement and the New Age. Although under the surface of mainstream culture, and in some senses associated with the counter-culture, this blossoming of Eastern wisdom and practices such as meditation, yoga and martial arts, can itself be considered a significant renaissance of its own. We might call it the *Eastern Renaissance*.

Since the end of the eighteenth century and reaching its apotheosis in the middle of the nineteenth, there has also been another renaissance, associated with poetic sensibility and a deep human connection with the natural world, known

as *Romanticism*. An associated trend was a renewed appreciation of Medieval, chivalric culture, which represented for certain romantics a more authentic mode of being than the limited view of humanity peddled by the Enlightenment architects of the Age of Reason.

Babylon can appear all-powerful. It seems to almost completely control public discourse, and to strictly determine what we can and can't say, think and do. But beneath the implacable surface of the Babylon system, there is the vital, spiritual dynamite of a germinating Spiritual Renaissance, at the same time *Christian*, *Humanist*, *Romantic*, *Eastern* and *Psychedelic*, which holds out the promise that we may yet chant down Babylon and usher in the Kingdom of God.

In Defence of Muppets

Although most of the feedback I've received about my work is positive, there seems to be something of a sticking point when it comes to "Muppets". Several people have advised me to use a less insulting word. Apparently it comes across as judgmental and dismissive. By anyone's standards, it's not exactly sensitive, let alone "politically correct".

I've considered scrapping the Muppet label and replacing it with something less contentious and provocative. But nothing else quite seems to fit the bill. So here I would like to briefly explain and defend my use of the M-word.

Firstly, it alliterates nicely with "Muggles". Secondly, it is closely related to puppets. This is a key feature of what I am trying to express with the term, namely, the tendency to parrot the tenets of a collective ideology. The ideology itself is the "Titan" or "Giant" and the individuals are the "Fighting Spirits" of the Giant (see the *Bhavachakra* or Tibetan Wheel of Life for the origin of these terms). I think John Gray is getting at something similar in his book *The Soul of the Marionette*.

Thirdly, I like its humorous, deflationary feel. A defining characteristic of the Muppet stance is that it takes itself so seriously. The pricking of this po-faced self-righteousness is both salutary and funny. Fourthly, it winds people up, which is itself a good test of Muppetry. The more enraged someone is at the word, the more of a Muppet they probably are. From the psychological point of view, this is useful information, both for me and (hopefully) for the person concerned.

In case you have no idea what I'm talking about, let's see if I can explain what I mean by "Muppet" in a bit more detail. Muppets often think of themselves as intellectuals, by which they mean that they are cleverer than Muggles. In fact, much of their identity is predicated on their superiority to Muggles, who are considered gullible, ignorant, brainwashed, unenlightened and prey to "false consciousness". Muppets, on the other hand, have inside information into the reality of things. They are, to employ another contentious term, "woke". Muppetry can take many different forms. I will consider five.

1. Nerd Muppets. These are usually involved in either computing or science. They hold to one or other version of scientific materialism and scientism, and believe that science can in principle account for all of

reality. Whether reductionists, emergentists or eliminativists, they all agree on the basic axiomatic premise that only matter exists and that everything else is an illusion. The brain is a computer and human beings (and other organisms) are soft machines. Muggles are regarded as too stupid and scientifically illiterate to appreciate the brute facts that consciousness is just an illusion and that there is no meaning to life or existence.

2. Hippy Muppets. These are usually involved in alternative therapies, alternative spiritualities and alternative philosophies, and often also mind-altering drugs. They have all sorts of bizarre beliefs, the more exotic the better. They look down on Muggles, who are too narrow-minded and superficial to understand the mysteries to which they are privy, and they have a hate-hate relationship with Nerd Muppets.

3. Woke Muppets. Even more touchy than the "New Age Stoner" type of Hippy Muppet are the more politicised "Progressive Liberationist" or "Critical Social Justice" Muppets (this is where I get into most trouble). I am not against progress or social justice per se, but there is a specific stream of Postmodern thought which has produced a veritable cottage industry of philosophical confusion and social distress. I could say more but I'll leave it at that.

4. Radical Muppets. These are the old-school political revolutionaries and activists. Whether on the Far Left or the Far Right, they are political extremists, swinging between anarchy and totalitarianism. They are anti-establishment, anti-bourgeois, anti-capitalist, anti-liberal, anti-conservative. They are starry-eyed Utopians who believe that only by

overthrowing the current, irreparably corrupt socio-political system can we usher in the hoped for Utopia, overlooking the inconvenient fact that one person's Utopia is another's Dystopia. They have nothing but disdain for Muggles, those unwitting, witless slaves of the system, and nothing but pure hatred for Divas, those power-hungry oppressors.

5. Fundamentalist Muppets. These are religious fanatics, of whatever stripe or affiliation. They are implacably dogmatic and hold to an extremely narrow, literalist interpretation of their sacred scriptures. Their most extreme proponents take to violent acts of terrorism and martyrdom in the name of their divine calling to set the world right and glorify their god. They hate all Muggles and Divas, but most fervently hate all Muppets (apart from those in their sect, that is).

These are very broad brushstrokes. I hope I'm not being unfair. To sum up, with this treatment of the derogatory term "Muppet", I am being explicitly critical of 1. Naive Scientism 2. New Age Nonsense 3. Reified Postmodernism 4. Political Extremism 5. Religious Fanaticism. The details can be debated as to what and who actually belongs in each of these categories, but I stand by the categories themselves.

I do have a word to say in defence of Muppets, however. They offer a powerful critique of the dozy complacency of ordinary Muggles, who are too wrapped up in the obvious, the superficial and the mundane. Muggles are too materialistic and unreflective, it's true, which is why they miss out on so much of the magic of reality, and Muppets are right to shake them up now and then.

The Muppet attack on the Divas (the eternal war between the Asuras and the Devas in Buddhist mythology) is also necessary in order to keep the powers that be in check and to keep those in authority on their toes. It is essential for any functioning, healthy society that people are able to "speak truth to power". Does this mean that anyone critical of the status quo, the political elite, the ruling class or the government is therefore a Muppet? God forbid! But Muppets are particularly vocal in this capacity.

The underlying claim is that the rigid certainty and inflexible dogmatism of Muppetry is the result of excessive left brain hemisphere dominance. I won't go into this now, merely point you in the direction of Iain McGilchrist. (One striking result of this left hemisphere dominance is the Dunning-Kruger effect, which explains the old adage that "a little knowledge is a dangerous thing").

What I am not advocating for, of course, is the weaponising of the term "Muppet" as a term of abuse against those who hold different opinions to you. It should not be used as a moniker or casual insult against people you disagree with otherwise (as I hope is obvious) you will yourself be acting like a Muppet. The so-called Culture Wars are bad enough without them descending into Muppet Wars.

We are living through a time of great tension, polarisation, distrust, enmity and intolerance. People with differing views and opinions resort all too readily to censorship, ridicule or "hate speech". Many people, myself included, worry that this dangerous breakdown in civil discourse and freedom of expression threatens the very foundations of Western

democracy. We might all do well to rein in our inner Muppets right now.

However, a true Christian must avoid these five modern heresies like the plague. True religiosity and holiness is as much about what you don't do as what you do, about what you don't believe as what you do believe. Orthodoxy is, as G.K. Chesterton beautifully described it, a wild adventure:

"This is the thrilling romance of Orthodoxy. People have fallen into a foolish habit of speaking of orthodoxy as something heavy, humdrum, and safe. There never was anything so perilous or so exciting as orthodoxy. It was sanity: and to be sane is more dramatic than to be mad. It was the equilibrium of a man behind madly rushing horses, seeming to stoop this way and to sway that, yet in every attitude having the grace of statuary and the accuracy of arithmetic. The Church in its early days went fierce and fast with any warhorse; yet it is utterly unhistoric to say that she merely went mad along one idea, like a vulgar fanaticism. She swerved to left and right, so exactly as to avoid enormous obstacles. She left on one hand the huge bulk of Arianism, buttressed by all the worldly powers to make Christianity too worldly. The next instant she was swerving to avoid an orientalism, which would have made it too unworldly. The orthodox Church never took the tame course or accepted the conventions; the orthodox Church was never respectable. It would have been easier to have accepted the earthly power of the Arians. It would have been easy, in the Calvinistic seventeenth century, to fall into the bottomless pit of predestination. It is easy to be a madman: it is easy to be a heretic. It is always easy to let the age have its head; the difficult thing is to keep one's own. It is always easy to be a modernist; as it is easy to be a snob. To

have fallen into any of those open traps of error and exaggeration which fashion after fashion and sect after sect set along the historic path of Christendom--that would indeed have been simple. It is always simple to fall; there are an infinity of angles at which one falls, only one at which one stands. To have fallen into any one of the fads from Gnosticism to Christian Science would indeed have been obvious and tame. But to have avoided them all has been one whirling adventure; and in my vision the heavenly chariot flies thundering through the ages, the dull heresies sprawling and prostrate, the wild truth reeling but erect."

Saints and Sinners

We are all sinners. We're only human. We do the best we can. We forgive each other. We try not to break the law. We try not to break the commandments. We try not to create bad karma. Sometimes we're good, sometimes we're not. Nobody's perfect.

A useful portrait of an everyman sinner adapted from the *Bhavachakra* (the Buddhist Wheel of Life) is made up of seven archetypes. I call it the "Wheel of Babylon" and in my translation the archetypes are: Diva, Demon, Victim, Addict, Muppet, Muggle and Rival. These more or less correspond to the seven deadly sins Pride, Lust, Greed, Gluttony, Anger, Laziness and Envy.

Thinking about archetypes is useful because it helps us see that it's not what you do it's the way that you do it. If you keep all the points of the Law, if you always do the right thing and say the right thing, but you're full of yourself, like the proud Pharisee (Luke 18: 9-14) you are possessed by the Diva archetype. Whatever you do, you're still a Diva.

The Christian claim is that you can't just tweak your personality here and there if you want to stop sinning and be at peace with God (=be saved). Your "old man" must die and your "new man" must be born (Ephesians 4; 22-24). You must be "born again" or "born from above" if you want to enter the kingdom of God (John 3:3).

The Buddha was equally radical. He said that if you are not enlightened, you are deluded. It's not just a matter of degree, it's a radical difference in kind, a radical transformation of your very being. When you spiritually awaken, you are no longer a sleepwalking apeman (or apewoman). You are a new creature, a *bodhisattva*.

If the seven archetypes Diva, Demon, Victim, Addict, Muppet, Muggle, Rival together constitute a portrait of the sinner, what about the saint? Well, obviously that would be the opposite archetypes, Mystic, Shaman, Warrior, Monk, Philosopher, King, Friend, corresponding (more or less) to the seven virtues Humility, Charity, Prudence, Temperance, Patience, Diligence and Gratitude.

The undiluted teachings of both Christianity and Buddhism point in the same direction: *sanctification*. They are not religions of consolation, moral advancement or spiritual entertainment. They are not self-help. They are religions of

death and rebirth, in which you are required to "lose your life", "deny yourself", give up your old sinful personality in favour of a new saintly one (Romans 6: 1-11).

But how? In two words, *tariki* and *jiriki* (Other Power and Self Power). Christians talk about *faith* and *works*. Same thing. Of the two, however, Christians (and Shin Buddhists) put the emphasis on Other Power, or *grace*, the free gift of God, which is exactly as it should be. A prideful Diva cannot become a humble Mystic by *jiriki* alone. You cannot pull yourself up by your own bootstraps.

There is sudden and gradual enlightenment, sudden and gradual conversion (the road to Damascus and the road to Emmaus). There is the saving power of Christ and the saving power of Amida Buddha. There are sacraments, scriptures, liturgy, prayer, meditation, community. There are mushrooms.

True religion is not a belief system. It is a psychotechnology for the production of saints. Whether we like it or not, whether we are aware of it or not, we make the ultimate choice: sinner or saint. This is the deepest existential choice that a human being can make. We are human. We can't devolve back to the innocence of animal nature, but we can evolve forwards to the innocence of sainthood.

"Because of 'sin', because of that strange element within the world which opposes God, and perverts His gifts, all working of the Supernatural in human life must involve suffering and tension. Real temptation, struggle, darkness, is involved in every genuine transcendence of the 'natural man'. Yet since this transcendence is the very condition of the fulfilment of personality, it brings even through effort a real and vivid joy,

an ever-deepening peace and harmony, to the soul that undertakes it."

Evelyn Underhill

"A new species is arising on the planet. It is arising now, and you are it!"

Eckhart Tolle

The Meaning of Football

After watching the 2021 Euros Cup Final between England and Italy and witnessing the tragic penalty shootout in a pub garden in Islington, I went with a friend to get some provisions from the Turkish shop down the road. There were other football fans there somewhat aimlessly milling about and I overheard one young lad in an England shirt say, "I can't see the point of living any more".

I don't think he actually took his life that fateful night and I don't know if anyone else did. But it did get me thinking about the meaning of football. What's going on? Isn't it "just a game"? Obviously not!

I've been thinking a lot about what John Vervaeke calls "The Meaning Crisis". His claim is that people in modern Western societies have lost a sense of meaning in life, with a whole host

of negative consequences and related crises, such as the mental health crisis, the opioid crisis, the obesity crisis and even the environmental crisis.

He makes a strong argument to the effect that meaning is closely associated with what he calls "Relevance Realization", which is the ability to identify relevant information in any given situation. This is also obviously connected to the ability to be a general problem solver (G.P.S.) and thus to general intelligence.

What's that got to do with football? Bear with me!

Optimal relevance realization is when your theoretical construct, insight or idea has strong convergence (many lines of supporting evidence or argumentation), making it trustworthy, while also having strong elegance (many lines of applicability and explanatory power, or "multi-aptness"), making it interesting.

What if your theory is high in convergence but low in elegance? Then it's true but trivial. It doesn't explain much beyond itself. What if your theory is low in convergence but high in elegance? Then it's far-fetched. The former set of theories and ideas are trivial and boring. The latter set are interesting but far-fetched - the stuff of conspiracy theories.

So what? What about the football? Hang on!

If we put triviality at one end of a relevance spectrum and far-fetchedness at the other end, with optimal relevance realization bang in the middle, like this:

TRIVIALITY -- RELEVANCE REALIZATION -- FAR-FETCHEDNESS

we can more easily see where we can and can't find existentially satisfying meaning.

On the triviality end, there is very low entropy - information is highly ordered - which means that there isn't much meaning. At the extreme, everything is meaningless, a state of mind experienced by people with severe clinical depression.

On the far-fetched end, there is high entropy - information is chaotic and things easily fly apart - which means that there is too *much* meaning. At the extreme, this results in psychotic and paranoid delusional states of consciousness, where everything is pregnant with meaning and esoteric significance.

In the Wheel of Babylon model, these two ends of the relevance spectrum are represented by two archetypes, the Muggle and the Muppet:

MUGGLE --------- RELEVANCE REALIZATION --------- MUPPET

The Muggle archetype is associated with narrow-mindedness and triviality. The Muppet archetype is associated with careless thinking and far-fetchedness. Muggle culture tends towards the conservative and conformist, circling around well-worn patterns of thought and behaviour, whereas Muppet culture tends towards the revolutionary and counter-cultural, rejecting established modes of being in favour of wildly creative flights of fancy.

But as I pointed out, there is no satisfying intrinsic meaning at either pole. So where do Muggles and Muppets find meaning? In victory. They are both motivated by *philia nikea*, the love of victory. This is because when there is no intrinsic satisfying existential meaning (there is either too little or too

much meaning-making), you end up with a meaning crisis, and the meaning associated with power, success and victory promises to plug the gap. The motivating factor in both cases, then, is the desire to be Top Dog.

The Top Dog is at the top of the Muggle or Muppet status hierarchy. In the Wheel of Babylon model, this is called the Diva. Part of the meaning of football, then, is "the love of victory". Just like in a war, we want our team or our country to come out victorious by defeating all opposition. The same logic obviously applies to other situations where there is a competitive arena or competitive market. For example, doing well at school and achieving success in a career.

By winning a competition like the Euros, we obtain the emotional rewards of achieving Diva status. We are the champions. This provides us with a powerful sense of meaning in life. (Presumably Italians woke up this morning with a stronger sense of meaningfulness than English people). When we lose, especially when we have defeat snatched from the jaws of victory, it feels as if life has been drained of meaning. We feel depressed and "can't see the point of living any more".

If you base the meaning of your life on *philia nikea*, you will be continually haunted by the meaning crisis. You can't always win. You can't always be Top Dog. And even if you are one of the "lucky few" and manage to secure your position at the top of the heap, power, success, fame and fortune cannot deeply satisfy your need for existential meaning.

But football is not just about the winning. It's also about the taking part (to roll out the parental cliché). Football is "the beautiful game" and it is the appreciation of this beauty, of the

skill, intelligence, athleticism and elegance of the players working together in harmony, that we can glimpse the deeper meaning of football. The Arsenal F.C. motto, *victoria concordia crescit*, or "victory through harmony", nicely brings both meanings together.

The "harmony" side of the equation is related to the idea of "flow". When you are in flow, or "in the zone", that's when you play beautiful football. And we can appreciate the graceful beauty of this state as spectators, both in the flow of individual players and in the collective flow of the team as a whole. When the players are in harmony with each other and within themselves, they can enter the flow state, where real football magic becomes possible. Which also, as a side-effect, means that they have a greater chance of winning.

So as well as the love of victory, there is the love of flow. In Ancient Greek, this is *philia rheo*. (A rheophile is an organism that prefers to live in flowing water).

If we turn back to the work of John Vervaeke, we can see that a defining characteristic of the flow state is precisely relevance realization. This is experienced as an intuitive grasp of the right thing to do and the right way to do it, via a kind of body intelligence. Vervaeke also points out that flow states are experienced as profoundly meaningful. The more often and more deeply you can enter a flow state, the more you will experience your life as meaningful. And this is a more satisfying source of meaning than the meaning derived from *nikea*.

As well as the physical flow state achieved in competitive sports like football or tennis (Novak Djokovic won the

Wimbledon men's final, notching up his twentieth Grand Slam and creating a triumvarate of joint record-holders with Nadal and Federer on the same day that Italy won the Euros), there is the mental flow state of "insight cascades". This is a state of deep understanding beyond mere logic, which is neither trivial nor far-fetched. It is the essence of relevance realization, of what we call "wisdom".

So as well as the love of victory, *philia nikea*, and the love of flow, *philia rheo*, there is the love of wisdom, *philia sophia*, from which we derive the word "philosophy".

The only kind of meaning available to Muggles and Muppets beyond the trivial and the far-fetched is the meaning that comes with the pursuit and achievement of victory, which is the drive to Divahood, or "the will to power", as Nietzsche called it. But as we begin to release ourselves from the hold of philia nikea and to pursue philia rheo and philia sophia instead, our lives become oriented along a different dimension of value, where flow and wisdom become more important and meaningful than victory.

By optimising our relevance realization, therefore, we create the possibility of connecting more deeply with the body through flow states and with the mind through insight states. These states are often experienced as *higher* states of consciousness, typically described in spiritual and mystical terms. Considering that they are closely related to radical self-transcendence, this should be unsurprising.

Psychedelics work by disrupting the habitual meaning-making machinery of the Muggle and Muppet systems and facilitating a state of flow and insight. This is not automatic,

however. If the underlying motivation is still philia nikea, the movement towards flow and insight will be sabotaged by egocentric obsession with victory. This is why the spiritual-therapeutic use of psychedelics should be accompanied by the cultivation of philea rheo and philia sophia.

This insight provides us with a simple heuristic for assessing people's suitability for psychedelic work. If you don't care much for football (or for music or dance) and you don't know much about Socrates, Plato or Aristotle (or Buddhism), then you probably don't have much love of flow or love of wisdom and you will struggle to achieve the necessary relevance realization needed to deepen your connection with life and meaning.

The sacred meaning of psychedelics is to be found in the interplay between altered states, flow states and insight states made possible through relevance realization. (These three states are represented in my model by the MYSTIC SHAMAN, WARRIOR MONK and PHILOSOPHER KING archetypes). The true meaning of football is similarly to be found in these states, and in the victory of *rheo-sophia* over *nikea*, not just "victory through harmony" but genuine "harmony over victory".

24 Hour Party People

Michael Winterbottom's 2002 film *24 Hour Party People* starring Steve Coogan as Tony Wilson is really a kind of parable about three personality types represented by three larger-than-life characters: Ian Curtis, Sean Ryder and Tony Wilson. If all this is before your time, you might not know who they are, but hopefully you will at least have heard of Joy Division and The Happy Mondays.

The Madchester rave scene centred around the Hacienda club was the epicentre of an Ecstasy-fuelled psychedelic revival hot on the heels of the Acid House revolution of the late Eighties. These were exciting and heady times, drawing comparisons in some quarters to the psychedelic efflorescence of the Sixties. Sadly, however, the revolutionary promise of the second Summer of Love in 1988 dissolved as fast as the first one in 1967. Why?

24 Hour Party People gives a kind of symbolic answer in the three aforementioned figures Ian Curtis, Sean Ryder and Tony Wilson. Ian Curtis famously hanged himself at the tender age of 24; Sean Ryder famously became a crack addict; and Tony Wilson famously closed the Hacienda and disappeared from public view. Is this just an expression of The Wheel of Fortune, a concept brought up several times in the film, most memorably by a homeless beggar under a bridge quoting Boethius? Or are there forces other than luck, fate and fortune at play?

There were countless drugs casualties in the rave generation, just as there were in the hippy generation. Perhaps it was just the result of carelessness. Unlike the Sixties LSD guru Timothy Leary, Aldous Huxley was of the view that powerful psychedelic drugs shouldn't be bandied about willy-nilly but should be taken with due care and reverence if the great promise of spiritual transformation they afford wasn't to descend into mere hedonism.

Ian Curtis was a troubled, angry young man. He was basically a kind of indie-goth-mod-punk on speed. If we had to place him on *The Wheel of Babylon*, he would probably be a "muppet". Sean Ryder, on the other hand, childishness notwithstanding, is much more of a straight working class "muggle". And Tony Wilson, who in the film can't resist telling people he went to Cambridge and is periodically called a c**t by his proteges, was clearly a bit of a "diva".

Nobody knows what prompted Ian Curtis to commit suicide, but he clearly experienced some kind of descent via his inner victim to the hell of his inner demons. Sean Ryder, predictably enough, descended from muggle to addict via his inner diva fairly quickly. Tony Wilson, being a journalist, remained a diva pretty consistently throughout.

From *Love Will Tear Us Apart* to *Hallellujah*, the glimpses of supernal light from the musical psychedelic beyond failed to break any of them free. It's like the parable of the sower:

"Behold, a sower went forth to sow; And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up: Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because

they had no deepness of earth: And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them."

(Matthew 13: 3-7)

Slaves in Babylon

At the infamous 1969 Doors concert in Miami, Jim Morrison screamed, "you're all a bunch of fucking slaves!" Rather rude and insulting though it is, he wasn't completely wrong in his observation that we are surrounded by slaves, Muggle slaves, Muppet slaves, Addict slaves, Victim slaves, Diva and Demon slaves.

Six years earlier, in his book, *Strength to Love*, Martin Luther King, Jr. wrote:

"In his essay 'Self-Reliance' Emerson wrote, "Whoso would be a man must be a nonconformist." The Apostle Paul reminds us that whoso would be a Christian must also be a nonconformist. Any Christian who blindly accepts the opinions of the majority and in fear and timidity follows a path of expediency and social approval is a mental and spiritual slave."

Muggle slaves are most recognisably conformist. They are slaves to things like social media, soap operas, gossip, football, pop music and popular culture, and the strict demands of

family and friends. Any deviation from the norm is curtailed through ridicule and peer pressure.

Muppet slaves are also conformists, while often deluding themselves that they are nonconformists. They are slaves to ideologies, often of a counter-cultural hue, whether political, philosophical, artistic, psychological, theosophical or religious. Many modern Westerners are slaves to a materialist worldview, which prevents them from straying beyond the narrow mental space delimited by the natural sciences. Others are slaves to the latest trends in the culture war. The defining features of muppet slaves are dogmatic fundamentalism and cultishness; they are easily identified by their fighting talk and tone of strident self-righteousness.

Addict slaves are slaves to the passions, both substance and behavioural addicts, slaves to alcohol, weed, sugar, nicotine, smart phones, box sets, shopping, gambling, sex. Victim slaves are constantly haunted by a victim mentality, and labour under persecution complexes and conspiracy theories. Certain minority ethnic groups, such as African Americans and secular Jews, are particularly prone to this form of mental slavery. It is also ubiquitous among radical feminists and those who fly the rainbow flag.

Fear God and you will fear no man. The fear of God is both the beginning of wisdom and the beginning of freedom, freedom from mental and spiritual slavery to man-made idols. Bob Marley sang, "Emancipate yourselves from mental slavery, only ourselves can free our minds." But the enslaved mind cannot free itself. Only God can do that.

"For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!"

(Romans 8:15)

Possession vs Absorption

I am the first to admit that my interest in ideological possession sometimes verges on the obsessive. I even occasionally feel like I am actually possessed by the idea of possession. This is certainly transparently the case for many YouTubers who seem to have made it their life's mission to expose and debunk all the ideological muppets out there, from the Woke and the anti-Woke to the anti-theist and anti-anti-theist brigade.

The Wheel of Babylon is all about possession. If you're possessed by hate, rage, resentment, revenge fantasies, violent impulses or murderous intent, you are probably possessed by a "Demon". If you're possessed by fear, anxiety, worry, regret, despair, depression or severe self-criticism, you are probably possessed by a "Victim" archetype. If you're possessed by lust, desire, craving, greed, gluttony or the bottle, bong or needle, you are probably possessed by an "Addict" archetype.

That's how possession looks in the lower three realms of the Wheel. In the upper realms, you are ideologically possessed

when the Muppet archetype takes over, culturally possessed when the Muggle archetype holds sway, and pleasurably possessed when the Diva archetype is in charge.

The six opposite archetypes don't function possessively. They emerge through *samadhi*, or absorption. So that absorption in dhyana yoga manifests the Mystic archetype, absorption in kundalini yoga manifest the Shaman archetype, absorption in karma yoga manifests the Warrior archetype, absorption in bhakti yoga manifests the Monk/Nun archetype, absorption in jnana yoga manifests the Philosopher archetype and absorption in raja yoga manifests the King/Queen archetype. In fact the word "yoga" could itself be interpreted as meaning something like absorption.

Absorption is closely related to the experience of *flow*, which positive psychologists such as Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi identify with optimal human flourishing. When you are in flow, or "in the zone", you are fully absorbed in what you are doing, whether that be a physical activity like dancing, fighting or playing sports, an emotional one like listening to music or a mental one like writing.

There is a large body of research that points to the same conclusions as common-sense: absorption makes us happy and possession makes us unhappy. If we want to make this fundamental insight the basis of a conscious practice of self-improvement, we could do worse than resist possession by our inner Demon, Victim, Addict, Muppet, Muggle and Diva and cultivate absorption in our inner Mystic, Shaman, Warrior, Monk/Nun, Philosopher, King/Queen.

The Raven and the Dove

When the raven was released from the ark, it didn't come back. It was interested only in its own self-preservation. But the dove returned with an olive branch.

The 'worldly-wise' have no time for religion. They are too busy seeking their own advantage in the world. Worldly success is their highest value, and they use all the worldly arts at their disposal to secure it. But they have no wings to fly with.

The 'birds of appetite' on the other hand, do have time for religion. But they use it for their own ends, and twist it into the dark arts of occult self-aggrandizement. They pick at religion like a raven picking at a dove.

The 'birds of appetite' are *divas*. 'Yapping dogs' and 'ignorant pigs' are *muppets* and *muggles*.

"Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you." (Matthew 7:6)

But neither should you give that which is holy unto the ravens.

In the shamanic universe, there are black magicians and there are white magicians. Black magicians use their powers for their own personal advantage and self-interest:

"You are seeking something along with God, and you are acting just as if you were to make a candle out of God in order to look for something with it. Once one finds the things one is looking for, one throws the candle away. This is what you are doing." (Meister Eckhart)

White magicians don't seek their own benefit, whether that be fame, riches, pleasure, power or influence. They don't seek "something along with God", but trust in God alone. Thus, the fruits of their work are not for themselves only but for the higher good.

"For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Mark 8:36)

Why pray? Why meditate? Why work out? Why practice kundalini yoga? Why study religious or philosophical texts? Why go to church? Why have therapy? Why take psychedelics? For your own power and glory or for the glory of God?

"Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."

(1 Corinthians 10:31)

Seeds and Soil

Sometimes apparently simple stories can have deep psychological significance. Consider the parable of the sower:

"Hearken; Behold, there went out a sower to sow: And it came to pass, as he sowed, some fell by the way side, and the fowls of the air came and devoured it up. And some fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth; and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth: But when the sun was up, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up, and choked it, and it yielded no fruit."

(Mark 4: 3-7)

What do these three lots of seeds represent? Jesus immediately expounds the hidden meaning to his disciples:

"The sower soweth the word. And these are they by the way side, where the word is sown; but when they have heard, Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts. And these are they likewise which are sown on stony ground; who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness; And have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time: afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word's sake, immediately they are offended. And these are they which are sown among thorns; such as hear the word, And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of

other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful."

(Mark 4: 15-19)

So this allegorical story about a sower sowing seed on different types of ground is actually about imparting "seeds" of spiritual truth via "the word" in people's hearts. The seeds fail to grow sufficiently to give fruit, signifying that the spiritual truth fails to produce any tangible results. Why? Not because there's anything wrong with the seeds, but because the soil is bad. In other words, there's something wrong with the human heart.

In the parable, Jesus describes three ways in which the heart is indisposed to receive his teaching. If what he describes is true to life, we shouldn't be too surprised to find that these three unfruitful personality types actually correspond to modern psychological typologies.

Consider the classical clinical diagnosis of mental health patients into different personality disorders. Theodore Millon helpfully describes them in the following way:

Narcissists are "Egotistical, arrogant, grandiose, insouciant. Preoccupied with fantasies of success, beauty, or achievement, See themselves as admirable and superior, and therefore entitled to special treatment. It is a mental disorder in which people have an inflated sense of their own importance and a deep need for admiration. Those with narcissistic personality disorder believe that they're superior to others and have little regard for other's feelings."

Sadists are "Explosively hostile, abrasive, cruel, dogmatic. Liable to sudden outbursts of rage. Gain satisfaction through dominating, intimidating and humiliating others. They are opinionated and close-minded. Enjoy performing brutal acts on others. Find pleasure in abusing others. Would like to engage in sadomasochist relationship, but will not play the role of masochist."

Dependents are "Helpless, incompetent, submissive, immature. Withdrawn from adult responsibilities. See themselves as weak or fragile. Seek constant reassurance from stronger figures. They have the need to be taken care of by a person. They fear being abandoned or separated from important people in their life."

Obsessive-compulsives are "Restrained, conscientious, respectful, rigid. Maintain a rule-bound lifestyle. Adhere closely to social conventions. See the world in terms of regulations and hierarchies. See themselves as devoted, reliable, efficient, and productive."

Borderlines are "Unpredictable, manipulative, unstable. Frantically fear abandonment and isolation. Experience fluctuating moods. Shift rapidly between loving and hating. See themselves and others as all-good or all-bad. Unstable and frequently changing moods. People with borderline personality disorder have a pervasive pattern of instability in interpersonal relationships."

Of the three types of "bad soil" in the parable of the sower, the first is typical of narcissistic personality disorder or sadistic personality disorder. In my psychological schema, these are represented by the *Diva* and *Demon* archetypes; the second is

typical of dependent personality disorder, represented by the *Victim* and *Addict* archetypes; and the third is typical of obsessive-compulsive personality disorder or borderline personality disorder, represented by the *Muggle* and *Muppet* archetypes.

What about the "good soil", that is, those people whose hearts are capable of receiving and nurturing spiritual truth and producing "good fruit", that is, real, tangible results?

"...these are they which are sown on good ground; such as hear the word, and receive it, and bring forth fruit, some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some an hundred."

(Mark 4:20)

Again, just as there are three types of bad ground, there are three types of good ground - some produce more fruit than others. What are these three good types? Let's suppose that they would be the converse of the negative archetypes. We can imagine the following hierarchy:

Philosopher Kings produce "thirtyfold".

Warrior Monks produce "sixty".

Mystic Shamans produce "an hundred".

You Never Enjoy the World Aright

In my book *The Confessions of a Psychedelic Christian* I describe the problem of treating spiritual enlightenment as an aberration, an anomaly, a curiosity, a beautiful dream, an altered state of consciousness. It is almost inevitable that consensus reality is given ontological precedence over any other deviations from it, no matter how compelling. The peer pressure is enormous. Even the day after my mystical *Satori* experience of absolute certainty and penetrating insight into the unified, nondual nature of reality, I had to consciously fight this tendency of the mind to betray itself in favour of the status quo. The more I remembered it as an extraordinary experience, the easier it was for my mind to file it away under the "non-ordinary" category of experiences and simply revert back to the ordinary world, with the slightest sleight of hand eliding the "ordinary" with the "real" world.

But one of the most shocking and revolutionary aspects of my mystical experience was that it was more real than anything I had ever experienced in my life. It was definitely more real than the "ordinary world". I could say with absolute confidence, "though the rest of the world be on that side, on this side am I". Even if it was billions to one, I knew that I was right about the true nature of the world. *Tant pis* for the other billions.

Over the years and decades since that parting of the veil, it has been difficult to maintain the force of that original conviction, although I still know it to be true. I have had to

seek corroboration in the writings of mystics throughout the ages, who have had similar experiences and shared the same conviction that the ordinary way we experience the world is not right. When it comes to nondual experiences, you can't beat the Mahayana Buddhists and Advaita Vedantists. But the writer who, to my mind, writes most eloquently about this is the seventeenth century Anglican poet and mystic Thomas Thraherne:

"You never enjoy the world aright, till the Sea itself floweth in your veins, till you are clothed with the heavens, and crowned with the stars: and perceive yourself to be the sole heir of the whole world, and more than so, because men are in it who are every one sole heirs as well as you. Till you can sing and rejoice and delight in God, as misers do in gold, and Kings in sceptres, you never enjoy the world."

Yesterday I re-read C.S. Lewis' preface to *The Hierarchy of Heaven and Earth* by Douglas Harding. He begins with these momentous words: "This book is, I believe, the first attempt to reverse a movement of thought which has been going on since the beginning of philosophy." The philosophy that Harding is attempting to reverse is basically the philosophy of scientific materialism, which ultimately ends up in a nihilistic view of the world, the end point of a "process that has led us from the living universe where man meets the gods to the final void where almost-nobody discovers his mistakes about almost-nothing".

Later that evening, I had a conversation with my cousin in which I attempted to describe how the direct experience of our immediate surroundings radically change when we look at them through the lens of Parashiva, Shiva, Shakti. It is a shift in

awareness analogous to Harding's "headlessness", where you stop inferring a "meatball head" with its "peep holes" on your shoulders mediating the world and instead experience the world directly, as though the world *was* your head. It is a short-cut to a Berkeleian vision of phenomenological immaterialism. And it works. But it can easily be dismissed as little more than a fun thought experiment, as just another "altered state".

But Berkeley was serious. Harding was serious. And - goddammit! - *I'm* serious. My cousin looked at me as if he thought I might be mad. In any case, we were meant to be talking about the therapeutic potential of psychedelics, not weird mental tricks of perception. But I believe that precisely this, our most intimate, immediate and direct perception of reality, reveals the deep roots of the spiritual dis-ease and proliferating mental health crises of the modern world. Call it "the meaning crisis" or "the disenchantment of the world" or "cosmic pessimism" or what you will: the scientific worldview we have inherited from the Enlightenment philosophers is making people unhappy and unfulfilled because it is stopping them from enjoying the world aright.

When I read and write about the interminable debates between atheists and theists, it sometimes seems as though it were ultimately a case of temperament or personal preference. I am often tempted to throw up my hands in despair and say, "whatever!" Does it really matter? Some people believe in God and some people don't. Get over it! But the issue goes far deeper than the abstract, theoretical argument you might find in a school debating club. It's about the kind of world we live in. Either it is a divine world full of magic, purpose and meaning, or it is "a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,

signifying nothing." I know it is the former, but it seems that our society is so punch drunk on the latter, that it's people like me that are considered the mad ones.

Ultimately, all the questions about materialism and spirituality boil down to one: is the world full of spirit, full of "the glory of God" or is it an intricate, interlocking system of mechanical forces devoid of anything beyond its own ceaseless and ultimately meaningless activity? Materialists will never tire of telling me that my spiritual visions and experiences of divine being, consciousness and bliss are illusions. They suppose that I may be suffering from some kind of poetic condition, but who's to say they aren't suffering from an un-poetic one? They think I am labouring under the illusion of a God-filled universe, but I think they are suffering from the illusion of a Godless one. Stalemate.

There is, in the final analysis, no way of adjudicating between our conflicting worldviews, which are, after all, subjective. However, the sober materialist criticism of a religious person "filled with the holy spirit" on the grounds that they are clearly deluded seems to me as absurd as a miserable person pitying a cheerful person because their misery tells them that there is no such thing as happiness.

The Hierarchy of Heaven and Earth

The *Ray of Creation* presents us with a schematic picture of the hierarchy of Heaven and Earth. It has its origin in *Amun*, "the Hidden One", which is absolute vacancy, nothingness, nada. Physicists call it “the Quantum Void”. How something can come from nothing is an intractable mystery, which has taxed the greatest minds of every generation and has made the God hypothesis irresistible for almost everyone who thinks about it deeply enough.

The Ray of Creation is a map of the evolution of the universe from the seemingly inauspicious beginnings in *Amun* through the Big Bang, *Ra*, the formation of the atomic elements, *Atum*, the arrival of cellular life, *Ka*, the development of intelligent soul-life, *Ba*, and the emergence of planetary consciousness, *Gaia*, and universal consciousness, *Jah*.

This is the Ray of Creation: seven discrete yet interpenetrating levels spanning the entire hierarchy of existence from Absolutely Nothing to Ultimate Whole. Embedded within the human organism, they correspond to the ancient chakra system discovered by the Indian yogis: *Amun* at the base, *Ra* at the sacral, *Atum* at the solar plexus, *Ka* at the heart, *Ba* at the throat, *Gaia* at the third eye and *Jah* at the crown. This correspondence powerfully illustrates the fact that the Ray literally passes through us, and that each one of us is a microcosm of the whole universe.

However elastic our consciousness, scaling the heights and plumbing the depths of the hierarchy, our natural resting place is the human soul, *Ba*. This is located at the throat chakra, about three-quarters of the way up the cosmic tree. We exist as individual souls, but also as parts of a collective entity, Humanity. One cannot exist without the other. *I* cannot exist without the *other*, in a hierarchical network of family, friends, colleagues, neighbours, compatriots, citizens of the world. This social network of communal soul-life can be pictured as a horizontal line which, superimposed onto the Ray of Creation at *Ba,* forms a traditional Christian cross.

Ba is the intersection point of the horizontal line of humanity that marks you out as an individual. Look down through the vertical hierarchy of existence and you will see *Ka* (your life-force) arising from the trillions of living cells of which you are composed, and then *Atum* (the All), comprising the atoms of which your living cells are composed, of which there are estimated to be around 100 trillion per cell.

Since *Amun-Ra* transcends the limits of the physical universe, let's put this Nothingness and Energy to one side for the moment. We now have *Atum-Ka-Ba-Gaia-Jah*. You will notice that there is symmetry between the levels above and below us. At the centre of the hierarchy is the soul, *Ba*. Immediately below and above this are *Ka* and *Gaia*, life-force and world-soul. This makes sense if we conceive of the integrated totality of the planet as depending on the synthesis of its living, biological substrate, the biosphere. The larger whole that encompasses and embraces out little *Ba* is *Ka-Gaia*, stretching from organic cellular life below us all the way up to the Anima Mundi above.

One step lower and one step higher reveals a natural affinity between atomic matter, *Atum*, and the universe in its entirety, *Jah*. *Ka-Gaia* is only possible in the context of this larger reality, which spans the whole breadth of existence, from atoms and electrons to universal consciousness. But the enormity of *Atum-Jah* is itself necessarily contained within two further shells, *Ra* and *Amun*, Energy and Nothingness.

At the lower end of the hierarchy, *Ra* is simply the E in Einstein's $E=mc^2$. A the higher end, it is the pure uncreated energy of a Creator God. Let's call this pairing *Ra-Shiva*. Finally, we have the ultimate pairing of the inner, immanent emptiness at the centre of everything, *Amun*, and the outer, transcendent emptiness beyond everything, *Parashiva*. This is the coincidence of the Centre-Whole, *Amun-Parashiva*.

As well as expressing a linear hierarchy, the Ray of Creation also describes a series of nested pairings, *Amun-Parashiva*, *Ra-Shiva*, *Atum-Jah*, *Ka-Gaia*, at the centre of which lies the human soul, *Ba*. If you recall, *Ba* also exists on the horizontal dimension of collective humanity. Therefore, there is always the danger that we forget the vertical dimension altogether, forget the life-force that sustains us, our Mother Earth, *Pachamama*, that embraces us, and the deeper and higher layers beyond these, in which we live and move and have our being.

When I forget the vertical, I live as though the only thing of any significance were people and society, that is, the horizontal. When this happens, society, divorced from the vertical dimension, becomes a kind of mental prison, a Matrix, a Babylon. *Ba-Babylon* is the pairing of lost human souls and the man-made world of culture cut off from nature and spirit.

There is no longer a Cosmic Tree (or Cross) reaching from Earth to Heaven and back again, just a flat line, fittingly representing the flat-lining of spiritual death.

It is impossible to wake up from this slumber, to rise again from this grave, to heal this sickness unto death, without realizing and embodying our unique place at the juncture of Heaven and Earth:

"As man I bisect all the Pairs and their linking processes, for I include inferior members of every Pair, but am included in the superior member. I am at home in the upper half of the hierarchy because I am the lower half. To use more familiar language, man the microcosm reflects the macrocosm - a doctrine which, in its many forms, is as ancient as it is universal. And it is generally implied that man's business is to recognize and restore the links between what is above and what is below, between the universe without and the universe within. That is to say, while man is man because he cuts the hierarchy in half, his office is to heal that wound, to restore the unity of the Pairs, and so to realize himself as much more and much less than man. His task is to re-seat the suprahuman rider on the infrahuman horse, to join ruler and ruled, to realize the ancestral cave and the ancestral mountain imply each other, to link the nine circles of Hell with the nine circles of Heaven, to reunite the rising branches of the universe-tree with its deepening roots - and so to regain his own balance. The common-sensible part-man who is only human, and the scientific part-man who finds himself only in the bottom half of the hierarchy, and the religious part-man who finds himself only in the top half - all three need to be conjoined in the symmetrical and vertical man who is whole because his universe is whole. Such, more or less, is the suggestion of a

long esoteric tradition, of the experience of mystics and poets in every time and country, and of much psychological analysis."

(D.E. Harding)

Big Mystic, Small Shaman

"But it is my habit to find motion, and therefore depth, only in my middle regions. All other planes collapse. The near (like the fast-revolving flywheel) is still because it is too swift; the far, because it is too slow. And the real hierarchical universe, inexpressibly deep and mobile, is hidden from me by my own shallowness."

(D.E. Harding)

Time is the measure of all things: the orbit of an electron around its nucleus, a fleeting impression, a breath, a day, a year, a lifetime, an age, the life of a planet, a star, a galaxy, a universe. We only really experience those things whose time-frames play out in our middle regions, from seconds to years. But the time range of the universe extends so much further in both directions, towards the impossibly fast to the impossibly slow. The foreground of our lived world, our near regions, are invisible to us because they are too small and too fast; the background, our far regions, are invisible because they are too large and too slow. Those things that are neither too fast nor

too slow to actually perceive (but are still very fast or very slow) we experience as actual foreground and background, a tingling sensation in the chest, a setting sun.

Mystics experience a slower and larger dimension of the universe. To achieve this, they employ special slowing-down techniques, classed under the general headings of "meditation" and "prayer". The breath slows down and the mind slows down. One breath can last minutes rather than seconds, with the hiatus between breaths also lasting a minute or two. Thoughts slow down to such an extent that it seems as though the mind had stopped altogether. The very slow, the very far and the very large now come into range. Thus the mystic becomes "macro-cosmic".

There is also the converse process: the breath can speed up to hyper-ventilation levels, as Stanislav Grof discovered through his experiments with "holotropic breathwork", or as the pranayama yogis have known for millennia. The mind can also reach levels of activity that make the sharpest wit seem a positive sluggard. These are levels of superhuman "genius" cognition as described for example by Sylvia Nasar in *A Beautiful Mind*.

As well as impossibly fast, subtle and intricate mental activity, the inner workings of the body also become accessible to awareness when time speeds up. These are felt as vibrations, buzzings, tingles and surges of energy, unusual sensations, inner lights and colours experienced in specific regions of the body. Traditional shamans are adept at this inner somatic journeying, this "fantastic voyage", by which they purportedly heal themselves. Thus the shaman becomes "micro-cosmic".

If you are familiar with the dramatic transformations of consciousness produced by psychoactive compounds such as DMT, LSD, mescaline, psilocybin etc. this should all sound familiar. Sometimes consciousness expands out far enough that you are able to listen in on grand cosmic symphonies, the music of the spheres; sometimes it reduces down far enough that you can eavesdrop on hyper-kinetic synaptic conversations. Sometimes it seems to shrink to the size of a cell or an atom; sometimes it grows to include a universe.

Psychedelics are useful tools for reflecting on our place in our middle regions of human relations and human society, that is, for illuminating the horizontal dimension of human existence. They can provide psychological insight and emotional healing. However, their greatest gift is their magical ability to open us up to the vertical dimensions of the very large above us (the macrocosm) and the very small below us (the microcosm), thus uniting the two poles of Heaven and Earth.

Headlessness and Faith

"Headlessness" is Douglas Harding's simple and straightforward way of describing our unmediated sensory experience of the world. It dissolves the boundary between ourselves and the world, which is ultimately conceived or visualised as a "meatball head" with two peep-holes and other

sensory organs. Headlessness is the already given state of affairs (we don't experience or see a head), which we overlay and obscure with inherited theories of perception, such as the theory that the world and the mind are two different "things" mediated by a brain inside a skull-box.

Once you see the world headlessly, you can't unsee it. Even if you revert back to your habitual way of seeing, you now possess a capacity for nondual vision which you can access at will. It is no different from the acquisition of any other skill, such as solving algebraic equations or riding a bike.

The always-already state of nondual awareness, however described or conceptualised, is available to everyone, but not everyone "gets it". It depends on a sudden illumination, an "aha!" moment, a penny-dropping, jaw-dropping, world-shattering moment. This is called "seeing into your Original Nature" or "seeing your Original Face" in Zen Buddhism. In the Hindu tradition, this is the direct path or "royal road" known as *Raja Yoga*. Nisargadatta Maharaj and Ramana Maharshi are probably the most famous exponents of this approach.

Everyone has a royal *Raja* birthright, but not everyone claims it. The same is true of *Bhakti Yoga*, the yoga of devotion. In the West, this is best understood as a capacity for "faith". Everyone is presumably capable of faith, but not everyone "gets it", just as everyone should in principle be able to ride a bike (in the absence of certain physical disabilities), but not everyone can.

Once you have tasted "One Taste", you can taste it again, just by remembering or un-forgetting (anamnesis). Once you have tasted "belief in God" and "trust in God", you can also do

it again, just by bringing Him to mind, for example simply by repeating the word "Lord" a few times. You can *believe* as an active verb, simply by remembering or un-forgetting God.

Headlessness and faith are both discrete, recognisable states of awareness. Once you have experienced them, it's easy to recognise them. And the more you experience them, the more recognisable they become and the more discrete they become. They are clearly distinguishable from the "ordinary" state of consciousness.

Some people "get" faith but don't "get" headlessness and vice versa. Most people don't "get" either. I suspect this is because in the modern West, we live and breathe in a left-brain hemisphere dominant society, where "knowledge about" trumps direct "knowledge of" (see Iain MacGilchrist's *The Master and His Emissary* thesis). I would argue that both headlessness and faith are right-brain hemisphere capacities and that Raja Yoga and Bhakti Yoga are right-hemisphere activities.

Faith is obviously undervalued and discouraged in secular, materialist culture. For the most part, nonduality and headlessness don't even register at all. The only pursuits recognised as worthwhile are action and knowledge, which, raised to their highest spiritual expressions, are represented in Hindu tradition by *Karma Yoga* and *Jnana Yoga* respectively.

Lama Yeshe said, "True religion should be the pursuit of self-realization, not an exercise in the accumulation of facts". And St Paul said, "A person is justified by faith apart from the works of the law". In other words, neither Jnana Yoga nor

Karma Yoga are enough. Neither have the whole picture. We also need self-realization (Raja Yoga) and faith (Bhakti Yoga).

Man cannot live by bread alone, and neither can he live by the left-brain hemisphere alone. For a mature, balanced and integrated spirituality, we need reason and good works but also headlessness and faith. And if you don't "get" either, it may just be because you've never really tried.

The Trial

In T*he Trial of the Man who Said he was God*, the protagonist is charged under a new blasphemy law in the fictional near future. It is a brilliant conceit, providing an engaging and entertaining vehicle for a thorough exposition of Harding's own mystical philosophy. The structure, like the philosophy, is disarmingly simple, the prosecution marshalling all manner of arguments and objections via a series of witnesses, which are answered one by one by the accused.

The story (if you can call it that) is reminiscent of the trial of Socrates, who was also charged with blasphemy and corrupting the youth. Harding explicitly nods to Socrates towards the end of the book, as well as to that other famous blasphemy trial, the trial of Jesus.

Socrates and Jesus, probably the two most influential men in the history of Western civilization, were both put to death

for blasphemy and for disturbing the peace. They were too revolutionary, too threatening to the status quo. In Dostoevsky's story about The Grand Inquisitor, the second coming of Jesus ends exactly like the first, because although the Inquisitor recognizes who He is, he decides that maintaining social order is priority.

In a recent Meetup discussion about Psychedelics and Faith we talked about how psychedelic experiences undermine consensual reality and therefore naturally align them with the counter-culture. As one participant put it, "in the Sixties, smoking a joint was a political act". We talked about how the politicization of psychedelics in the first psychedelic wave was arguably their downfall. They were put on trial by the Nixon administration in the US, found guilty and summarily criminalized. And the rest of the world followed suit.

Coincidentally, the sermon last Sunday was about how an essential part of being a Christian is the willingness to take on the inevitable yoke of persecution. Although atheists will cry "foul!" and point at all the horrible persecutions (such as the Spanish Inquisition) carried out by the Church over the centuries, it does feel as though at the tail end of the history of Christianity, as it was at the beginning, Christians are under attack, "more sinned against than sinning".

Many Christians have an aura of paranoia around them. Jews might quip that they are getting a taste of their own medicine and had better get used to it - Jews have been persecuted and many chronically paranoid for centuries. Paranoia also permeates the psychedelic community, for obvious reasons. No one wants to spend the next few years in jail.

Maybe we are all on trial, to one degree or another. In my book, *The Confessions of a Psychedelic Christian*, I describe a bad trip, a psychotic episode really, where I was propelled by an unwise cocktail of hashish, LSD and Ecstasy into a nightmarish version of Franz Kafka's exquisitely crafted paranoid fantasy, *The Trial*. I am lucky to have escaped alive (and relatively sane!)

I love the work of Douglas Harding. He is a brilliant thinker and a brilliant writer. In so many respects, his philosophy and approach coincide with my own, and I feel a deep affinity between us. And I am a devoted follower of his "Headless Way". But reflecting on the undercurrent of his admittedly masterful work, *The Trial of the Man who Said he was God*, I wonder how much he himself suffered from the paranoia that comes with "special revelation".

Harding was misunderstood and ignored for decades before he finally managed to share his "seeing", before anyone saw the way he saw. And he struggled with opposition and ridicule for the rest of his life. This goes with the territory, of course. It's much easier to slip into an established religion than strike out on your own. If you were ever to emerge from obscurity, you would be extremely naive not to expect to be heckled from all sides. (Note to self!)

I am constantly amazed that Douglas Harding is not more well-known than he is. Why is he not a household name? Why is Headlessness not common knowledge? This is an interesting puzzle. There are probably a whole raft of factors. Paranoia may be one of them. Another may be his over-emphasis on one experience and one way.

Harding's central question was, "Who am I?" and his answer was, quite conventionally really, "I AM". The Headless Way is really a version of the Royal Road, *Raja Yoga*. Ramana Maharshi is the archetypal Raja Yogi. Walt Whitman, especially in *Song of Myself*, was also an exemplary Raja Yogi.

Although he wrote profusely about all aspects of the spiritual life, it may be that his over-emphasis on Raja Yoga limited his general appeal. It may be that the Royal Road doesn't suit everyone. It lacks the devotional element of Bhakti Yoga and the active element of Karma Yoga, which are arguably more accessible and appealing to people with vague spiritual leanings and longings.

For all I know, I may be erring in the opposite direction, by attempting to be *too* integral. I include six yogas in my model. For most people, that's probably five too many. "Zen Christian Shamanism" is already a mouthful, but what I am actually proposing is "Active Philosophical Headless Shamanic Christian Zen", which embraces Karma Yoga, Jnana Yoga, Raja Yoga, Kundalini Yoga, Bhakti Yoga and Dhyana Yoga. Not exactly catchy!

Whatever I call it, I will be judged. There's no way round it. Hopefully I won't have to do time, or drink hemlock, or be crucified. And hopefully I won't become defensive, bitter or paranoid. But who knows whether my work will ultimately be ignored, excoriated or celebrated? I leave it in God's hands. Whatever the world may think, God is my Witness and God is my Judge. In the end, that is the only Trial that matters.

Stories

There are Muggle stories and there are Muppet stories. Muggle stories are the ones we constantly tell ourselves about our lives. They tend to be rather mundane and parochial and although of great interest to us, are usually boring for other people, much like our dreams. These are the stories we pay psychotherapists to listen to and that our nearest and dearest have to constantly put up with. They are our personal soap operas.

Muppet stories go beyond our personal dramas in an attempt to make sense of the world. They are metanarratives which impose a single interpretive frame on the world, giving us a sense of reliable meaning and control. Ultimately, they are all examples of reductionism, reducing all complexity to one simple master narrative or theory of everything. They are totalising, veering towards totalitarian, dogmatic, ideological, fundamentalism, often characterised by passionate zealotry and activism.

In the upper half of the Tibetan Wheel of Life, there are Muggles (the human realm), Muppets (the titan realm) and Divas (the deva realm). So what about the Divas? What about the stories of the gods? Well, the motto of the diva is; "neither a Muggle nor a Muppet be". They see the limitations of our little, personal stories and their reflections in popular culture. They see the limitations of our fundamentalist stories and the way they inevitable embroil us in culture wars. They understand that we are meaning-seeking animals and story-

telling creatures and that the best way to approach our lives and the world around us is through a rich tapestry of stories, not through the narrow lens of our own personal story (our "life script" as Eric Berne would say) or a single totalising grand narrative. Instead, they have multiple maps of meaning. They read old books, go to art galleries, theatres and concert halls, even occasionally to church. They are well educated, erudite, witty, sophisticated, cultured, refined. They resist simplistic and reductive visions of reality. They know how stories work. However, they cannot avoid being somewhat elitist and snobbish, always a sure sign of Divahood.

Matthew Arnold, C.S. Lewis, J.R.R. Tolkien, Owen Barfield, Dorothy L. Sayers, F.R. Leavis, Northrop Frye, Iris Murdoch, Rudolf Steiner, Carl Jung, Joseph Campbell, Jordan Peterson, Pinkola Estes, Alister McGrath, to name a few, are some of the more insightful and well-known advocates of the "storied life". They divide their time and effort between reaping the imaginative benefits of a deep and serious engagement with culture, with "the best that has been thought and said", and criticising the short-comings of Muggle and Muppet story-telling (which is when they get pulled into culture wars - remember that the titans and the gods on the Wheel of Life are perpetually at war).

Christianity is interesting in this regard, because it is such a central story, if not the central story, of Western culture and consciousness. Some of the writers I listed above, such as Tolkien, Dorothy L. Sayers and Northrop Frye, saw Christianity as a kind of meta-story or Ur-text, a great archetypal blueprint, "the greatest story ever told" to which all other stories must ultimately refer. Frye called it "the great code". Whether the story is literally true is beside the point. It appeals to the deep-

seated mythos of human consciousness, which goes far deeper than logos. (Karen Armstrong makes this crucial distinction between mythos and logos in her book, *The Case for God*). However, it is not really good enough to be a thorough-going mythicist when it comes to the Christian story, since the whole thing turns on the coincidence of myth and history, of archetype and person, of the ideal and the actual, the Word made flesh and God made man.

The deep appreciation of the nature of art, myth and story and of how they interpenetrate the real world is the essence of the deva realm. In the Christian context, this is best characterised as "Renaissance Humanism", "Christian Humanism" or in its more recent incarnation, "Romantic Christianity". Representatives of this imaginative religiosity are the English Romantics, Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge and the German Romantics, Herder, Schiller, Goethe, Novalis, Wagner. This type of creative, mythical, poetic sensibility gave rise in the twentieth century to works of imaginative fantasy such as The Lord of the Rings and the Narnia Chronicles. The fact that they appeal to children is not accidental (think of Blake's Songs of Innocence and Experience), since children have not yet had their innate mythos beaten out of them by the James Mills and Mr Gradgrinds of rationalist modernity.

So there we have it: there are Muggle stories, Muppet stories and Diva stories. There is Muggle Christianity, Muppet Christianity and Diva Christianity. However, true spiritual freedom is to be found beyond the Wheel altogether, where all our stories are transcended in a cloud of forgetting and a cloud of unknowing.

Patterns

We all know about our own negative patterns, our bad habits, our reactivity, our negative emotions and anxious negative thoughts (the "ants" crawling around inside our skulls). And we all know something about the patterns of our nearest and dearest. Everybody has bad patterns.

"Bad behaviour" refers to negative or dysfunctional behavioural patterns. When we talk about physical actions, we tend to use the morally loaded words "good" and "bad" although these can also carry a purely qualitative meaning ("bad posture" and "bad dancer" are obviously not moral judgments). At the aesthetic level, we talk instead of patterns that are "beautiful" or "ugly". A pattern on a rug or on a dress, for example. Or the pattern of notes in a melody. When we talk about patterns of meaning, on the other hand, we talk about "true" and "false", applied to lines of logical reasoning, theories and stories.

The Good, the True and the Beautiful are, of course, interrelated, although they are naturally associated with the optimal, "right", patterns of body, mind and feelings respectively. We talk about "good moves", "good balance" and "good posture"; "beautiful art", "beautiful words" and "beautiful music"; "true accounts", "true stories" and "true understanding".

Mysticism famously dissolves all patterns. This is represented, for example, by the central "purification" channel

(the *shushumna*) in Buddhist Tantra. On achieving satori (spiritual enlightenment) Zen Master Dogen said, "bodymind dropped!" This can be understood as referring to the mental and physical patterns of confusion, anxiety and tension. In that moment, he was free of his patterns. His freedom of mind made him a Mystic and his freedom of body made him a Shaman.

The Mystic and Shaman archetypes therefore point to the dissolution of all mental and physical patterns, the patterns of synaptic grooves in the brain and muscular and nervous tension in the body. This is "bodymind dropped!", or even more dramatically, "the Great Death". The death-rebirth motif is ubiquitous in all spiritual and religious traditions, because new patterns cannot be established until the old ones are dissolved.

The Warrior, Monk/Nun and Philosopher archetypes refer to the practice and mastery of *Karma Yoga*, *Bhakti Yoga* and *Jnana Yoga*, the yogas of action, devotion and knowledge. They are about establishing good, beautiful and true patterns of body, feelings and mind. This is the rebirth, the reconstruction, the reprogramming of the "new man" (or "new woman") from the ashes of the old. (The King/Queen archetype refers to *Raja Yoga*, the royal road of the soul, the cosmic pattern of the individual's relation to the whole, *Atman* to *Paramatman)*.

With or without the aid of psychedelics, this is what the spiritual journey and the spiritual life is all about: giving up our habitual, negative patterns of movement, emotion and thought and training ourselves in new, better, truer and more beautiful patterns of body, mind and feeling. In Zen Christian

Shamanism, this is done primarily through dance and martial arts (body), music and art (feelings) and study and discussion (mind). True therapy, true medicine, is not merely psychological, or merely spiritual, but holistic and integral. Patterns exist in all dimensions simultaneously.

Drug Patience

When it comes to drugs, patience really is a virtue. If you ingest a high dose of magic (unless you have an anti-magic antidote - which you don't) you know that you are in it for the duration. And in the case of ayahuasca, the duration can be up to twelve hours or more. Especially if things have taken a turn for the worse and the bad angels are dragging you through a bad trip backwards, you had better have a bit of patience.

The same is true of our inner drug cartels. When your partner says something that really winds you up, a certain cocktail of drugs is released from the various glandular distribution centres of your inner endocrine drug factory. If you're really pissed off, your whole system will be flooded with adrenalin. And if it starts to get particularly stressful, it will also be flooded with cortisol. This is probably not a good time to sit down and work it out between you - probably best to just smash a few plates and slam a few doors (joking!).

Alternatively, you can patiently wait for the drugs to wear off, which may take a while. No clicking your fingers or *expelliarmus* magic spells can relieve you of the hormones swilling about in your bloodstream. But if you are patient, take some time out and stop producing more fight or flight drugs by continuing the argument in your head, you will calm down and come down soon enough. Then we can talk.

Psychedelics famously (and infamously) produce altered states of consciousness. But so do all drugs, including coffee, Red Bull and prescription psychiatric drugs. And so do our own inner pharmacies. Since time immemorial, human beings have experimented with altered states. They are kind of fun and kind of fascinating. They also seem to give us superpowers. For example, when I am perfectly level-headed, calm, relaxed, integrated and equipoised, I don't tend to write very much. When I am manic, and my creative juices are flowing, I can write reams of (to my mind) inspired prose.

This manic state is addictive. When I'm deep in an intense conversation, firing on all cylinders, I feel great - energized, excited, intellectually stimulated. Many celebrities have built huge followings from creatively harnessing their manic energy, Kanye West, Russel Brand, Jordan Peterson, Alex Jones and Madonna, for example. But more often than not, celebrities crash and burn, or rather, burn out and crash: the other pole of mania is depression and all five examples above are excellent examples of this.

If you are addicted to mania, you are an inner drug addict. If you can manage your habit and keep it within reasonable bounds, all well and good - you can use it to your advantage as a performance enhancing drug. If it goes too far, however,

the magic turns sour and toxic and begins to poison you. In excess, all drugs are poisonous, which is to say, in excess, all altered states, and all emotional states, are poisonous.

Even love can be poisonous. If you fall head over heels in love, it's the most wonderful feeling in the world. You want to dance and sing in the rain. But if you overdo it, it becomes obsessive and weird. Introspection and psychological self-awareness are good, but in excess, they become narcissistic and weird. Generosity and selflessness are good, but in excess, they become martyrish and weird.

Then again, you should take everything in moderation, including moderation, because the converse error to that of "excess addiction" is "excess phobia". How many middle aged couples do you know that have settled into a placid truce of non-sympathetic-nervous-system-arousal? No raised voices, no crazy conversations, no crazy adventures. No alarms and no surprises. The discomfort of stress hormones persuades them that the benefits of arousal and excitement are just not worth the costs.

The extreme cases are those psychiatric patients who are so tortured by their emotional altered states that they would prefer the whole thing be shut down, whether through surgical or medicated lobotomy. They would rather be a member of the walking dead than of suffering humanity. In the absence of such radical interventions, however, there is always that commonest and most time-honoured form of shut-down, self-medication with alcohol.

The point is not to avoid altered states altogether. We don't want to be cold, rational, calculating Dr Spocks or unfeeling

zombies. Neither is it to chemically excise them with some psychiatric brain suppressant. We don't want Brave New World style *soma* regulation, but neither should we slowly kill ourselves with booze and fags. The point is to ride the waves of alterity, but with skill and restraint, that is, to know how and when to pull back from the brink of toxic overdose, where life-giving drugs become death traps.

Drug addicts are not addicted to drugs in general. They are addicted to a specific drug. What's your poison? Heroin? Cocaine? Love? Mania? Anger? Stress? Depression? It can get very messy of course, especially when alcohol is in the mix, but generally speaking, addiction is usually associated with specializing too much in one particular direction, with poisoning yourself with one particular poison.

A fulfilling life is one that is filled with a wide range of human experiences, which means a wide range of emotions and altered states of consciousness. If you are addicted to one or two to the exclusion of all others, you will narrow yourself down horribly, to the point where you may even appear sub-human to yourself and others. On the other hand, if you are phobic of all states other than your base-line "sober" state, you will soon become a cardboard caricature of a regular guy or gal, fine for a lifestyle magazine perhaps, but no good for real life lived deeply and fully. That's a painfully slow and boring death.

We need to be patient with ourselves and others. And we need to be patient with drugs. We can't live without them, but only when we learn to live with them, will we learn to truly live.

Have you tried turning it off and on again?

Die before ye die (Hadith attributed to Nabi)

If you die before you die, you won't die when you die (Inscription over a door at St. Paul's monastery in Mount Athos)

The death and rebirth motif in religion is really the key and the sum total of spiritual experience, from per-historic shamanism to modern-day NRGs (New Religious Groups). "Death" here clearly doesn't refer to physical death, and neither can it refer to loss of consciousness, since the process of death and rebirth is experienced by a conscious subject. If "feels" like a death, even though nobody can possibly know what death feels like, if anything. And it "feels" like a rebirth, even though no one can remember what their birth was like.

There is a mystery here, which is, appropriately enough, the mystery of the mystics. The anonymous fourteenth century author of *The Cloud of Unknowing* didn't speak in terms of death and rebirth, but in terms of forgetting and remembering. This is perhaps a more realistic, although less dramatic metaphor. By forgetting who you are in a "cloud of forgetting", you enter a "cloud of unknowing" between you and God, which is the only way to *gnosis*, the direct experiential knowing, the *anamnesis* or "unforgetting", of who you are and who God is, which is ultimately found to be the same thing. In other words, you forget your identity as a human being and remember your identity as God, or in the

stronger language of death and rebirth, you die as a human being and are reborn as God.

Mysticism is dedicated to exploring this process of *theosis* or deification. For those who are open to such heights of spiritual ambition, it is presented as the pinnacle of human achievement, as the final goal of the spiritual quest. However, since you don't physically die, you inevitably come back down to Earth (what goes up must come down). You forget that you are God and remember that you are a human being.

But you are changed. You're not exactly the same human being as you were before your death and rebirth escapade. You feel refreshed, revived, rebooted. It's as if your operating system was running sluggishly and someone turned you off and on again. Perhaps part of your brain has been temporarily shut down, perhaps your left hemisphere or your default mode network. Who knows? The important thing is that you feel more alive than you did when you started.

The way up is not easy, but neither is the way down. Both need to be mastered if religion is to make any real difference in your life. The way up depends on the classical spiritual disciplines of meditation and prayer, in other words, mysticism, which could be summed up as "the way of self-forgetting". The way down is "the way of self-remembering" or "self-re-membering". That is, the art of putting yourself back together again.

When you forget yourself, when you can say with Dogen Zenji, "bodymind dropped!" awareness is clear and pristine with no intermediary thoughts, feelings or sensations separating you from the world. But as body and mind return,

they can either do so in a confused, chaotic rush, or in an orderly, controlled and disciplined unfolding.

The controlled return passes through five distinct stages: first to return is the inner experience of being alive, the inner somatic movements of energy and sensation; next the musculature of the body and the rediscovery of physical movement; then feelings and emotions; then thoughts; and finally a sense of self. These five stages correspond to the hierarchical organisation of the nervous system and brain, passing through the reptilian brain stem through the limbic system and the neo-cortex.

In other words, we re-member ourselves step-wise, usually in a bottom-up fashion (although it can happen the other way up). From absorption in the pure awareness of the mystic (dhyana yoga), we re-emerge from the cloud of unknowing, are reborn, as a shaman (through kundalini yoga), a warrior (karma yoga), a monk or nun (bhakti yoga), a philosopher (jnana yoga) and a king or queen (raja yoga). We rediscover our energetic Beingness, then our bodies, then our hearts, then our minds and finally our souls. Except that all of these aspects of who we are are made new, cleansed and purified of toxicity, of ego, of sin. We are reborn not of the flesh, but of the spirit.

So if you're feeling sluggish and cramped in your own skin, if you're feeling less than fully alive, as if you were carrying around the accumulated rubbish of the past, you know what to do.

The Immortality Key

Half way through Brian Muraresku's fascinating book, *The Immortality Key: The Secret History of the Religion with No Name*, a deep dive into the mounting evidence for an original psychedelic sacrament at the Eleusinian Mysteries and then later, via the pagan continuity hypothesis, in Christianity, I got to wondering about the essential differences between a psychedelic Christianity and a non-psychedelic institutionalized Christianity.

Muraresku makes the point that mysticism has always had a difficult relationship with institutional religion, due to its essentially subversive nature. This is most starkly illustrated within the Buddhist tradition in the famous Zen koan, *If you meet the Buddha on the road, kill him!*

He writes, "In what he [Brother David Steindl-Rast] calls the centuries-long "tension between the mystical and the religious establishment," the technicians who yearn for real experience are always butting heads with the authorities who are trying to keep the house in working order." He also quotes Brother David (a Benedictine monk) as saying, "Every religion has its mystical core. The challenge is to find access to it and to live in its power."

Christianity is undoubtedly a profoundly mystical religion. However, it has in many cases become an empty shell of its former self, devoid of any trace of spiritual substance, such as in its modern post-Enlightenment rationalist, secularist,

literalist versions, "so that "live doctrine fossilizes into dogmatism" and the ethics and morality that attempt to translate "mystical communion into practical living" are reduced to moralism."

This doesn't mean that Christianity devoid of its mystical core is completely useless, however. It has a strong ethic of selfless service and "good works", of what the Indian Vedic tradition calls *Karma Yoga*. It has a highly developed liturgical and devotional system, replete with some of the most sublime art and music ever created, engagement with which in India is called *Bhakti Yoga*. It has a profound and sophisticated theological tradition, with some extraordinary deep thinkers, all practitioners of *Jnana Yoga*. It has prayers and sacraments which connect believers to their spiritual essence or soul, akin to the Royal Road of *Raja Yoga* in the Indian tradition.

Regular, exoteric Christianity, the common-or-garden church-going variety actually ticks a lot of boxes: ethical, aesthetic, intellectual and spiritual. Just like any of the mature world religions, Christianity continues to attract followers because it does indeed address the four yogas, and it does it exceptionally well. Maybe too well.

Because without the mystical core, these practices degenerate into mere empty ritual. The *exoteric* needs to be undergirded, supported, infused, energized, illuminated, by the *esoteric*, the inner spiritual essence of its very raison d'etre. The exoteric can only survive on the fumes of the esoteric for so long before it collapses under the weight of its own fossilized structure.

Just as the secular humanist Enlightenment project is running on the fumes of the Judeo-Christian tradition it emerged from, the Judeo-Christian tradition itself is running on the fumes of direct, esoteric, mystical experience. And when the fumes run out, civilization itself will inevitably collapse in on itself, as old, decrepit civilizations tend to do.

There has understandably been a passionate call for a return of the mystical element within Christianity for a long time now. Many mystically-inclined Christians now meditate, for example. However, as Brian Muraresku's book persuasively and suggestively demonstrates, there is also the psychedelic element to consider. Christianity clearly has a mystical core, which is often lost sight of, but it also has a psychedelic core, enshrined in the central mystery of the Eucharist. And real, hard evidence is mounting that this defining sacrament was originally a psychedelic spiked wine with the power to transport its partakers into spiritual communion with God.

If the exoteric side of religion can be represented by the four yogas and their corresponding archetypes, Warrior (karma yoga), Monk (bhakti yoga), Philosopher (jnana yoga), King (raja yoga), the esoteric side can be represented by two further yogas, *dhyana yoga* and *soma yoga*, meditation and psychedelics, Mysticism and Shamanism. Herein lies the real "immortality key".

It's time to put the marrow back into the old bones of tradition, and refill the empty tank of religion. It's time for a truly integral Psychedelic Christianity.

Persephone, Apollo and Dionysus

The three great cults of the Greek Mysteries were the cults of Demeter and Persephone at Eleusis, Apollo at Delphi and Dionysus all over the place.

In the myth, Persephone is abducted by Hades while gathering flowers (she may have munched on a particularly psychoactive one) and becomes his queen in the underworld. Her mother Demeter, distraught with grief, implores Zeus to get her back. Hades eventually relents, but not before tricking her into eating some pomegranate seeds, which magically compel her to return to him for six months of every year for all eternity.

Persephone is a vegetation goddess as well as the goddess of Spring and Nature. The story of her yearly return to the underworld is an agrarian myth about the crop cycle, which is a kind of yearly death and rebirth. The esoteric meaning is not about farming, however, but about spiritual regeneration, which is also clearly what John was getting at in his gospel:

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."

(John 12:22)

On an esoteric level, Persephone represents what the transpersonal Chilean psychologist Claudio Naranjo calls "formless meditation". This results in a kind of ego-death or

ego-dissolution, where all habitual "default mode" objects of consciousness disappear. In the Buddhist traditions, this state is known as Samadhi.

The re-emergence from this state of quiescence and suspended animation is like a second birth into the phenomenal world of objects. These objects can take any form, but they can be arranged to include especially harmonious forms in a consciously designed "form meditation". The newborn consciousness is thus moulded into shape by another Greek god, the god of music, poetry and the civilized arts, Apollo. In other words, you awaken from your death-trance in beauty, and your receptive soul is beautified.

The third type of meditation discussed by Naranjo is "expressive meditation". This is the kind of full-blooded, full-bodied meditation typical of shamanic rituals in indigenous cultures, typically with lots of drumming and dancing. In the ancient Greek and Roman worlds, this was known as a bacchanal, from Bacchus, the Latin name for the Greek god of (spiked) wine, theatre, madness and partying, Dionysus.

In *The Immortality Key: The Secret History of the Religion with No Name*, Brian Muraresku focuses on the pagan continuity hypothesis, with particular emphasis on the shift from Dionysus to Jesus. He claims that a psychedelically inspired "religion with no name" has accompanied humanity since the Stone Age in the form of psychedelic beer, later replaced by psychedelic wine, and that it was going strong immediately before, during and after the birth of Christianity in the first century AD.

It may have no official name, but there are in fact three names that usefully capture the nature of this secret religion: Persephone, Apollo and Dionysus. Together, they provide a powerful methodology for radical spiritual transformation via the threefold practice of formless, form and expressive psychedelic meditation.

The Seal of Apollo

"Set and Setting" has become something of a psychonautic cliché. It will never go out of fashion, however, because it so concisely and catchily expresses the essential conditions for a good trip. "Set" refers to mind-set. You should be in a relaxed and positive frame of mind, not racked with anxiety and worry. "Setting" refers to the place you take it in and the people you take it with. You should ideally take psychedelics in a safe and supportive environment.

People usually refer to set and setting in the negative or minimal sense. In other words, make sure you're not in a bad place mentally or physically, and you should avoid a bad trip. But if you take set and setting seriously, why not make a conscious effort to create as conducive an environment as you can? Why not ceremonially prepare yourself and the place you are in to receive your magical guest with the utmost care? At this point, psychedelic use becomes sacramental.

To take a sacrament, you need a sacred set and setting. In the Christian Mass, you only take communion after having participated in the service, which is a kind of spiritual preparation and purification. In some churches, especially in the Catholic tradition, you can only take communion once you have been to confession.

Similarly, in a psychedelic ceremony, there must be a preparatory element as well as a sacred ritual element. In addition, however, there should be a carefully designed post-communion element, which is of course the heart of the matter. "Set" thus refers to the "pre-communion" preparation stage and "setting" to the "post-communion" tripping stage.

The essence of a good mind-set is meditation. This has a negative and a positive rationale. The negative is about avoidance of negative emotions and negative thoughts. The positive is about getting "in the zone", so that you are as receptive and open as possible and better able to "go with the flow".

An important aspect of this positive preparation is increased suggestibility. Research has shown that meditation and psychedelics both increase sensitivity and suggestibility, so that any ensuing positive feelings and insights have a stronger and more lasting effect. This can be intentionally used to our advantage: first "set yourself suggestible" by relaxing and inhibiting the default mode network, then offer yourself positive affirmations in the form of a "setting mantra".

When we come up on magic mushrooms, we find that our mind-set has shifted along with our altered state of consciousness. The important thing is to keep calm and carry

on, to remain positive, relaxed and open. You can continue with the mantra in your elevated state of suggestibility, but you will also need some other sensory input, even if you are a very experienced meditator. Prolonged silence can be hard to bear on high doses. We need more "setting".

It's almost as though, on drinking the sacred drink, our souls become thirsty for spiritual drink. And because they are in such a suggestible state, the drink they are offered should be as healthy and wholesome and refreshing as possible. In other words, it should be *beautiful*. We bare our souls in the radical openness of psychedelic suggestibility in order that they may be remade in the image of transcendental Beauty.

The "set" is peace and the "setting" is love. The "set" is openness and the "setting" is beauty. Beautiful music, through the skilful interweaving of melody, harmony, rhythm, dissonance and concord, tension and resolution, guides our fledgling souls towards the celestial realms of the Good, the True and the Beautiful, where they receive the stamp of the divine, like a seal on hot wax. This is what I mean by "the seal of Apollo".

Shamanic Hippy Paganism

The default mode for the ceremonial use of psychedelics is hippy paganism, or shamanic hippy paganism. This approach

circles around three principal elements: Nature, Story and Ritual. The spiritual core is nature mysticism or nature worship, which in modern times has taken on a certain political urgency, as it has inevitably been coupled to the environmentalist movement.

This spiritual core can be further subdivided into Nature, the Body and the Feminine (although the men have rightly insisted on also including the Masculine). The idea is that modern Westerners are chronically dissociated from Nature, the Body and their Feminine/Masculine essence and need to reconnect in order to restore the lost balance and harmony of natural man and woman. This is done primarily through Story and Ritual.

Story can be subdivided into Myth, Fairy Tale and Poetry/Song. The favoured stories are naturally folkloric (or "indigenous") and the favoured music is traditionally folk music (or "world music"), with a lot of drumming. The main themes revolve around ideas of connection to and disconnection from Nature and/or Tradition, with the accompanying tinge of joy and sadness. A nostalgic, pining mood is evoked by the psychodrama of exile and home-coming.

Ritual can be subdivided into rituals of Time, Place and Magic. Time rituals are related to seasonal festivals (such as Beltane or Sukkot). Place rituals are related to specific places and natural features (particular forest glades, river crossings, mountain views). Magical rituals conjure up the latent esoteric energies within Nature for the purpose of healing, divination, etc.

The Pagan Hippy ceremonial use of psychedelics can be very powerful and very beautiful. Participants invariably come away from the ceremonies feeling more connected to each other, to the natural world, to their own bodies and to their femininity or masculinity. To a greater or lesser extent, Shamanic Hippy Paganism does actually deliver. Which is wonderful, as far as it goes.

But there is more to psychedelics than is dreamed of in hippy philosophy. There is more *gnosis*, more *pistis*, more *kenosis*. There is a deeper vision, deeper knowledge, deeper surrender. Part of the problem, I suppose, is the result of a kind of unacknowledged, unconscious "class war" attitude. Hippy paganism is a *folk* religion, a grass-roots, oral tradition of stories and songs around the camp fire. Its acolytes typically define themselves in opposition to establishment *elitist* religion.

In her book, *The Origins of Early Christian Literature: Contextualizing the New Testament within Greco-Roman Literary Culture*, Robyn Faith Walsh argues that the gospels were written not by illiterate peasants in Judea but by highly educated Roman elites conversant with Greek philosophy and literature. It may be that the gospels were the products of early Christian mystery schools. It may even be, if Carl Ruck and Brian Muraresku are to be believed, that they were all drinking a psychedelic spiked wine sacrament, as they almost certainly did at Eleusis.

In England, the study of the Bible and Classics (and of Latin and Greek) have, since Victorian times at least, been associated with public schools and the upper classes, the cultural and economic elites of our time. The rejection of this rich Western

canon by pagan hippies is largely a consequence of class consciousness, combined with the often fervent belief that these works (especially the Bible) are largely to blame for all the ills of the modern world.

This is a self-limiting belief. The antipathy between folk religion and elitist religion helps no-one. For the psychedelic spiritual renaissance to truly take hold and move beyond the Sixties, we need to reach across the ideological divide and make friends. Or at least love our enemies.

Ultimately, what is *kenosis* but surrender to the mystery of Being (Nature or God)? What is *gnosis* but a beatific vision afforded by the ritual use of psychedelics? What is *pistis* but the living faith of our sacred stories made flesh?

In pagan terms, connection to Nature depends on kenosis, effective Ritual depends on gnosis and transformative Stories depend on pistis. The key, however, is not to become attached to Nature, Ritual and Story (even "the greatest story ever told"), or our culturally specific understanding of them, and thereby turn them into idols, but to hold instead to the underlying activity of the eternal cycle of kenosis, gnosis and pistis.

"For the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life."

(2 Corinthians 3:6)

The Unbearable Lightness of Being

The "Meaning Crisis" in contemporary Western culture is not an intellectual but an existential crisis. It is a felt-sense of underlying meaninglessness, a peculiar lack of ontological, rather than epistemological, solidity. Milan Kundera expressed this modern malady beautifully in the title of his cult classic 1984 novel, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*.

What is called for, what is calling, is *gravity*. Gravity calls for groundedness and gravitas. It calls for fully-embodied, full-blooded life. It calls for existential seriousness and responsibility. Ultimately, it is the call of Zen.

Modernity has advanced to a point of technological prowess such that it seems eminently reasonable to sidestep the unpleasant and inconvenient existential realities of physical and mental suffering. The techno-utopians promise us a frictionless future where all our electronic devices are seamlessly woven into a protective comfort blanket that will defend us against the "slings and arrows of outrageous fortune".

For every frailty and shortcoming of human nature, there will be an app or a pill. The experts have it in hand. In this Brave New World, there is no need for personal responsibility or personal growth. There is no need to voluntarily confront suffering, no need to take up your cross. The appliance of science will sort you out in a jiffy.

This utopia, like all utopias, is unbearable. As Jesus so presciently put it, "What doth it profit a man, to gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

(Mark 8:36)

Gravity

You can't go home if you don't leave home. Odysseus, the Prodigal Son and Frodo are just three examples of wayfaring heroes whose homecoming is the real pivot of the story. Just as there is something magical about venturing out into unknown territory, so is there magic in coming home.

"Coming home" is a common refrain among communities and cultures who have experienced the dislocation and trauma of exile and emigration. I am a Chilean exile, and the songs of my homeland, especially the songs of return, such as *Vuelvo* by Inti Illimani and *Vuelvo Para Vivir* by Illapu, never fail to tug at my heart-strings. Irish music is also replete with this kind of patriotic nostalgia because of their own long history of mass emigration, something that Enya has extensively exploited in her music.

In her beautiful song *Pilgrim*, Enya sings about this condition of being a wanderer on the Earth, but in a spiritual rather than geographical sense. "Home" is not Ireland, or some other homeland, but "you":

Each heart is a pilgrim
Each one wants to know
The reason why the winds die
And where the stories go
Pilgrim, in your journey
You may travel far
For pilgrim it's a long way
To find out who you are...

Enya's music has sometimes been called "New Age", which she rightly objects to, but this idea of finding out your True Self is central to New Age thinking. Whether expressed in a spiritual or psychological idiom, this is a Religion of the Self, or Soul Mysticism, which many people see as an alternative to the traditional religious focus on an external God. This inward turn chimes with such mystical proclamations as "the Kingdom of God is within you" in Luke's gospel and the bald Advaita Vedanta assertion that "the Self is Brahman" (Brihadaranyaka Upanishad).

A corollary of this inner divinity is the sense that the natural world is itself infused with divinity, that is, pantheism (God is everywhere). This is clearly expressed in Thomas' gospel: "the Kingdom of the Father is spread out upon the earth, and men do not see it." In his *Centuries of Meditations*, Thomas Traherne (1636-1674) writes:

The world is a mirror of infinite beauty,
yet no one sees it.
It is a Temple of majesty,
yet no one regards it.

It is a region of Light and Peace,
did not humans disquiet it.
It is the Paradise of God,
the place of Angels,
and the Gate of Heaven.

"Coming home" can refer to a physical return to your homeland after years of absence, as in the Homeric epic *The Odyssey*, or to self-discovery, as in the Disney film *The Lion King*. But it can also refer to a return to Earth itself, as in Alfonso Cuarón's 2013 film *Gravity*.

When I first saw the film, on a British Airways flight to Chile to see my dying father, little clues, such as the Russian ikon in the Soyuz and the Chinese buddha in the Shenzhou capsule, were not lost on me. Stranded in space, the sole survivor of a satellite debris storm, these two "rides" with their mystical symbols, were the vehicles that allowed her to get back down to Earth.

Most adventure stories, such as J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, focus primarily on the outgoing arm of the narrative arc. The return is almost a coda. Even in science fiction films such as *Star Wars* or *Star Trek*, the story usually starts with a call to leave home and go off on an adventure, only to return back home at the end, even if "home" is an itinerant Starship Enterprise. *Gravity* begins with the hero floating out in space. There's no take off or journey out, there is only the desperate struggle to get back, the return arm of the traditional arc.

Gravity is a Disaster Movie, in the venerable tradition of the 1974 classic *The Towering Inferno*. It is about the indomitable human will to survive, about courage and perseverance against

the odds, inspiring us to keep calm and carry on, even in the jaws of death. But it also has another, subtler, subtext.

The final scene (spoiler alert!) where the hero Ryan Stone drags herself onto the sandy shore and joyfully scoops up a handful of wet sand, is the final revelatory moment of the film, which explains the film's title, gravity not just in the literal sense, but in the metaphorical sense, "spiritually" coming back down to Earth after being lost in "psychological" space. Until that moment, partly because of grief over her dead child, Stone hadn't fully embraced life. Her soul hadn't fully incarnated. It takes a near death experience (NDE) for her to wake up to the miracle of life, with Friedrich Nietzsche "saying yes to life, even in its strangest and hardest problems." (Ecce Homo) It is an initiation, a baptism, a resurrection.

Like a stone, Dr Stone is as susceptible to gravity as everything else, even the temple in Jerusalem:

"As for these things which ye behold, the days will come, in the which there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down."

(Luke 21:6)

As with all adventure stories, spiritual adventures commonly focus on the outgoing journey, as in John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* or Thomas Malory's knights of the Round Table and their quest for the Holy Grail. After all, swash-buckling adventures in exotic locations are more fun. This is why in psychedelic circles there is so much emphasis on the exotic psychedelia and colourful trip reports, the weird places and even weirder entities. The return journey is glossed over as

uninteresting, a mere "come down", accompanied by the inevitable anxiety that maybe this time you won't come back in one piece.

"Grounding" is usually understood as the process of integrating psychological material arising from a psychedelic experience. Important as this is, there is a more fundamental grounding. There is nothing quite like the relief of coming back down to earth, to sky and trees and water after an exhausting night travelling through other dimensions on ayahuasca. How wondrous is the warmth of the sun on your face. How delicious the taste of pineapple! What a miracle is every blade of grass!

Hakuin Ekaku (1685-1768) famously wrote, "This very land is the Pure Land. This very body is the body of Buddha". Ultimately, the point of working with plant medicine is not to "get high" or even to "get healed" or "get wise", but to find out who you really are and where you truly belong, not out there on the perimeter of psychic space, but here on this beautiful planet, feeling the cool earth under your bare feet and the wind on your bare legs, like Dr Ryan Stone in *Gravity*.

Interstellar Love

In the 2014 film *Interstellar*, the bond of love between a father and daughter separated in space and time is powerful

enough to bring them back together and in doing so, to save the world. The only thing that can traverse interstellar space and connect the fallen, dying Earth and the new life-sustaining planet discovered in a galaxy far, far away, is love.

With hindsight, it almost seems as though the aged Professor John Brand (Michael Cain) chose the hero Joseph Cooper (Matthew McConaughey) for the mission not because of his piloting skills but because his love for his daughter Murphy (Mackenzie Foy and Ellen Burstyn as the young and older "Murph") provided the personal motivation to succeed. But beyond this, there is a more esoteric idea about the special line of communication between two people who are intimately connected through love.

This special connection is borne out by telephone telepathy. How is it that so many people report knowing who is on the other end of the line when the phone rings, or even thinking about the person calling just before it rings? Rupert Sheldrake has carried out carefully designed experiments to test this strange phenomenon scientifically. One important finding is that the incidence of so-called telephone telepathy is far higher between people who are intimately connected, that is, between romantic partners and family members.

Is *Interstellar* a Christian allegory? There are certainly some interesting parallels, especially the central theme of a special unbroken bond and line of communication between a parent and child across a cosmic chasm connecting two different realms. In the film, this situation was caused by an environmental crisis. In the Bible, it was prompted by a spiritual crisis.

The last books of the Jewish Bible, the books of the prophets, are an extended lamentation at the inability of the Jewish people to remain faithful to the covenant established between them and their God JHWH. Why were they so faithless, lukewarm, rebellious and sinful? Why did they keep falling away from their calling to be the people of God? The despairing frustration of the prophets comes through loud and clear.

How does the New Testament attempt to solve the problem of this apparent disconnect between God and His people? By creating a bond of familial love. Jesus refers to God as his father and to himself as the son. Just as in *Interstellar*, parent and child are separated across an impossibly large physical and metaphysical gulf. In both stories, the separation is not a total break, however. It is something like quantum entanglement, where two particles remain connected even when they end up at opposite ends of the universe.

In Christianity, the Father and the Son are connected by a bond of love (in Trinitarian terms, this love is the Holy Spirit). When the Son returns to the Father after his death and resurrection, this is spatially imagined as a return to heaven, the spiritual abode of God. Son and Father are reunited, not unlike the return of the Prodigal Son in Jesus' parable (Luke 15: 11-31), and the Son takes his seat at the right hand of the Father.

The followers of Jesus had developed a bond of love with him on earth. He was their spiritual master, but also a brother and a friend. Love was the condition of discipleship: "You cannot be my disciple, unless you love me more than you love your father and mother, your wife and children, and your

brothers and sisters. You cannot come with me unless you love me more than you love your own life". (Luke 14:26 CEV)

Saint Paul is emphatic about this unbreakable bond of love:

"For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

(Romans 8: 38-39)

Now that Christ was ascended to heaven, the original bond of love between God and the world through the Son remained intact, except that now it was established between Christ and his followers across the chasm of heaven and earth, through this more intimately personal and deeply human relationship with him.

The Christian solution to the problem of human indifference to the non-human (albeit anthropomorphised) transcendent God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob was to humanise and personalise the connection through a bond of familial love in two directions: first the bond between Father and Son, then the bond between the Son and his followers and disciples, which are in a sense his spiritual children, adopted as the children of God. The key to this arrangement is the dual nature of Jesus as both fully divine and fully human. Only thus can he act as a bridge between heaven and earth.

The Christian solution is love. When the lawyer asked Jesus what was the greatest commandment in the law, he replied:

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

(Matthew 22: 36-40)

This is not an original saying. Jesus was quoting scripture. The Christian innovation, however, is in the mediation of Christ himself, which makes it psychologically easier to love God by drawing on a personal, intimate, human love. It is after all easier to love a person than an abstraction.

As the anonymous author of *The Cloud of Unknowing* put it, "He may well be loved, but not thought. By love may He be gotten and holden; but by thought never."

But isn't this all a bit human-all-too-human? Don't you lose the pristine idea of an invisible, transcendent God? Aren't you in danger of falling into a kind of idolatry? And what about the non-human world of Nature? All this love talk is all very well, but doesn't exclusive focus on the human-divine love of the Son of God in heaven mean that we neglect our love of the natural world here on earth, perhaps even creating the environmental crisis we're now facing as a consequence?

Christianity is a Love Religion but it's not a Nature Religion. Compared to the traditional indigenous shamanic religions of the world, it seems suspiciously detached from the natural world, even condescending and dismissive. Genesis 1:26 is often cited by environmentalists who blame the mass extinction of species and careless destruction of their natural

habitats on Christianity, since God seemingly gives us free licence to do whatever we want with all life on Earth:

"And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth."

This is debatable and continues to be debated, but there is clearly some truth to it. Over the centuries, we have developed an attitude of power and dominion over Nature, which has had some disastrous consequences, especially since the advent and rapid development of science and technology and their aggressive application in the service of purely human interests since the seventeenth century. All this was at least in part facilitated by this passage in Genesis and the attitude of superiority over Nature it engendered.

Is there a way of reading the Christian story in a more environmentally friendly way? Is there a way of including the non-human natural world in our circle of care and love? Not just as an afterthought but as an integral part of our religious commitment?

One way to do this is to notice a seemingly universal religious impulse that Christianity shares with its own religious parents, Judaism and Greek Paganism, as well as with all traditional indigenous religions, ancestor worship. In the Bible, this is most clearly seen in the genealogy passages, the "begats". What has this got to do with environmentalism? Bear with me!

The New Testament begins with "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham." (Matthew 1:1) beginning with Abraham. In the gospel according to Luke (Luke 3: 23-28), the genealogy is recounted in the opposite direction, starting with Jesus and working backwards: "Jesus, when he began his ministry, was about thirty years of age, being the son (as was supposed) of Joseph, the son of Heli, the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, the son of Melchi, the son of Jannai, the son of Joseph," etc. etc. until we arrive at "the son of Enos, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God."

Jesus' father was Joseph. Joseph's father was Heli. His ancestors stretch back all the way to "the first parents", Adam and Eve, and through them back to their father, God. The same is obviously true of all of us. If we trace our evolutionary lineage back, we are all descended from the same common ancestor we share with the chimps. If we keep going back, we eventually arrive back at the ultimate first cause where the backwards regress stops and on which the whole sequence rests, in other words, God.

When Jesus says that he is the Son of God, he is skipping all the generations of his ancestors back to the first father of this patriarchal lineage. He is ultimately "the son of Adam, the son of God."

This is where we hit the root of the problem in the family tree (pun intended). In the Judeo-Christian genealogy, we are descended from Adam and Eve, who were created by God along with the rest of the natural world. He created the plants and trees on the third day, the animals on the fifth day, and mankind on the sixth day. Our ancestors stretch back to Adam,

who was directly created by God in parallel to all other life on Earth. So the animals and plants are not really ancestors.

For the indigenous tribes of the Amazon basin, as well as for almost all First Peoples, ancestors also include animals and even plants. Our modern understanding of evolution confirms that this is literally true. Whether or not we accept a Creator at the beginning of the whole series, with the origin of life on Earth, or at least at the Big Bang, we now know that our ancestral lineage stretches far back beyond the human.

If the six days of Creation described so beautifully in Genesis are read as a sequential "book of the generation of Creation" in the manner of the genealogical "begats" of the Old and New Testaments, then we can also consider the animals and plants as our ancestors, as well as the herb, the vine, the cactus and the mushroom. As Paul Stamets says, human beings are essentially fungal in their basic cellular composition.

The interstellar bond of love connecting God and mankind includes all of space and time, passing from us via our ancestors from father to father back through our own species, genus, family, order, class, phylum and kingdom all the way to "Our Father in heaven". Love is the way, the truth and the life, connecting us all and engendering an attitude of care and reverence for all things. If we truly understand and embody this, maybe we won't end up in the desperate environmental straits that the people of the near future in the film *Interstellar* find themselves in.

On the other hand, our connection to the transcendent ground of Being is here and now. When Jesus says "before

Abraham was, I am" (John 8:58) he is pointing to this identity beyond time and space. The great I AM is the name that God gives himself in Exodus: "And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you." (Exodus 3:14).

Therefore Jesus is the Son of God not through ancestry in linear time on the horizontal plane of existence, but vertically, through the generative womb of the eternal present. This is what it means to be born of the spirit and not of the flesh. With this direct connection, which folds time and space together like a wormhole, the human and the divine are one. But this unity also includes the whole of Creation:

"As earth is my witness. Seeing this morning star, all things and I awaken together."

(Gautama Buddha)

Hollywood Love Confusion

A young man at the last Psychedelics and Faith Discussion Group recommended the film *Everything Everywhere All At Once*, citing it as a psychedelic masterpiece, so I duly took my partner and one of my children to the local cinema to watch it. It was very entertaining and I thoroughly enjoyed it. However, it stands as another cinematic monument to Hollywood Love Confusion.

The basic story arc is classic Hollywood: an exciting but confusing struggle against a misguided nihilistic teenage villain, including a healthy dose of hot pursuit and cool fighting. In the end, however, the only way to defeat the villain is not by fighting, but by loving. Love, somewhat predictably, wins the day.

The love that defeats cynicism is the protagonist's rediscovered love for her daughter (the nihilist) and her husband, and compassion for everyone else. In terms of *The Four Loves* (C.S. Lewis), this is basically the loves *storge*, *filia* and *agape*.

Filia mean friendship. Storge is usually translated as affection - the "pipe and slippers" type of familial love, domestic, homely, comforting. Toward the end of the film, the husband produces a kind of paean to storge, presenting his kindness and apparent weakness as a kind of strength, his way of "fighting" the dark forces of nihilism.

Agape can by translated as unconditional love or compassion, but as C.S. Lewis makes clear in is book, this is not a human love, but the love that flows down from God, the unconditional divine love that rains on the just and the unjust. In his words, it is "the love of God".

However, for a secular people, there is no such thing as God. Ergo, there is no such thing as the love of God. In a godless multiverse where "nothing matters" because "everything is possible", the only way of not falling into the black hole of cynicism and despair (a black bagel in this case) is human love - the kindness-affection of storge and a kind of human version of agape.

This is where the Hollywood Love Confusion kicks in. The Hollywood version of agape is a kind of unconditional love, yes, but one understood on a human level as licentiousness. In other words, everyone should be given licence to satisfy their desires and do what they want. This inevitably ends up being all about the third of the four loves, namely, *eros*, or sexual love. And it inevitably ends up being about letting everyone satisfy their erotic drives however they like.

Hence the BDSM (bondage and discipline, dominance and submission, sadism and masochism) and the LGBTQ+ (lesbian, bisexual, gay, transsexual, queer, etc.). Unconditional love ends up meaning little more than "let the kids have their fun". Through the secular prism, agape becomes something like hyper liberalism - summed up as "anything goes" - which is the optimistic complement of the pessimistic secular belief that "nothing matters".

At the end of the film, the previously hostile and violent characters hell-bent on destroying the protagonist are, through the magical fulfillment of their personal, idiosyncratic erotic proclivities, as she showers them with her new-found agape, completely neutralized as they lie around sucking, licking and being spanked, each in his, her or their own private reverie.

Is this what Saint Augustine meant when he said "love and do what you will"? Was he a hyper liberal? Obviously not. The key difference is this: Augustine is talking about spiritual agape, the love of God, not the human idea of it. The human idea is purely logical - unconditional love should logically imply total permissive acceptance - "anything goes". However,

spiritual agape is a living force, energy, power, not just a mental idea or attitude.

If you are filled with love of God, you are filled with the Holy Spirit, which is to say, you are filled with holy love-energy. What Augustine is saying is that if you are filled with holy love-energy, whatever you do will be good, so there's no need to worry about working out what you should or shouldn't do or why you should or shouldn't do it. Agape, the love of God, will flow through you so that you do the right thing.

Which doesn't mean that you will do anything or that anything goes. You will do those things which the holy love-energy moves you to do. In other words, the "do what you will" part doesn't mean "do what you want", it means "act freely in accordance with the dictates of your will when your will is perfectly aligned with the will of God in the fullness of His love".

The redeeming love that the film (and secular humanism) offers to the problem of teenage nihilism is the unconditional love of a mother for her daughter. However, the natural love of a parent for a child (*storge*) is not really unconditional unless it is underwritten by the supernatural love of God (*agape*). There are always strings attached.

Equally, the rational answer that the film (and secular humanism) gives to the problem of teenage nihilism, "we must cherish those rare moments that actually make sense", just like the humanist sop, "you must make your own meaning", has no foundation without the possibility of non-contingent truth. Accidental sense in a nonsensical multiverse and arbitrary meaning in a meaningless one is too close to nihilism to stop

at least half the teenage Joys from diving straight into the black bagel.

Either you believe in love or you believe in evolutionary adaptations, the survival advantages of which are to nurture helpless infants (*storge*), to bond in tribal groups in order to gain a competitive edge over other groups (*philia*) and to reproduce (*eros*). Either you believe in "natural" love or you believe in "supernatural" love (*agape*). If you believe in the latter, not only do you have a romantic sensibility, you also have a religious one.

Belief in love is the gateway drug to belief in truth, belief in goodness, belief in beauty and ultimately belief in God. God is love. This is what will set you free, not the half-arsed stoicism and sentimentalism of secular humanism or the confused love of Hollywood.

Love in Babylon

In *The Four Loves*, C.S. Lewis explores the different manifestations of four distinct forms of love: *storge* (affection), *philia* (friendship), *eros* (sexual/romantic love) and *agape* (charity). He makes the point that any one of the first three forms of love become corrupted and distorted if divorced from the fourth form, *agape*, which he calls "the love of God". It seems that without this mysterious love of God, we can't

help making idols of one or several of the other loves, and that never ends well:

"The claim to divinity which our loves so easily make can be refuted [...] The loves prove that they are unworthy to take the place of God by the fact that they cannot even remain themselves and do what they promise to do without God's help."

This is readily seen if we relate the first three loves to the different worlds of the Wheel of Babylon. *Storge* is associated with Muggle World, being the love of comfort and domesticity, family and familiarity. *Filia* is associated with Muppet World, in the sense that it creates a separate clique or elitist bubble which can foster collective delusions in relation to the rest of society. *Eros* is associated with Diva World, in the way in which it builds exquisite pleasure palaces for its blessed lovers.

To reiterate, C.S. Lewis is not saying that there is anything inherently wrong with *storge*, *philia* or *eros*. In fact, human beings cannot live happy and fulfilled lives without them. His point is, rather, that they can become distorted and inflated to the exclusion of the transcendent Source of Love and of each other. As soon as they "take the place of God", they begin to sour and go bad.

When *storge* goes bad, the cosy, comfortable and familiar Muggle World degenerates to the point where it becomes indistinguishable from Addict World. Those loved things that habitually bring comfort, whether substances like coffee or alcohol, behaviours like shopping, socialising or watching television, change from Muggle needs to Addict needs. We

find ourselves caught in an ever-tightening spiral of urgency and desperation.

When *philia* sours, the special bonds of friendship, cameraderie and solidarity turn into bonds of slavery, enmity and paranoia. Muppets in arms become Victims both of the (real or perceived) persecution of outsiders, and of each other. A cult mentality develops, where all sorts of abuses can flourish in an atmosphere of mistrust and suspicion. Think of Stalin's inner circle, or Osho's.

Finally, when *eros* goes rotten, the delirious passions of sexual and romantic feelings quickly flip over into intense rage, jealousy and hatred. Divas in their Diva Heaven become Demons in Hell, ever discovering new and ingenious ways to torture each other.

Without *agape*, that endlessly self-giving fount of charity and eternal source of Light and Love, *storge*, *philia* and *eros* inevitably flounder on the rocks of selfishness and narcissism, making Addicts out of Muggles, Victims out of Muppets and Demons out of Divas, endlessly turning the Wheel of Babylon, until we finally find the courage to step off into the infinite ocean that is the love of God.

Habits of Love

1

Kenosis ("self-emptying") is about letting go of bad habits. *Pistis* ("faithful practice") is about establishing good habits. *Gnosis* ("spiritual vision") is about seeing deeply into the heart of what is good and bad.

2

Kenosis is as much about renunciation as it is about surrender; *pistis* is as much about orthopraxy (right action) as it is about orthodoxy (right belief); *gnosis* is as much about discernment as it is about knowledge. The deeper the practice of *gnosis-pistis-kenosis*, the higher the forms of the Good. This ascending spiral can be understood as *noesis*.

3

Bad habits are associated with the six realms on the Wheel of Babylon: narcissism and pride (Divas); ideological possession (Muppets); conventional mediocrity (Muggles); victim mentality (Victims); addictive behaviours (Addicts); hatred and vengefulness (Demons). The ultimate goal of spiritual practice is freedom from Babylon:

"Babylon dropped" is the kenotic state of no-*kleshas* and no-*sins*.

4

We can express this in the language of love: God is love and God is everything. All things therefore subsist in love, including Babylon. However, the love that fuels Babylon is divorced from *agape*, the divine source of love, through the falling away occasioned by the original sin of Pride. The love that fuels Babylon is limited, conditional, human love:

storge (familial affection), *eros* (sexuality) and *philia* (friendship), that is, *storge* without *agape*; *eros* without *agape*; *philia* without *agape*.

5

These three dissociated loves create the Wheel of Babylon: *storge* without *agape* produces Muggles and Victims; *eros* without *agape* produces Addicts and Demons; *philia* without *agape* produces Divas and Muppets. With this understanding, we can see the need for *noesis* (the cycle of *kenosis-gnosis-pistis*) in our return from our spiritual exile in Babylon: *kenosis* being the renunciation of all limited, human forms of love, *gnosis* direct contact with the divine source of love and reception of the divine gift, and *pistis* the suffusing of *storge*, *eros* and *philia* with *agape*.

6

Noesis is the progressive spiritualisation of human love through the continual influx of divine love in the upward spiral of *kenosis-gnosis-pistis*. In the imagery of John the Divine and John of the Cross, the deadening and dehumanising love of the Whore of Babylon is transformed by the love of God into a resurrected life, a living flame of love.

Religious discipline and discipleship therefore necessarily involves *kenosis*, renunciation of creature comforts (*storge*), sexual gratification (*eros*) and social chitchat (*philia*) -

"If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple."

(Luke 14:26)

- until he learns to bear the beams of love in *gnosis* and to integrate it into his life in *pistis*. *Noesis* is both salvific and redemptive – it creates a New Heaven and a New Earth.

Love and Will

A loving person will participate in and enjoy, give and receive, love in the form of *storge*, *philia* and *eros*, that is, affection, friendship and romantic love.

A moral person will act according to the moral demands of *care vs harm*, *fairness vs cheating*, *authority vs subversion*, *loyalty vs betrayal*, *sanctity vs desecration* and *liberty vs oppression*.

A moral, loving person, particularly one sensitive to the vital energy and force of love and will, would be perfectly justified in considering themselves "spiritual" as a token of their moral and loving nature. In a census, if they happen not to have any determinate religious faith, they would probably tick the box marked SBNR, that is, spiritual but not religious.

But what is "religious" exactly? According to non-religious people, a religious person is someone who assents to and abides by the particular set of predetermined rules and propositions established by some or other organised religion, who joins in their rituals and festivals and who perhaps engages in some of the recommended spiritual practices.

This is how it looks from the outside. For some people, how it looks is basically how it is.

However, a genuinely religious person, one with a living faith, which is to say, one who lives, moves, and has their being in the presence of the numinous and the holy, is something else besides.

A spiritual but not religious person, whatever their purported spiritual beliefs, will value human love and will (including love and will directed towards the non-human). The love of plants and animals, and of nature in general, is not just a casual aside, of course. It is precisely this love and sense of moral obligation which prompts SBNRs to consider themselves "spiritual" in the first place, since it transcends the merely human. Love of the natural world distinguishes them from the "un-spiritual" masses, who only seem to care for themselves and other humans like them.

Consequently, the implicit spirituality of SBNRs will in most cases find its explicit expression in some form of nature religion, whether neo-pagan, animistic, pan-indigenous, or New Age.

This is not something that can or should be sneered at or taken lightly. It provides a genuine spiritual core of meaning, purpose, kindness, love, compassion and good will towards all sentient beings, itself clearly a powerful force for good in the world.

But it is not religious. A religious person is oriented not towards human love and will, but towards divine love and will, love of God and obedience to God.

As C.S. Lewis argued (and as I argued above), there is a love above and beyond *storge*, *philia* and *eros*. This is the love of God, *agape*. Similarly, there is a moral foundation above and beyond the six described by Jonathan Haidt (in *The Righteous Mind*). This is *obedience vs rebellion*.

The Bible, for example, can be read as one long, sustained meditation, over many centuries, on the activity of the love of God on a portion of humanity and of that portion of humanity's obedience vs rebellion against it. The alignment of human love and will to the divine love and will are the sole or primary focus of the religious, who therefore says, with the Shema Yisrael, "love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your being, and all your might", and with the Pater Noster, "Thy will be done".

The three human loves and the six moral foundations listed above are, for the religious, contained within the one

transcendent rule of the love of God and obedience to God. Human love and will are not ignored or discarded, but taken up in a holy embrace.

Moral, loving people, spiritual, sensitive, intelligent, educated though they may be, cannot understand this. It takes faith. And it seems that people either have it or they don't.

Which is why it is much easier to answer negatively to the question, "are you religious?" than to the question, "are you spiritual?" Ideological reasons aside (apart from militant atheists and scientific materialists basically) everyone likes to think of themselves as spiritual to some degree. Everyone feels the pull of love and good will. But everyone also knows, deep down, that the mysterious category of *the holy* is the exclusive preserve of *religious* experience. The love of God and the will of God are alien concepts to the non-religious, even distasteful ones. So it's easy to say "no".

The leap of faith is a leap too far for most people, especially for modern, post-Enlightenment, post-Christian people, even if they do encounter the numinous, in powerful psychedelic experiences for example. But it has ever been thus:

"And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed, after that Paul had spoken one word, Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers,

Saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive:

For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they

should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them."

(Acts 28: 25-27)

Unconditional Love

That which makes people shed tears in therapy or on psychedelics is the realization that they weren't loved or that they didn't love enough. The unloved child neglected by messed up parents is flooded by waves of self-compassion. The unloved parent neglected by a messed up child is sent waves of love, grief and sorrow. "I love you, I'm sorry, Please forgive me, Thank you."

It may be a present or past romantic partner, an ex or a spouse, or a friend, or an enemy. "I love you, I'm sorry, Please forgive me, Thank you."

The only love that truly heals the human heart is the love that forgives, that is, unconditional love. Parental love is unconditional. It is more than *storge*, affection, *philia*, friendship, or *eros*, erotic love. It is *agape*, unconditional love, love that rains on the just and the unjust. It is an expression of the universal love that binds the universe, in religious language, the love of God.

An earthly father should channel the unconditional love of our heavenly Father. As should an earthly mother of course. (Please don't get hung up on gender issues - I won't go into that here). But the love of a good father (and mother) is paradoxically both conditional and unconditional. Otherwise there would be no guidance and no correction. Sometimes tough love is what is called for.

In any case, when our connection to the source of all love, conditional and unconditional, at the apex of the soul, where the human meets the divine, is broken, things fall apart. This is the Fall, when we are banished from the Garden of Delight, when Babylon system rushes in to enlist the lost, loveless souls into its army of producers and consumers of sugar water.

Babylon system is and always has been run and maintained by an army of addicts, hungry ghosts who can never satisfy their craving for love, because they are looking in all the wrong places. But a broken and contrite heart God will not despise. That's how the light gets in.

Antifragility

Nassim Nicholas Taleb opens his acclaimed book *Antifragile: Things That Gain From Disorder* with the following:

"Some things benefit from shocks; they thrive and grow when exposed to volatility, randomness, disorder, and

stressors and love adventure, risk, and uncertainty. Yet, in spite of the ubiquity of the phenomenon, there is no word for the exact opposite of fragile. Let us call it antifragile. Antifragility is beyond resilience or robustness. The resilient resists shocks and stays the same; the antifragile gets better."

Certain stressors make a system stronger rather than weaker. If your bones and muscles aren't put under a certain amount of stress, for example, they will grow brittle and waste away. The same appears to be true of the mind. *The Coddling of the American Mind: How Good Intentions and Bad Ideas Are Setting Up a Generation for Failure* by Greg Lukianoff and Jonathan Haidt explores how the fashion for "safe spaces" and "trigger warnings" in liberal American culture is having a detrimental effect on people's mental health, particularly among young people, making them more rather than less psychologically fragile.

What's the best treatment for somebody suffering from chronic depression or anxiety? Should we try to remove all potential shocks to the system and cover them in metaphorical cotton wool? Or should we help them to gradually face increasingly challenging situations, as we commonly do in Exposure Therapy for the treatment of phobias? King Sudhdhodhana and Queen Maha Maya attempted to protect their son Gautama Buddha from the harsh realities of the world by making sure he never left the precincts of the royal palace. It was only when he stole out of the palace in the dead of night and saw the reality of old age, sickness and death with his own eyes that he could begin his journey to spiritual enlightenment.

Psychedelic therapy is no walk in the park, royal or otherwise. Far from being an escapist flight from the dark existential reality of life, it puts you in profound relation with it. There are periods of enjoyment, bliss and fun, but there are also extremely difficult and painful periods of chaos and turbulence, grief and horror. To indulge in a couple of well-worn clichés, when it comes to plant medicines, "the only way out is through" and "what doesn't kill you makes you stronger".

The almost unbearable intensity of psychedelic therapy makes it a true hero's journey that calls forth the best we have. You could say it is profoundly "character building". However, it works best when two key elements are in place: a deep sense of wonder and a deep trust in our innate antifragility.

The Interests of Babylon

It is in the interests of Babylon to produce messed up people because they are easier to manipulate and because they make voracious consumers.

The most efficient way to produce messed up people is to undermine the family unit, which is most efficiently done by undermining the authority of the parents, which is most efficiently done by undermining trust and respect.

The children will develop a host of mental health problems, which the parents will struggle to cope with, and which a variety of professional state-sanctioned educational, therapeutic and psychiatric bodies will be called upon to help with, in order to save them from themselves.

As they grow up, they will become increasingly aligned with and emotionally dependent on the state, in the guise of a rolling platoon of professional parental figures. They will also depend on the state to protect them against the hostility of people who don't accept their neurodiverse state-sanctioned condition.

When they have children of their own, they will be even more likely to cede parental control to the wise and professional state-sanctioned educational, therapeutic and psychiatric bodies than their parents were.

Eventually, after several generations, once the loss of authority of parents is complete, children will be given directly into the professional care of the state, much as they are in Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*.

All their emotional and psychological needs will be met through consumption of goods and services, in other words, shopping, entertainment, dating agencies, social media, medication and therapy. However, their needs will never be fully met, because this endless consumerism is a poor substitute for genuine human love.

And so it goes...

Cynical Clowns and Fearful Bores

Two classic subpersonalities that sabotage or attempt to sabotage spiritual progress in spiritual communities are associated with the Addict and Victim archetypes on The Wheel of Babylon. The first, usually manifesting in an addictive personality, is the *Cynical Clown*, who uses humour to undercut and undermine. This is the joker in the pack, the court jester, whose purported aim is to puncture any signs of puffed-up ego or inflated narcissism.

William Shakespeare makes great use of this archetype, from Feste the fool in *Twelfth Night* to Falstaff in *Henry IV*. It seems that he was particularly sensitive to arrogance and hypocrisy and delighted in using his comic characters to pull pretentious Divas from their self-made pedestals. Which is a fine and wondrous thing. The world will always be in need of good satire.

However, although everyone should have a fool to keep their Diva ego in check (as did the medieval kings of England) he should, like Feste, be "wise enough to play the fool". He should know when to jest, and when to keep silent; and he should be able to tell the difference between a Sir Andrew Aguecheek and a Count Orsino.

Spiritual circles are rife with more or less thinly disguised spiritual narcissists in serious need of a Cynical Clown to bring them down a peg or two. However, the cynicism can get out of hand, finding more and more targets, eventually undermining

the whole enterprise. Sometimes, in the case of true cynics, this is the conscious or unconscious intention from the start, but more often than not it is a gradual development, a kind of *deformación profesional*. Truly bitter, resentful cynics, like envious Iago and inexplicable Judas (Satan entered into him), are not just naughty Addicts, but treacherous Demons.

Why the Cynical Clown should be associated with the Addict is an interesting question. It probably has something to do with the displacement and projection of hedonic motivations (usually some variation of sex, drugs and rock and roll) onto others as a defense mechanism. "Ah yes, I see what you're up to! (nudge nudge, wink wink)". It simultaneously acts in two directions: exposing the hypocrisy of the holier than thou in order to prevent hidden bad behaviour, but also encouraging open bad behaviour (such as lewdness and drunkenness). Sir Toby Belch is a good example.

Another, more common, frequenter of spiritual circles are the *Fearful Bores*. They also have a destabilising effect, but in a diametrically opposed way - instead of witty, cutting jokes, they engage in rambling, confessional anecdotes. Instead of encouraging everyone to be silly, they encourage everyone to be serious, seizing any opportunity to turn a social situation into an earnest group therapy session.

It's not hard to see how this subpersonality is associated with the Victim. There is, of course, the comfort of receiving understanding and sympathy, and there is also the added comfort of giving it, once you've succeeded in drawing out somebody else's confession of victimhood. There is a peculiar bonding that takes place, particularly among women (in my

experience - sorry!) over shared trouble, misfortune and mistreatment, a kind of solidarity of the oppressed.

Men do it too of course. But they tend to intellectualise more, spinning out their misery in seemingly endless trains of thought and levels of analysis. Of course it is vitally important that people feel able to talk openly and freely and feel comfortable enough to share their emotional and psychological difficulties and insights in a safe and welcoming environment. However, as with the Cynical Clown, it can get out of hand and end up derailing the spiritual progress of the community as a whole.

Why are silent retreats so powerful? Because they forcibly put a muzzle on the Divas, Demons, Victims, Addicts, Muppets and Muggles. And they muzzle the Cynical Clowns and Fearful Bores. Thus they clear a space for something else to emerge, something mysterious, something miraculous.

There will always be Victims and Addicts in spiritual circles. It's what drives them to seek help. There will always be Divas, especially among the spiritual leaders. There will occasionally be a Demon or two. And there will always be Muggles and Muppets. What ultimately causes the Cynical Clown and Fearful Bore subpersonalities to raise their heads, however, is the underlying nihilistic belief that this is all there is, that we are inescapably stuck on The Wheel of Babylon, and that to pretend otherwise is a lie. Ye of little faith!

Sometimes we need to have a laugh and take the piss. Sometimes we need to unburden ourselves in a heart to heart. But if a spiritual community is to thrive, we need, as much as

humanly possible, to keep our *Cynical Clowns* and *Fearful Bores* in check and keep the faith.

Narcissism

Narcissism is basically excessive self-love. It manifests itself in abusive and fawning, selfish and manipulative, behaviours. Narcissists are secretly or openly vain and greedy, conceited and self-obsessed. They seek status and adoration, even special status and special adoration. A narcissist believes that he is a Very Important Person and wants to be recognised as such, by his partner, friends and family, and by the world at large.

Everybody is a bit of a narcissist, a bit of a Diva. And everyone is also a bit of a Muggle, Muppet, Victim, Addict and Demon. It's only when one of these fine fellows blows up out of all proportion that we recognise it as a "problem". Then we can use our DSM to diagnose the appropriate personality disorder: narcissistic (Divas); borderline (Muppets); obsessive-compulsive (Muggles and Addicts); dependent (Victims) and sadistic (Demons). See *Personality Disorders* (chapter 8 of part 2 of my book, *The Confessions of a Psychedelic Christian*).

Post-Freudian received wisdom has it that the basic problem at the root of all our mental dis-ease is "repression". Freud gives a cultural-historical account of this problem in his

bestseller *Civilization and Its Discontents*, whose title speaks for itself (basically we are unhappy because in order to be civilized we have had to repress our natural narcissistic impulses to get along).

The solution and cure, as it has been taken up in popular culture and popular consciousness is simple: "express yourself!" Watch pretty much any pop music video and you will see this message coming through loud and clear, often accompanied by an impressive amount of posing and prancing about. Now, with the advent of social media, not just pop stars, but anyone and everyone can pose and prance to their heart's content.

The Mary Whitehouses of this world look on in horror. "Repress yourself!" they scream. And so it goes. Muggles think Divas are terrible show-offs and Divas think Muggles are terrible bores. The real difference is that Divas are open narcissists busily expressing themselves, whereas Muggles are secret narcissists busily repressing themselves.

Freud was famously critical of religion, which he sneeringly dismisses as a superstitious relic of pre-scientific ignorance in his other massive bestseller, *The Future of an Illusion*. For him, as for Nietzsche, religion amounts to little more than the worship of repression. It is fundamentally anti-life, anti-freedom, anti-sex, anti-self-expression, anti-will-to-power. Religious people are basically pale, emaciated, pathetic killjoys.

Modern people, liberated from the shackles of religion, are free to be themselves and to express themselves however they like. They can wear whatever clothes they like, listen to whatever music they like, have sex with whomever they like,

snort whatever they like. As long as they don't break the law (or get caught) nobody can tell them what to do. Not even their mum. Why? Because there is no God, so no one has authority to judge them in his name. Whoever judges them does it from their own subjective, relative, repressed and unenlightened point of view.

As long as God is seen as a tyrannical, repressive father, as William Blake's *Nobodaddy*, I feel completely justified in rebelling against him. Like Lucifer, I want my own light to shine. I want to shine like the stars. I want to break free. God knows, I want to break free.

The choice is clear: express yourself or repress yourself. Be someone or be a nobody. Being a nobody obviously sucks and religion is obviously all about being humble and being a nobody, so away with religion! If you think I'm joking, just look at what it says in the Bible. You can't get clearer than this, for example:

"Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."

(Matthew 16:24)

But then again, what if there is a third possibility? What if "deny thyself" does not just mean "repress thyself"? Jesus is certainly a model of self-denial. He certainly took up his cross. But what does that even mean? What does the crucifix mean? That bizarre and uncomfortable image of a dying man hanging on a cross? How is that something to emulate? How can we

follow that? Is it really just the sick worship of an anti-life masochistic death instinct?

The secret meaning of the crucifix struck me like a ray of sudden sunlight while sitting quietly in a side chapel of the Basilica of Santa Maria Novella in Florence. In fact the sun did suddenly strike the crucifix on the altar, lighting up the rays of the halo behind Christ's head. His head was bowed, almost as if he were moving it out of the way of the resplendent golden halo behind it, which, catching the light of the sun through the window, itself shone like the sun.

Because he emptied himself of self (*kenosis*) Jesus made room for something else. Something else shone through him. Call it the Holy Spirit or God or the Son of God, he got out of the way. He got his head out of the way and he got his ego out of the way. And he shone with the universal light of the sun beyond the light of any individual candle.

Saint Paul also saw the light, "the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world" (John 1:9) and understood that he was not that light, and that the more he denied himself, the more it shone through him:

"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me."

(Galatians 2:20)

There are other religions apart from Christianity, of course. There are the three main Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Christianity, Islam) and the three main Eastern religions (Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism). But they *all* teach self-denial and self-transcendence. The promise is that there is a way

beyond both expression and repression where life flows through us, without any narcissistic attempt to claim it or hold onto it for ourselves. The same is true for the psychedelic experience. You must get out of the way and "make room for the mushrooms".

This is the true religious instinct. Instead of being full of ourselves, we become a channel or instrument of peace, beyond the stress and strain of narcissistic self-concern, as Saint Francis of Assisi beautifully expresses it in his famous prayer:

> Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.
> Where there is hatred, let me bring love.
> Where there is offence, let me bring pardon.
> Where there is discord, let me bring union.
> Where there is error, let me bring truth.
> Where there is doubt, let me bring faith.
> Where there is despair, let me bring hope.
> Where there is darkness, let me bring your light.
> Where there is sadness, let me bring joy.
> O Master, let me not seek as much
> to be consoled as to console,
> to be understood as to understand,
> to be loved as to love,
> for it is in giving that one receives,
> it is in self-forgetting that one finds,
> it is in pardoning that one is pardoned,
> it is in dying that one is raised to eternal life.

Steppenwolf Syndrome

When you've had enough of Babylon, and you're heartily sick of all the Muggles, Muppets and Divas clamoring for your attention, it's easy to get despondent, cynical and downright grumpy. Suddenly you're not interested in all the news and gossip, the debates and controversies, the posturing and the posing. You feel like a dead tree, like burnt ashes. You feel dead to the world.

I call this "Steppenwolf Syndrome". If you've read Hermann Hesse's semi-autobiographical novel, you'll know what I mean. Steppenwolf is a loner in the romantic Nietzschean tradition. He sees through the artificiality, inauthenticity and pettiness of bourgeois culture and retreats into himself, living the life of a lone "wolf of the steppes" whilst walking the streets of Basel.

Steppenwolf rejects the modes of being characteristic of the Wheel of Babylon, but has not yet found a stable alternative. The painful result is isolation, loneliness, resentment and depression. His bitterness at the superficiality and insanity of modern culture turns on him until he himself starts displaying Muppet-like characteristics, whilst believing himself to be free of them.

The underlying conundrum at the heart of Steppenwolf's predicament is how to be "in the world but not of the world". The allure of the hermit's cell or the monastic cloister draws its psychological power from a Steppenwolf's deep repugnance at the human ego in all its manifestations (Diva, Muggle,

Muppet, Addict, Victim, Demon). He would rather escape to the forests and mountains like Henry Thoreau.

Bobby Dupea, the protagonist of the 1970 film *Five Easy Pieces* (played by Jack Nicholson) is another striking example of a spiritually restless character suffering from Steppenwolf Syndrome, who ends up hitching a ride on a truck bound for Alaska to get away from it all (sorry about the spoiler!).

How can spiritually inclined people be in the world but not of the world? What mode of being is resilient enough to not succumb to corruption by the Babylon matrix on the one hand or to Steppenwolfian sulkiness on the other? It's no good joining in the fray and allowing yourself a little temporary Muggleness, Muppetry or Divahood. It will only make you feel worse afterwards. And it's no good going to all the parties just to find fault and hate every minute of it.

One solution is to shift the focus towards the cultivation of a positive ego, instead of obsessively bewailing all the irritating forms of the negative. By flipping the six negative ego states of the "Wheel of Babylon" (based on the six realms of the Tibetan Wheel of Life) into their positive counterparts, you can focus on strengthening and fortifying yourself against the slings and arrows of outrageous egotism instead of just moaning about them.

The six negative ego states are Diva, Demon, Victim, Addict, Muppet, Muggle. Their six counterparts are Mystic, Shaman, Warrior, Monk, Philosopher, King. However, this is quite a juggling act. It's a lot to deal with. Where to start?

Well, we can helpfully simplify this six-fold model by simply noticing that the three archetypes at the top of the second diagram (what I call the "Armour of Christ") represent the mind and the three archetypes at the bottom of the diagram represent the body.

Mental life and social life is really all about talking. This is where the three mental egos, Diva, Muppet and Muggle, come out to play. How they talk and what they talk about is circumscribed by their respective outlooks on the world, focused as they are on asserting their superiority, challenging authority or achieving social acceptance. Their opposites are the Mystic, the Philosopher and the King, who are not subject to these primal drives. These three archetypes can be integrated into one, that of the "Mystical Philosopher King".

To be in the human world of social interaction, but not of the human world of social interaction, it is far better to be a Mystical Philosopher King or a Mystical Philosopher Queen than it is to be a Steppenwolf. Likewise, to be in the physical world of the human body, it is far better to be a Shamanic Warrior Monk or a Shamanic Warrior Nun.

This is a tangible and noble aim. Rather than drifting through life like a reed in a stream, you can dedicate yourself to being and becoming the best you can be, both in mind and body, a Mystical Philosopher King or Queen in mind and a Shamanic Warrior Monk or Nun in body. That way you will be able to brush off the Babylonian onslaughts of vanity, ignorance, delusion, craving, resentment and hatred, while at the same time resisting the "spiritual" temptation of wallowing in Steppenwolfian negativity and self-pity. That way you will be able to be in the world but not of the world.

The Way Out

The French existentialist philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre wrote a play called *Huis Clos*, No Exit, about three characters trapped in a room for all eternity. The most famous line from the play is "l'enfer, c'est les autres" or "hell is other people".

Not everyone shares Sartre's apparently misanthropic sense of the hellishness of society. He was clearly something of an intellectual snob for a start: "I found the human heart empty and insipid everywhere except in books". But many people are uneasy to varying degrees, which is why the perennial problem of the right relationship between the individual and society never goes away.

Sartre was obsessed with the idea of *authenticity*, a preoccupation shared both by the psychoanalysts and cultural Marxists of the time. Erich Fromm is the figure who best exemplifies both these approaches, most famously in his book *The Fear of Freedom*, originally published in 1941, just three years before Sartre's play was first performed.

Sigmund Freud believed that civilization depended on the ability of individuals to conform, but that this was achieved at the cost of neurosis: "when an instinctual trend undergoes repression, its libidinal elements are turned into symptoms, and its aggressive components into a sense of guilt." (*Civilization and Its Discontents*). Freud's thesis is very much in line with Jean-Jaques Rousseau's famous dictum that "Man is born free and everywhere is in chains", except that for Freud

the chains are internalised, more akin perhaps to Blake's "mind-forg'd manacles".

The Muggle answer to the problem of Sartrean social discontent is to try your best to fit in. But that solution has already been ruled out by the existential demand for autonomy, freedom and authenticity. Also, conformity may have some merit in a sane society, but what if the society itself is unhinged? As Jiddu Krishnamurti put it, "it is no measure of health to be well adjusted to a profoundly sick society".

Even in a relatively sane and healthy society, the Muggle Way is a satisfactory way out of Sartre's existential discontent only for those who don't feel particularly trapped in the first place. For those who feel it keenly, the Muppet Way seems more promising. If we really are in a profoundly sick society, then isn't the correct response to either pursue socio-political reform, or else overthrow the whole rotten edifice and start again? The revolution versus reform debate simmers away continuously in the minds and hearts of political dissidents and discontents, but the Muppet Way is the way of permanent revolution.

Unfortunately, as the numerous revolutions of the twentieth century volubly attest, this usually simply fulfils the old adage, "out of the frying pan and into the fire". It seems that the Utopian visions of revolutionary radicals don't actually pave a way out hell but rather plunge us into a deeper one.

So what about the Diva Way? What about worldly success, fame and fortune? Can enjoying the best society has to offer reduce and even erase our discontent? Will a night at the opera with champagne and caviar do the trick? Apparently

not. At least not according to a recent article in the Wall Street Journal entitled *Don't Envy the Super-Rich, They Are Miserable*.

The Victim Way obviously won't get you out of your existential discontent either. Impotently bemoaning your lot and blaming every man and his dog for it, although providing some psychological relief in the short term, inevitably ends up compounding your discontent. The only real practical utility is to provide more fuel for the Muppet Way.

The Addict Way similarly offers immediate relief with long-term negative consequences. In moments of weakness it may seem that the way out is at the bottom of a bottle, but it never is. And the Demon Way, the way of violence, murder and suicide, is best left well alone, for obvious reasons.

There is no way out of this closed room. There are no doors. Huis Clos.

Except upwards. For this is a room without a roof (Pharrell Williams) and the only way is up (Yazz).

Faith Healing

According to Paul Tillich, faith is not just the antidote to doubt and meaninglessness, but to the existential anxiety produced by doubt and meaninglessness. He also argues that other sources of existential anxiety, such as guilt and

condemnation, and fate and death, can only be overcome through faith.

Tillich makes a distinction between ordinary anxiety, "pathological anxiety", and existential anxiety. Existential anxiety is ultimately at the root of all particular, neurotic, pathological anxieties, and whereas a certain amount of faith can assuage these, we need "absolute faith" to deal with the deeper, underlying anxiety.

Chronic anxiety is well understood to produce both mental and physical problems, through stress hormones such as cortisol, for example. And existential anxiety is by its very nature chronic. It is an underlying dis-ease, something akin, perhaps, to the suffering that the Buddha spoke about, *dukkha*.

This chronic, existential anxiety and suffering is usually pushed into the unconscious, below the level of awareness. It manifests itself in fits and starts through anxious thoughts and feelings, but also somatically, primarily through muscular tension. The physical discomfort can become quite unbearable and debilitating, experienced in its acute phases as a "pain body" (Eckhart Tolle).

Tolle makes the point that the central Christian image of a suffering man on a cross resonates with many people because it so powerfully represents the existential condition of the pain body. The Christian belief that Christ can take away the pain, that he has magical healing power to take away "the sins of the world" as well as the pain that goes with it, obviously requires a leap of faith.

But if absolute faith is the antidote to existential anxiety, which is the underlying cause of the pain body, then faith heals. And absolute faith in the saving grace of Christ heals.

"For she said within herself, If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole. But Jesus turned him about, and when he saw her, he said, Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour."

(Matthew 9: 21-22)

Who Wants to Be a Saint?

The lynchpin of the human ego system is the Diva, a sense of specialness, even superiority, over everyone who isn't me. If not the master of the universe, I am at least the centre. Narcissism, whether overt or covert, is inevitably baked into the fabric of the human ego.

Babylon is what you get when you have a family, tribe, village, city, nation, world of egos living together. To accommodate each other, and co-exist with some degree of stability, however, people must take different roles. Obviously, not everyone can be a Diva all the time. The cat fights would be spectacular.

So we end up with all sorts of ego contortionists rubbing up against each other. Somehow, the wheel keeps on turning. It's not ideal of course. People suffer from all sorts of physical, mental and emotional abuse and neglect, from other egos as well as their own. We put a brave face on it all, but are dimly aware that our self-centredness poisons everything, including our so-called happiness.

Is it possible to start again and establish society on a different basis, as the Israelites tried to do when they fled from Egypt and followed Moses into the wilderness in search of the Promised Land? As Buddha's followers tried to do when they fled Samsara in search of Nirvana and the Pure Land? As Christ's followers tried to do in search of the Kingdom of God? Is it possible to base your life, not on ego, but on *no-ego*?

Just as the Diva archetype is the lynchpin of the human ego, so is the Mystic archetype the lynchpin of the human no-ego. The very definition of a mystic is someone who has transcended their ego. Nobody has a monopoly on egolessness, and nobody has a monopoly on mysticism. As soon as you claim it as "yours", the ego has slipped back in and you've lost it.

The egoless state can be expressed in different ways, whether theistically or non-theistically. The God Idea is very useful, but not essential. You can say "let go and let God" but you can equally say "let go and let Be". If you insist on one or the other, you've lost it. Egolessness transcends all ideas and concepts.

To be a mystic, the important thing is not what you say, or even what you do, but what you are, which is nothing. To "be nothing" is to be a soul rather than an ego. The Soul Idea is

very useful, but again, not essential. Buddhists prefer to stick with the idea of no-ego, *anatta*.

All the qualities and archetypes of the human soul system flow from this mystical state of no-ego. If they are well developed enough to outweigh their ego counterparts, so that the Mystic is stronger than the Diva, the Shaman stronger than the Demon, the Warrior stronger than the Victim, the Monk/Nun stronger than the Addict, the Philosopher stronger than the Muppet and the King/Queen stronger than the Muggle, you are technically a saint.

Sanctity must start with ego-dissolution. Some achieve this through prayer and meditation, spiritual practices and religious faith. Others need a little help from our mushroom friends. Either way, it's not easy. You have to want it, for a start. But in peak Babylon, who wants to be a saint?

The Nature Connection

There are three approaches to dealing with climate change and other environmental problems: technological, political and spiritual. Bjorn Lomborg and Bill Gates in their different ways promote the first approach. They advocate for increased investment in innovation and research as the best hope of finding real solutions to these real and pressing problems. George Monbiot and Greta Thunberg promote the second approach. They want a carbon tax, more regulation and more

binding international treaties to legally force governments, corporations and the oil industry to change their ways.

Skeptics of the first approach call it "techno-utopianism" and "the myth of progress". Skeptics of the second approach call it "eco-fascism" and "a communist plot". As you can see, the fault line is political. It's right wing bottom-up "big market" solutions vs left wing top-down "big government" solutions. The former are optimistic Pollyannas and the latter are pessimistic Eeyores. The former tend to think that everything will sort itself out eventually through the appliance of science and human ingenuity and the latter think we're doomed unless we take extreme emergency measures right now.

The third approach is spiritual. It sees our ecological crisis as a symptom of a wider spiritual crisis. In this view, something has gone wrong with our relationship to the natural world which needs to be put right. If we continue to treat Nature as a resource, only there to satisfy our own greed and insatiable appetites, so what if we have unlimited clean energy or martial law? Won't we eventually destroy ourselves and the planet anyway?

This approach is clearly more philosophical. It asks questions about intrinsic value and human nature. If we could manufacture a futuristic world of high-tech artificial intelligence running on an inexhaustible source of clean energy (some kind of nuclear fusion perhaps), so that we could live a life of limitless consumption and entertainment with no environmental costs, would we want it? Is this transhumanist vision recognisably human? Surely it would end up as some version of Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*.

Alternatively, if we could establish a totalitarian surveillance state that uses artificial intelligence to impose strict limits on everyone's consumption in order to reliably safeguard and protect the natural world, would we want that? Wouldn't that be just another version of George Orwell's *1984*?

Advocates of the third approach, such as Paul Kingsnorth, are skeptical about the first two approaches. Perhaps there are partial political and technological solutions in the short term, but in the long term, we need to radically re-consider our modernist assumptions about our place in the world. We need to ask ourselves if we are acting like spoilt gods, as Yuval Noah Harari argues in *Homo Deus*, or if we are dangerously left-hemisphere dominant, as Iain McGilchrist argues in *The Master and His Emissary*. Can a culture with no place for the sacred survive? However politically powerful or technologically advanced? As W.B. Yeats put it, "things fall apart; the centre cannot hold".

The spiritual approach is about inner change rather than outer change. It's about a change in outlook and values, a revolution in consciousness. How is this possible? It is difficult to imagine how this might happen without a conversion experience. You can't just reason yourself there. Climate data and environmental propaganda are not enough. The change must be emotional and psychological as well as rational. And it must be deep.

Sam Gandy, a researcher at Imperial College London, has been looking into the relationship between psychedelics and biophilia, the love of nature. It seems that psychoactive plants and fungi such as ayahuasca and psilocybe cubensis do indeed provoke a profound reorientation in our attitude to the natural

world, which is often experienced as a kind of spiritual awakening. Could this be Nature's way of bringing us back into alignment? Is it a coincidence that psychedelics have become so prevalent now, just at this crisis point in our collective cultural evolution?

It is our disconnection from any sense of the sacredness of Nature that has brought us to this pass. We have sacrificed Her on the altar of economic growth and progress, sold on an anthropocentric fantasy of technological mastery and independence. So, whilst continuing to pursue the first two strategies in our battle against environmental catastrophe, we mustn't lose sight of the third.

The World, the Earth and the Heavens

The socio-cultural world of human intercourse, the world of getting and spending, is too much with us. Or rather, we are too much with it. Why? Because it's the only world we know. Or rather, it's the only world we know intimately.

Some people are drawn to the peace of the woods and the mountains. They love to ramble alone, feel the cool air on the face, watch the clouds scud across the sky, the dappled light dance through the leaves. William Wordsworth dedicated his life to expressing the wonder felt by the Soul in Nature. The world of the Lakeland poets was not "the world", but Nature, "the earth":

The world is too much with us; late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers;—
Little we see in Nature that is ours;
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!
This Sea that bares her bosom to the moon;
The winds that will be howling at all hours,
And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers;
For this, for everything, we are out of tune;
It moves us not. Great God! I'd rather be
A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn;
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathèd horn.

Nature lovers have one foot in the human world and one foot in the natural world. Sitting by a stream, following the eddies of water, they may completely forget their worldly cares and worries and enter a state of quiet contemplation and communion with Nature. Some might make a conscious attempt to still the mind and relax. They might call what they are doing "meditation" or "mindfulness". What they are really doing is retreating from "the world" and stepping onto "the earth".

There is a tug-of-war in the human heart between "the world" and "the earth". For most people, "the earth" is just a holiday from "the world", a temporary respite from the responsibilities and pressures of work and family life. Mostly they are in the world, but just occasionally, in the woods, by the sea or up a mountain, they find themselves on the earth.

People who feel a strong nostalgia for the earth feel homesick and sad in the world and long to reverse the dominance hierarchy so that the world is on the earth instead of the earth being in the world. Most are also fervent environmentalists, lamenting the destruction of the natural earth by the human world. Some even consider their love of the earth as a religion, as in the Water Protector slogan, *The Earth is My Church, Nature is My Religion*.

There is "earth religion" and there is "world religion". We generally think of earth religion as some kind of indigenous shamanism or paganism, "a Pagan suckled in a creed outworn", but it is also at the heart of Taoism and Zen Buddhism. Through mindfulness and immersion in Nature, the followers of earth religions free themselves from the "mind-forg'd manacles" of the social world and enter a place of original natural innocence and vitality.

"World religion" is secular humanism. The focus is primarily on the world of human culture and the improvement of society. It generally manifests itself in the guise of politics, whether through an incremental, progressive creed or a utopian, revolutionary one. Environmentalism may play a subsidiary role in the overarching political agenda, but only because "the earth" is seen as an important aspect of "the world", just one item among the many clambering for "social justice".

In the psycho-spiritual battle between "the world" and "the earth", the world generally wins, and the earth devotees end up resentful and depressed. Worldly duties and responsibilities, as well as the incessant psychic attacks from the entertainment media, the news media and social media,

make it exceptionally difficult to stay grounded on the earth, as the Huni Kuin tribe from the Brazilian Amazon realised:

"In 2000, Ninawa Pai Da Mata decided to move his village deeper into the jungle, in Acre state, in an attempt to protect and revive traditional life. 'We had to move to escape many things the westerners brought - alcohol, foreign music - and to embrace our own culture and spirituality again, to listen to the wisdom of nature,' he says." Jane Dunford

Not everyone can move deeper into the jungle though. Or move to the Lake District. And the pull of the city and the internet is strong. Modern trains and broadband are fast. And the pull of work, family and friends is generally stronger than the pull of the trees and rivers. Life is expensive and demanding.

The history of Western Imperialism (as well as Eastern Imperialism) testifies to the victory of "world religion" over "earth religion", of science and technology over nature and spirituality. But it's not just indigenous earth religions that have suffered from the spectacular success and dominance of the secular world religions. The "heaven religions" have also suffered.

Modern secular people think that they live in the world, and that part of the world involves going for walks in Nature. There is nothing else. Heaven and hell are just fictions or psychological projections, the figments of a delusional medieval religious imagination. Modern secular people who hanker after a "creed outworn", neo-shamanism, neo-paganism, neo-"earth religion", believe in living as close to Nature as possible, with as little Culture as possible, but they

don't usually believe in heaven or hell either. And they certainly don't like the idea of "our Father, who art in heaven".

Genuine shamans not only believe in heaven, but they go there all the time, through vision quests and soul flights. Their magical brews take them beyond the world and beyond the earth to another, transcendent reality, sometimes blissful and full of awe, sometimes painful and full of horror. Sometimes "heaven" but sometimes more like "hell".

Every time I take a strong dose of a psychedelic in a ritual setting, whether ayahuasca, DMT, psilocybin or LSD, I end up in a strange but familiar place I can only describe as heaven. It can get a bit rocky and turbulent at times. Occasionally it can feel as if I am on one of the lower rungs of hell or being dragged backwards through an infinite hedge of purgatorial fire. But it is recognisably a kingdom of heaven.

When I come back down to earth, I invariably find myself *on earth* and not in *the world*. I feel compelled to go for a walk in the countryside or in a park. I feel connected to the trees and the water, the earth and the sky. Suddenly, the world is no longer too much with me. It has shrunk in size from that of a giant Empire State Building devouring octopus to that of a tiny gad fly.

Heaven and earth are more than a match for the world. But earth without heaven always seems to lose. Hence the need for something like *Shamanic Christian Zen*, which puts the world in its place, on the earth and under heaven. The world is too much with us because we have forgotten about the earth and heaven. We have turned from the true Trinitarian God of earth, world and heaven and worshipped a false mono-god,

followed false mono-prophets and sold our souls to a false mono-religion: "the world".

If you treat "the earth" and "heaven" as escapist holidays from "the real world", you are at heart a devotee of the world, a secular humanist, even if you profess otherwise. You may cultivate mindfulness, go wild swimming or forest bathing for improved physical, mental and spiritual health; you may even take psychedelics or enjoy religious services (or both at the same time). But, as Thomas Traherne put it centuries ago, "till the Sea itself floweth in your veins, till you are clothed with the heavens, and crowned with the stars" and "till you are as familiar with the ways of God in all Ages as with your walk and table", in other words, until heaven and earth are more powerful and real, more salient and meaningful, more close and intimate than the human world of getting and spending, "you never enjoy the world aright".

Or put it this way: unless you spend time alone before God on earth and in heaven, your worldly religion is none of His, whatever you may profess.

The Word Made Flesh

"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth."

(John 1:14)

The Word ("el Verbo Divino" in Spanish) is a fairly clumsy translation of the original Greek word, *Logos*. For the Stoics the Logos was the principle of divine reason and creative order pervading and animating the universe. It was the kind of "logic" (from logos) that held everything together.

If we think of the Logos as a kind of spirit, then John's statement that the Word was made flesh means that this spirit became fully embodied, fully incarnated ("carne" means flesh). It is a statement of radical nonduality: spirit and flesh are one. How this happened is a mystery, but the Christian faith rests on the belief that somehow Jesus was this nondual spirit-body or God-man, full of grace and truth.

Now "grace" and "truth" are clearly two aspects of the broader concept of the Logos. But they are also words. You could say that the words themselves, like everything else in the universe, are animated by the Logos. There is a kind of spiritual power in these two words. If you meditate on the word "grace", for example, repeating it quietly to yourself over and over, you will eventually feel this power, which is not just a form of energy, but is pregnant with meaning.

Perhaps there is value in translating Logos as Word after all. If you meditate on the word "grace" for an extended period of time every day, it will become your mantra. At a certain point, you will have internalised it to such an extent that it will make perfect sense to say that this word has been made flesh. It is now a part of your very being.

You are what you eat. The food you put in your mouth is digested and metabolised and transformed into energy. The same is true of the words you put in your heart. However, we are not normally aware of this fact, since we usually read and hear all sorts of words in a fairly random, chaotic way, so that each individual word barely registers.

For a word to be "made flesh", it has to be treated with special reverence and given special attention. It has to be a mantra. Liturgical prayers are mantras. They are repeated over and over again until they sink deep into the subconscious, deep into the body. Sacred scriptures are potentially mantras. Read in the right spirit of reverence and attention, they permeate your very flesh. It turns out that the flesh is in fact, in some mysterious panpsychist way, conscious.

The word is made flesh because mind and body are not-two. Therefore we become what we think and say, hear and read. If you truly believe in the Incarnation, you will become the Incarnation. The Word will become your flesh too. But it requires conscious intention, active attention, lively faith and dedicated practice. As Zen Master Dogen was fond of saying, "practice and enlightenment are one and the same".

Psychedelic Baptism and Psychedelic Communion

Baptism is an initiation rite that uses water as the elemental symbol of spiritual purification.

The idea is that through baptism you are cleansed of your sins so that you can embark on a new spiritual life with a clean slate and a clear conscience. You are "born again" into a completely different mode of being. Symbolically at least, you are free of your besetting sins, whatever they may be.

You could say that the clinical use of psychedelics for the treatment of conditions such as anxiety, depression or addiction is a kind of baptism by fire. It is an intense form of therapy whose effectiveness depends on the direct confrontation of the sufferer with his or her deepest psychological issues. Sometimes, it seems that water just isn't enough, as John the Baptist indicated in his famous prophecy:

"I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire."

(Matthew 3:11)

In the clinical context, it is primarily those issues around greed (addictions), fear and anxiety (a victim mentality) and depression and despair (inner demons) that the psychedelic

therapists focus on. These are represented in the Tibetan Wheel of Life by the lower three realms, the hungry ghost or "addict" realm, the animal or "victim" realm and the hell or "demon" realm. The hope is that intense psychedelic therapy can go some way towards curing these seemingly intractable conditions.

In a spiritual context, there are also the higher three realms to take into account, namely the human "muggle" realm, the fighting spirit "muppet" realm and the heavenly "diva" realm. These must also be cleansed and purified before the neophyte can enter the Holy of Holies.

Conceited divas are not fit for the spiritual life:

"It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God."

(Mark 10:25)

Revolutionary Muppets are not fit for the spiritual life:

"Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves."

(Matthew 7:15)

Reluctant Muggles are not fit for the spiritual life:

"And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God. And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my

house. And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."

(Luke 9: 59-62)

Neither Muggle, Muppet or Diva, nor Addict, Victim or Demon is fit for the spiritual life. However, these ego structures are burnt up by the miraculous effect of the Holy Spirit in a psychedelic baptism of fire. Then, and only then, is communion of the soul with God in the psychedelic kingdom possible.

There are therefore two stages in Shamanic Christian Zen training: Psychedelic Baptism and Psychedelic Communion. And you can only partake of the second once you have undergone the first. As Thomas à Kempis, always succinct and to the point, said, "the reason why so few receive inward light and freedom is because they cannot wholly renounce self."

Apocalypse

The Greek word *apokálypsis* doesn't mean "the end of the world"; it means "the unveiling". The Latin translation is *revelatio*, where *velum* means "veil": to re-veal something is to un-veil it. The last book of the Bible, the Book of Revelation, is an unveiling, an apocalypse.

The psychedelic apocalypse is the unveiling of heaven and earth. This is the meaning of Noah's nakedness:

"And he drank of the wine, and was drunken; and he was uncovered within his tent."

(Genesis 9:21)

But his sons Shem and Japheth covered him up again. Why? Not out of prudishness, but because, as T.S. Eliot put it, "humankind cannot bear very much reality". Humankind cannot live unveiled, apocalyptically. We need the veil. We need the blue pill.

But which veil? Do we need to cover our heads at all times? Do we need to grow beards? Do we need to follow a complex velum (from Proto-Indo-European *weg*, "to weave a web") and clothe ourselves from head to foot with laws and customs? Laws and customs enshrined in our holy Torah for example? Do we need "Tradition"? But which tradition?

What is the best kind of veil? A black, completely opaque veil shows nothing at all of that which it covers. A completely transparent one shows everything, and is no veil at all. The best veil is semi-transparent; it both hides and reveals:

"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 I am known."

(1 Corinthians 13:12)

To see "face to face" is to see the apocalyptic vision, as was revealed to Arjuna by Krishna:

In your own body, Lord, I see the gods
And hosts of creatures, every kind of thing:
The Lord Brahma upon his lotus seat,
The seers of old and serpents of the skies.
I see you, Lord, so infinite in form;
On every side I see your myriad arms,
Your bellies, mouths and eyes; there is no end,
No place where you begin, nor one between.
O Lord of every form, O Lord Supreme,
Adorned with crowns, with club and discus armed,
A radiant mass of universal light,
Of blazing fire and bright effulgent Suns,
My eyes can barely see your boundless might.
O Lord Supreme, O Lord, immutable,
You who alone are worthy to be known,
Safe refuge of the world, and guardian Prince
Of that eternal Law that governs all,
You are, I deem, the ancient Soul of Man.
As I behold you, infinite in power,
Alpha and Omega of all that is,
With Sun and Moon for eyes and mighty arms
Commanding every side, I see your face
Blazing with purest fire, warming the world
With your benevolence. From heaven to earth
You fill each mote of air and part of space.

(Bhagavad Gita, chapter 11)

In the psychedelic apocalypse, the Vision of the Universal Form is un-veiled and then re-veiled. Sometimes you can almost physically see the veil descending once again as the vision fades. But the thickness of the veil determines the thickness of the cloud of forgetting. A tissue-thin veil can

easily be pulled aside, prompting another remembering and another apocalypse. A heavy dark cloth can cover the blinding effulgence and unbearable beams of love for countless aeons.

What is your veil? What is your religion? When was your last apocalypse? When will your next be?

Veiling and Unveiling, Remembering and Forgetting;
Breath of God, Spirit of Life.

The revelation of Jesus Christ was an apocalypse. What then is the post-apocalyptic veil that covers up this unveiling? Not the thick veil of the law, but the thin veil of faith:

"For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God"

(Galatians 2: 19-20)

"But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus."

(Galatians 3: 23-26)

The veil that Christianity proposes is the minimal veil possible for humankind: the veil of faith.

Four Wise Monkeys

The three wise monkeys are a visual depiction of the proverb "hear no evil, see no evil, speak no evil".

The *four* wise monkeys include a fourth maxim, which cannot easily be represented pictorially: "think no evil".

What if we were also to increase not just the number of monkeys but the scope of the concept of evil? What if we were to include the whole of the Babylon System?

We'd get the following: "hear no Babylon, see no Babylon, speak no Babylon, think no Babylon".

The Wheel of Babylon (essentially the *Bhavachakra*, the Tibetan Wheel of Life) depicts six realms: Diva World, Muggle Land, Muppet Land above and the Victim, Addict and Demon Realms below.

All of these realms are available to us, through the miracle of modern technology, at the touch of a button. A *TV Times* that included everything on the television and radio, and satellite, cable, Netfix, Amazon, etc., everything on the Internet, YouTube, Podcasts, Wikipedia, Spotify, Porn Hub, etc., all social media platforms, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Tik Tok etc., everything on your games consoles, Playstation, Xbox, etc., in your local cinema, theatre, bookshop and newsagents, not to mention everything on your bookshelves and in your film and record collections, would be a fairly exhaustive guide to the cultural delights of Babylon.

Now, if you watch and listen to Divas, Muggles and Muppets, either in the flesh or on screen, or talk to or about them, you will inevitably also spend a lot of time and energy thinking about them. They will leave traces in your psyche that may linger for minutes, hours or days. The same goes for Victims, Addicts and Demons.

The key point to understand is that even just *thinking* about Tom, Dick and Harry, or Donald Trump and Aunt Sally, means that you are automatically and instantaneously in Muggle Land, Muppet Land or Diva World. And even just fantasising about Scarlett Johansson or Ryan Reynolds and you are instantly in the Addict Realm.

"Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart."

(Matthew 5: 27-28)

You are never truly alone, because you carry a host of characters around with you wherever you go, even to the proverbial mountain cave. Even without your phone.

So remember the four wise monkeys. Stay away from Babylon, forget Babylon, stop thinking, even just for a few seconds, and you will enjoy the peace which passeth all understanding, and experience the freedom of the flight of the alone to the Alone. You will momentarily escape Samsara and enter Nirvana, and in that timeless moment, will enjoy your original Buddha Nature that you have since before your parents were born.

Drop Out, Tune In, Turn On

Traditionally, the Mystic Way passes through three stages: the Way of Purgation, the Way of Illumination and the Way of Union. The first demands detachment, dis-identification, renunciation, sacrifice etc. The second requires study, prayer, meditation, worship etc. The third establishes being, consciousness and bliss on another, divine, ground.

Mystics drop out of Babylon, tune into the Word and turn onto the Spirit. If you fancy yourself a bit of a mystic and feel called to the Mystic Way, however, make sure it's not "me, myself and I" dropping out of Babylon. Don't stumble at the first hurdle. The ego (represented in the Wheel of Babylon as Diva-Demon-Victim-Addict-Muppet-Muggle) is baked in. The ego *is* Babylon.

It's no good hating and resenting the world and trying to escape it. Even if you went to live alone in a cave in the mountains, you would take it with you. "Wherever you go, there you are". Mystics must drop out of the whole self-world/agent-arena Babylon system complex. "Babylon dropped!" implies "bodymind dropped!"

Also, the impulse to "drop out" in the first place should not arise from negativity, nihilism or hopelessness. It follows naturally from an initial glimpse of spiritual union. But there must be an initiation, an awakening, a conversion, a "turn on" to start the ball rolling. Mystics first turn on, tune in, drop out.

Then they drop out, tune in, turn on, tune in, drop out, tune in, turn on, tune in, drop out etc. etc. This is the Mystic Way.

Risking Enchantment

In the nineteenth century, Max Weber described what he called the dis-enchantment of Modernity. Morris Berman and Thomas Moore call for its re-enchantment, as does Sharon Blackie. Rod Dreher worries that the real danger in our brave new world of New Age and Occult lunacy is not dis-enchantment but mis-enchantment, since when people cease to believe in God, they do not then believe in nothing, but in anything. Sharon Blackie thinks he's a nutjob (sic).

Who are the orthodox here? Who are the heterodox? Who are the heretics? Of those who risk enchantment, which will find it and which will lose it?

When it comes to psychedelics, this is is a matter of (spiritual) life and death. Personally, I have come to the conclusion that the whole issue turns on the head of one tiny pin (on which are dancing an indefinite number of angels). Or perhaps *thorn* is more accurate. I'm talking about the OG - God.

This will annoy many people of course. Let it be known that I don't mean "Old Grey Beard", "Sky Daddy" or even "The Christian God". I mean the actual, ineffable, living God that spiritual traditions the world over point to in their various different ways. It's God or Babylon, whichever way you turn it, twist it or try to wriggle out of it.

The actual presence of God is primary. Everything else is secondary. In my idiosyncratic terminology, "One, Three, Seven" are primary and "Twelve" is secondary. And safety is found only within the orbit of the Twelve (planet Earth). Beyond that, you risk finding yourself lost in space, drifting between Saturn and the fixed stars (see William Blake's *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*).

On earth Thou hidest, not to scare
The children with Thy light,
Then showest us Thy face in heaven,
When we can bear the sight.

Frederick William Faber

In my Beginning is my End

One summer twenty years ago, by the river Isis in Oxford, I had a profound experience of "waking up" from ordinary, habitual "me" consciousness into an extraordinary "non-dual" consciousness, where I felt completely at one with my surroundings and with the whole world. It felt as though I had stepped into a timeless realm, where one instant and ten thousand years were somehow the same and where one glance at a flower was more real and meaningful than my whole life up to that point. The experience only lasted for a few hours of clock time, but once back in the "ordinary" state, I

knew that I would have no choice but to dedicate the rest of my life to finding my way back again. Thomas Traherne went there hundreds of years ago:

The corn was orient and immortal wheat, which never should be reaped nor was ever sown. I thought it had stood from everlasting to everlasting. The dust and the stones of the street were as precious as gold. The gates were at first the end of the world; the green trees when I saw them first through one of the gates transported and ravished me; their sweetness and unusual beauty made my heart to leap, and almost mad with ecstasy, they were such strange and wonderful things. ... Eternity was manifest in the light of day, and something infinite behind everything appeared, which talked with my expectation and moved my desire. The city seemed to stand in Eden, or to be built in Heaven.

Many others have been there too. For other first hand accounts of spiritual awakening, check out Richard Bucke's *Cosmic Consciousness: A Study in the Evolution of the Human Mind*, William James' *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, W.T. Stace's *Mysticism and Philosophy* or *Mysticism: A Study and an Anthology* by F.C. Happold. Here is an account taken from *The Varieties of Psychedelic Experience* by Masters and Houston:

The subject, S-1 (LSD), a housewife in her early thirties, was taken by the guide for a walk in the little forest that lay just beyond her house. The following is her account of this occasion:

I felt I was there with God on the day of the Creation. Everything was so fresh and new. Every plant and tree and fern and bush had its own particular holiness. As I walked along the ground the smells of nature rose to greet me - sweeter and

more sacred than any incense. Around me bees hummed and birds sang and crickets chirped a ravishing hymn to Creation. Between the trees I could see the sun sending down rays of warming benediction upon this Eden, this forest paradise. I continued to wander through this wood in a state of puzzled rapture, wondering how it could have been that I lived only a few steps from this place, walked in it several times a week, and yet had never really seen it before. I remembered having read in college Frazer's Golden Bough *in which one read of the sacred forests of the ancients. Here, just outside my door, was such a forest and I swore I would never be blind to its enchantment again.*

Appendix 1: Flight Instructions

Mushroom Meditation

The sacred mushroom ceremony opens with a mantra meditation. This helps establish a conducive set and setting. However, it is a mistake to imagine that the meditation is just an "intro" to the psychedelic experience. The meditation doesn't end when the mantra ends and the mushroom begins, it deepens.

In a ceremonial context, in contrast to a recreational or even therapeutic context, the whole trip from beginning to end is a meditation. The mantra meditation is followed by a silent meditation and a music meditation. Under the influence, silence is not silence and music is not music, but they are both deep meditations.

The music meditation is at the heart of the experience, when the effect of the mushroom is at its peak. We traverse many dimensions of space, time, mood, texture, harmony, dissonance, colour, form, meaning, meaninglessness, movement, stillness, intensity and intimacy. It is a deep, inner, multi-dimensional transcendental meditation.

Trying to meditate through the music, or in spite of the music, can be frustrating and potentially derailing. This is not background music for your usual meditation practice, be it zazen, vipassana, TM, or whatever else. It's not silent meditation and it's not mellow mood music meditation.

Fight the music with meditation and you will lose. Flow with the music and you will find that the music and the meditation are not-two and you will enter into true mushroom meditation. There is nothing you have to do. Just follow the music and the meditation will take care of itself. If the music is not to your taste, your inner

critic starts complaining and you can feel your hackles rising, take a deep breath and remember these words: *Judge not, that ye be not judged.*

The mushroom meditation is followed by a period of silence and then a dub reggae meditation, once the peak intensity has abated sufficiently to permit coordinated physical movement, balance and rhythm. After the inner flight, we ground ourselves, come back down to earth and back into the body, and take the opportunity to express ourselves in movement and dance, hopefully with thanks and praise and joy.

The ceremony concludes with a walking meditation in a local nature reserve and a shared meal of soup and bread, where we share our experiences in a relaxed, convivial atmosphere. Maintaining a mindful state of meditative awareness even in this post trip "after party" invariably makes for more creative, constructive and enjoyable conversations and is an excellent training in applying meditation to everyday social life.

Follow the Music

In a sacred mushroom ceremony the peak of the experience takes place lying down with eyes closed (and optional eye shades) listening to music. It is a kind of musical meditation. Except that on a medium to high dose, this is no ordinary listening, no ordinary music and no ordinary meditation.

Synaesthesia (the experience of sounds in the form of visual shapes and colours for example) is very common. Also fairly common is an intense synaesthesia where you are fully immersed in a multi-sensory sound world. It's as though you are actually inside the music, experienced as an aural incarnation of the mushroom, sometimes like an immense cathedral of colour, sometimes like a magical deep sea palace or deep space alien craft.

The peak experience is an inner journey into another dimension. If you sit up and open your eyes, the spell is broken and the magic evaporates. The amazing thing about magic mushrooms is that (with practice!) you can pass easily between the inner psychedelic world and the outer physical world. If you need the toilet or a drink of water, you can come out of the other world, get up and do what you need to do, and then go straight back into it. There are still trace psychedelic effects with eyes open, but on medium to high doses, they aren't too distracting.

If there is anxiety, fear and confusion, discomfort, paranoia and mental chaos, you will quite understandably be tempted to come back to the "real world", to sit up and open your eyes, and look for security and support in your surroundings and the people around you. If there is a guide or a shaman, you might turn to him or her for help. The best help a guide can give, however, is simple presence and encouragement, until you feel settled and grounded enough to dive back in. After all, there is no way out but through.

Use the mantra. Watch and pray. Neither think nor try not to think. Neither fight nor try to surrender. Just follow the music...

music heard so deeply that it is not heard at all, but you are the music while the music lasts.

T.S. Eliot

Why so Weird?

The first section of the musical playlist is typically quite weird. This is not accidental. In therapeutic settings, the music is comforting and relaxing, allowing you to voyage gently through your psyche. You are tripping but your ego can still navigate the journey fairly well because the music is familiar enough. There are "no alarms and no surprises".

In an intense shamanic ceremonial setting, however, the music is designed to interrupt your habitual thought processes by breaking your expectations, by "breaking frame". The point is not to create a nice soft play area for your ego. It is to break through into a greater dimension of freedom, to die and be reborn, so to speak.

Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

John 3:3

A Kind of Exposure Therapy

Trips that are all sweetness and light fail to deal with your shadow. What is the shadow? Well, to have likes you must have dislikes; to appreciate beauty you must depreciate ugliness; to seek pleasant feelings you must avoid unpleasant feelings. The light we experience as "good" casts a shadow on everything else which we experience as "bad".

Our personal preferences, our likes and dislikes, if pandered to, create aesthetic bubbles which imprison us in gilded cages. Aesthetic sensibility is not a decorative spandrel with no bearing on the actual structure of our lives. It is how we parse reality. And before we know it, if we're not careful, we can find ourselves, like Hansel and Gretel, locked in a house made of sweets in the woods.

Be wary of the four D's: dislike, distaste, discomfort and disgust. A key feature of modern urban life in the West is the profound sense of entitlement to things one likes and intolerance of things one doesn't. If progress means guaranteeing everyone gets what they want when they want it, it means creating progressively pampered, precious, prejudiced, pusillanimous people.

The ability to confront us with things we really don't like is actually one of the most unremarked therapeutic virtues of psychedelics. They press our buttons and trigger us like nothing else. This is an opportunity. If we can tolerate dislike, distaste, discomfort and disgust on psychedelics, we find that we are more able to tolerate them when we're sober. It's a kind of exposure therapy that smooths the sharp edges of those unconscious ingrained phobias we unwittingly allow to dominate our lives.

As a consequence, we become less defended, less frightened, less judgy, less fragile. As Nietzsche famously said, what doesn't kill you makes you stronger.

"Mal Viaje" and "Nada"

When embarking on a psychedelic journey, the two things you will inevitably worry about are "mal viaje" (a bad trip) and "nada" (nothing). Especially if this is a once-in-a-lifetime or a once-in-a-longtime experience, you really don't want to be left frightened and confused on the one hand or disappointed and deflated on the other.

Why do we have bad trips and no trips? Sometimes the fault is with us, sometimes with the mushroom and sometimes with the environment we take it in. If we are highly-strung, have a controlling personality, and find it difficult to relax and go with the flow, we are much more likely to have a bad trip or no trip. If we are in a bad mood or feeling anxious or suspicious, the likelihood is even higher.

This is the "set" part of "set and setting". You should come to the experience with a good mindset, that is, with a positive attitude of openness, curiosity, trust and respect. You should also have a stable enough personality, without any of the obvious contra-indications, such as a history of psychosis or schizophrenia, or a personality disorder, such as OCD (obsessive compulsive disorder), C-PTSD (complex post-traumatic stress disorder), DID (dissociative identity disorder) or NPD (narcissistic personality disorder).

The "setting" part is also important. You should be taking it in a safe and supportive environment with people you trust, ideally with an experienced guide. You should feel comfortable and confident in the knowledge that if you completely let go of the reins, you will be held, and that whatever crazy happens, it will be contained, and things won't spin out of control.

Apart from "set and setting", the main contributing factor to the resulting experience is the psychedelic compound itself. It depends on the quality and quantity: you want the good stuff at the right dosage. Too little and you might have little more than a threshold experience or absolutely "nada"; too much and you might have an overwhelmingly intense experience that careers off into a "mal viaje".

However, it is often our own psychological resistance which blocks the proper working of the mushroom, and keeps a potentially beautiful mild-to-medium experience in the waiting room or a potentially profound medium-to-strong one in the hell realms. We are in continuous intimate dialogue and communion with the mushroom, whether it be barely perceptible or all over the place. The sacred dance is on, no matter what. And the trip isn't over until it's over.

In fact, with experience, we find that there really is no such thing as "nada" or "mal viaje". *Gnosis* can be found in any and all conditions. Sometimes we need to be reminded that we don't always get what we want and that we must make the best of what we are given.

Please Don’t Worry

Please don't worry if you can't think straight when you're high on magic mushrooms. Don't worry if you can't recall certain details about your life, or if you can't remember why you are there or what you're meant to be doing. Don't worry if your mind is scrambled and you can't follow a line of reasoning further than a couple of steps

before you forget what it was you were thinking about. Don't worry if you can't work it out, or if you can't work anything out. Don't worry if nothing seems to make sense.

You're tripping. The normal functioning of your mind is impaired. Certain parts of your brain have been temporarily knocked out, are under a kind of neuronal anaesthetic. Your left hemisphere in particular, as well as your default mode network, are in suspended animation.

Please don't worry about it! It's completely normal. You are in a temporary altered state of consciousness. It will pass. Your logical, rational faculties will return. You're not going mad. You're on drugs, remember?

There's nothing you need to do, nothing you need to solve, nothing you need to worry about. You are in a safe place with people you can trust for the sole purpose of journeying deep into the heart of your very being, consciousness and bliss, deeper than you ever thought was possible.

But first you need to stop worrying, otherwise you won't go anywhere but round and round the windmills of your mind. Mind loops can be entertaining as well as infuriating, exhausting and nightmarish. But this is not what sacred psychoactive plant medicines are for. This is not what shamanic journeying is about. This may be "tripping" in the popular imagination, but only because Westerners don't know how magic carpets work. Don't worry about the patterns on the carpet. Learn to fly.

A Momentary Lapse of Reason

On a high dose of psilocybin (3 grams and above), the peak of the experience will typically last for 3 - 4 hours. During this time, an inward journey through the psychedelic dimension, carried on the

wave of a specially crafted musical playlist, will afford extraordinary opportunities for spiritual transformation, regeneration and renewal.

However, if an anxious thought about the outside "real world" impels you to abandon the psychedelic dimension in order to deal with the supposed source of your anxiety, you will suffer a period of temporary madness, something like a waking dream (or waking nightmare) tinged (or saturated) with paranoia and confusion.

Please resist the pull of anxiety and refrain from acting out the incipient madness. This is one reason why it is so important to trip with a sitter, guide or shaman. They are there to deal with any problems and to make sure that you are perfectly safe, so that you don't feel the need to "fix" anything and thereby inadvertently sabotage your journey.

There is, however, method in the mushroom madness. Even if you do "lose it", and suffer a momentary lapse of reason, don't worry about it. The subsequent return to normality will grant you deeper insight and understanding, whatever form the "madness" takes. You will find that with careful reflection, processing and integration over the following days and weeks, both body and mind are clarified and refreshed, and you end up feeling more securely sane than ever.

No excellent soul is exempt from a mixture of madness.

Aristotle

No man is sane who does not know how to be insane on proper occasions.

Henry Ward Beecher

Show me a sane man and I will cure him for you.

Carl Jung

The Hardest Lesson

The hardest lesson and the greatest gift of the psychedelic experience is to "lose your mind and come to your senses". This doesn't mean that you literally have no mind (except in the Zen Buddhist sense of *mu-shin*) but that your centre of awareness shifts from the left brain hemisphere to the right hemisphere. If you don't know what the significance of this is, please read Iain McGilchrist's *The Master and His Emissary: The Divided Brain and the Making of the Western World*.

Left hemisphere activity is basically linguistic and rational. This is where we are when we try to make sense of the world and control it by fitting it into a system of mental concepts and categories. In many contexts, in society at large, this works fine. On psychedelics, this is a sure recipe for a bad trip.

"The Kingdom of Heaven is within": whether you are in a blissful heavenly realm or a tormented hellish realm, you are in the spiritual dimension, the "Kingdom of Heaven". The psychedelic vision quest is an inner spiritual journey and the battle is an inner spiritual battle. The more centred in the right hemisphere, and the more suspended the left, the better things will go for you.

As soon as your rational mind, through fear, decides to put a stop to the trip and to come out of the Kingdom, to take control, to get things back to normal, to "go home", the cogs of left hemisphere madness begin to spin. And the more you try to control the experience, the more out of control it gets.

The classic psychedelics, ayahuasca, peyote, magic mushrooms, LSD, DMT, are powerful sacred medicines. They are spiritual, not mental, agents of self-discovery. If you allow your rational ego to take the reins and break the sacred circle of the ceremonial space, you will find yourself swimming against the stream. And it's a powerful stream.

What you are actually doing is pulling yourself out of the inner "kingdom of heaven" and wrenching your consciousness back into the "real world", which feels safer, because more familiar. The "real world" is the familiar, habitual mental world system of the left hemisphere, which feels like "home". And you want to go home. But you're not in Kansas anymore, and there's no going back for the duration of the trip.

The hardest lesson is to let go, to let go of your desire to control everything and have your way, to let go of your ego, to let go of your own little kingdom. And the greatest gift is the boundless freedom, joy and peace that this endless letting go makes possible.

Give over thine own willing, give over thine own running, give over thine own desiring to know or be anything.

Isaac Pennington

Be Kind to the Ego

What is the point of ceremonial tripping? As you learn to think psychedelically, you will appreciate that there is never a "point" or a single point. Reality is much too complex and multi-faceted for such brutal reductionism. However, it does help to focus and clarify sometimes. It helps to formulate an intention before journeying, and it helps to crystallize the lessons we receive.

So what's the fundamental point of tripping? I would say it is to strengthen the soul and weaken the ego. What does that mean in practice? Well, here's one way to think about it.

In my book The Confessions of a Psychedelic Christian, I defined the soul and the ego with reference to the Tibetan Wheel of Life as two sets of six opposing archetypes: Mystic, Shaman, Warrior, Monk/Nun, Philosopher, King/Queen vs. Diva, Demon, Victim,

Addict, Muppet, Muggle. So the point is to strengthen the former, the "soul archetypes", and weaken the latter, the "ego archetypes".

When everything flows smoothly, it feel like the soul is in charge and our positive qualities are being strengthened. However, when something goes wrong, the ego can take the reins and pull things in a decidedly dark direction. This can happen in several ways, depending on which part of the ego is triggered.

Dissociation, depersonalisation and derealisation are associated with the Muggle archetype. When the ordinary, everyday ego identity dissolves, the Muggle Self is left all at sea. You have no idea who you are and you don't know what's real any more. If this happens, your homework is to practice *Self-Inquiry*. Develop your King or Queen archetype.

Narcissistic collapse is associated with the Diva archetype. When the self-important ego identity, whether grandiose or covert, is threatened with collapse, the Diva Self will protect itself by dismissing the experience, rejecting the situation and running away, sometimes literally. Alternatively, narcissistic inflation can lead to delusions of grandeur and a messiah complex. The homework in both cases is to cultivate *Humility* and *Gratitude*. Develop your Mystic.

Conspirituality and superstition are related to the Muppet archetype. When conventional, consensual reality dissolves, the Muppet Self constructs a paranoid delusional worldview in its place. The homework here is *Critical Thinking*. Develop your Philosopher.

Re-traumatization is related to the Victim archetype. Abusive acting out is related to the Demon archetype. Clinging obsessiveness is related to the Addict archetype. What is called for in these cases is *Self-Soothing*, *Self-Compassion* and *Courage*. Develop your Warrior, Monk/Nun and Shaman archetypes.

Whatever happens, welcome your beautiful soul but be kind to your ego!

Trust and Respect

Deep transformative psychological change is possible in therapy only where there is a solid therapeutic alliance between therapist and client. And a solid therapeutic alliance is only possible where there is trust and respect.

The same is true of psychedelics. However high the dose, you won't get very far unless you trust and respect the mushroom.

But please remember: no matter how difficult or challenging your experience, you are developing, at the very least, strength and stamina, patience and courage.

There is no such thing as a bad trip where there is genuine trust and respect.

Trust the mushroom.

Trust yourself.

Trust the process.

Trust the setting.

Trust the music.

Trust the guide.

Trust God.

Appendix 2: The Clearing

ANATTA, ANICCA, ABHAYA

ANATTA means "no-self". When you say the word, bring the meaning to mind. Do not treat it as a negation or attack on your ego. Take it to refer to the conscious part of you that is not identified with anything. See if you can connect with a neutral space of pure awareness within you. We start with ANATTA, because if we do not consciously find a neutral space within, and disidentify from the forms of our ego, the rest of the meditation may be hijacked by one subpersonality or other and will lose its effectiveness.

ANICCA means "impermanence". All things change. Nothing stays the same. Impermanence is a law of nature. We too are here for just a brief time, no longer than a "brief candle". We must let go of the illusion of permanence, which is the central illusion of the ego. The ego is just a temporary psychological configuration, but it maintains itself in being through the illusion of permanence. It is a self-fulfilling belief. Because we believe our ego (which is just another word for "personality") is permanent, we behave as if it were permanent and solid. When we remind ourselves of ANICCA, impermanence, we relax our hold and become more fluid and flexible. This is also a very important attitude at the start of a meditation, because it means we are open and sensitive to change, and not rigid, resistant or defensive.

ABHAYA means "fearlessness". We must put on the fearlessness of a spiritual warrior as we enter into meditation. This is important to combat the fear that is at the heart of the ego. The ego is afraid for itself. It is afraid of death. Both ANATTA and ANICCA mean death for the ego. If we cannot overcome this fear, we will once again fall back in thrall to the ego. It welcomes us back with obsequiousness

and cold comfort: “You did the right thing to give up. Well done. Stay here with me. You’re safe with me. We’ll look after each other. Don’t go out there again. It’s dangerous.” To break through the shell of the ego, we must be fearless even in the face of death.

KARUNA, KARUNA, KARUNA

KARUNA means “compassion”. Confronting the fear of the ego and fear of death, we encounter suffering. The spiritual journey is beset by hardship and struggle. We cannot avoid great suffering if we are to change and die to ourselves. We need the soothing balm of compassion. Compassion is not pity. It literally means “suffering with”: *com passio*. It is the willingness to share the suffering of another, and so help carry the load. We can arouse compassion for our own suffering as much as the suffering of another. We can also receive the compassion of an archetypal “divine being” such as Avalokitesvara, Isis or the Virgin Mary. Perhaps the most powerful visual depiction of compassion is that of the pieta, Mary weeping over the broken body of her son. Bringing this scene to mind cannot fail to arouse deep feelings of compassion in us, which we can then direct to our own sufferings “in Christ”.

DOSA NIRODHA, KARUNA

DOSA means “hate” or “aversion”. It is a negative psychological attitude of dislike, disgust, anger, rejection. NIRODHA means “cessation”. So when we say the words “DOSA NIRODHA”, we become aware of any unacknowledged negativity or resentment we might be carrying, and gently let it go. If it does not dissipate completely, we are content with lessening its energetic charge and so reducing its hold on us. We bring compassion to the suffering caused by DOSA, and the suffering that caused it. We bring compassion

also to our inability to free ourselves of it completely. DOSA, if it does not arise in the heat of the moment, as when provoked by an adversary, is generally connected with past slights and resentments. It is the negative energy of our "unfinished business".

TANHA NIRODHA, KARUNA

TANHA means "thirst" or "desire". It is the opposite instinctual drive from DOSA, a pulling towards, rather than a pushing away. It encompasses all forms of craving, clinging, neediness, lust and desire. It includes spiritual desire as much as sexual desire or desire for fame and fortune. TANHA can be as distracting and destructive as DOSA. Psychological issues associated with DOSA are those around phobias and traumas, and anger management issues. Those associated with TANHA are addiction issues, substance abuse and obsessive compulsive disorders. By bringing the energetic charge of TANHA to awareness and consciously letting it go with compassion, we can begin to reduce its subliminal hold on our lives.

DUKKHA NIRODHA, KARUNA

DUKKHA means "suffering" or "unsatisfactoriness". It was the recognition of the problem of DUKKHA as the tragic and inescapable fact of life that impelled Shakyamuni Buddha to strike out on his spiritual quest to find a solution to human suffering. The first of his Four Noble Truths is the self-evident existential truth, "there is dukkha". DUKKHA is broader than physical pain or even psychological pain. It includes "having what you don't want" (DOSA) as well as "not having what you want" (TANHA), but also, more subtly, "not having what you have" and "not wanting what you want". In other words, being generally dissatisfied. Life just doesn't

seem to live up to the billing. Free even from the push and pull of DOSA and TANHA, things just don't feel right. There is a subtle background malaise. The psychological issue here is depression. Where DOSA indicates an inability to let go of the negativity of the past, and TANHA indicates an inability to deal with the seductive lure of the future, DUKKHA indicates our inability to enjoy the present.

UPEKKHA, UPEKKHA, UPEKKHA

UPEKKHA means "equanimity". Equanimity is a dispassionate philosophical attitude. Whatever comes our way is treated equally, without preference or deference. We resist the temptation to react negatively with DOSA or greedily with TANHA. We refuse to react with the dissatisfied indifference of DUKKHA. UPEKKHA is a state of poised equilibrium. It is a condition of spiritual fortitude in the face of the "slings and arrows of outrageous fortune" (Shakespeare), the capacity to "meet with Triumph and Disaster/ And treat those two imposters the same," (Kipling). By arousing the quality of UPEKKHA, we complete and consolidate our withdrawal from hate, greed and suffering and turn to face any eventuality with strength and courage.

KARUNA, MUDITA, METTA

KARUNA means "compassion". This is the golden thread that runs through the whole meditation. We bring the healing power of compassion to bear on all our psychological struggles and difficulties. The difference here is that we are now in a position of spiritual strength from which we can bring compassion to others. We

bring to mind the suffering of sentient beings and send out healing compassion to all.

MUDITA means “sympathetic joy”. Here we share in the happiness and joy of others. It is the positive correlative of KARUNA. KARUNA and MUDITA can be seen as the psychological antidotes to DOSA and TANHA. When we encounter difficulty, pain and suffering, we don’t like it, so we instinctively react with aversion, DOSA. But we can bring compassion to alleviate the suffering. Thus compassion is the antidote to hate. When we encounter success, joy and happiness, we might react with envy, another form of DOSA, or with craving, TANHA. We like it and we want some of it. Or we can bring sympathetic joy to celebrate the success and happiness of the other without wanting a part of it. Thus MUDITA is the antidote to greed. It is like sharing in the achievement or pleasure of a young child. If they are enjoying a lollipop, it would be ridiculous to desire the lollipop, or we are no better that a young child ourselves. In KARUNA we “suffer with”; in MUDITA we “enjoy with”.

METTA means “love” or “loving kindness”. We send love and good will to all sentient beings, whether suffering, happy or indifferent. METTA is the antidote to hate, greed and suffering and blesses both the giver and receiver. Once we have made an inward clearing of our psychological ties to ego, permanence, fear, hate, greed, envy and suffering through self-compassion, we find that love arises and flows naturally and easily. Love is the crown of The Clearing Meditation.

Appendix 3: The Ray of Creation

There is an ancient story about some blind men and an elephant. Each one felt a part of the elephant and came to the conclusion that it was just as they felt it. The one who grabbed a leg thought the elephant was like a pillar, the one who grabbed the tail thought it was like a stick, etc. The moral of the story is that different people take only part of the scriptures, believing it to be the whole. The contradictions lead to disagreements and religious conflict, but are simply the result of partial understanding.

What if we could feel the leg, the tail, the ear, the belly and the trunk to get a better picture of the elephant? We would have to accept that true as each part is, it is not the whole truth. As a self-professed "blind man", I have made it my life's mission to feel the *whole* elephant.

I have felt seven parts:

I have felt the empty Void within and beyond manifestation, called s*unyata* in the Buddhist scriptures. I call it Amun, "the Hidden One".

I have felt the light and energy within manifestation, called *kundalini* in the Vedas. I call it Ra, "the Sun God".

I have felt the material substance of manifestation, called *prima materia* by the alchemists. I call it Atum, "the All".
I have felt the aliveness of my body, the breath of life, called *prana* in India and *qi* or *ki* in China and Japan. I call it Ka, "the Life Force".

I have felt the pure consciousness of the Self, called *atman* in the Vedas. It is the Witness of our life. I call it Ba, "the Soul."

I have felt my connection and identity with the planet, called the *anima mundi* by the Neoplatonists. I call it Gaia, "the Earth Goddess".

I have felt the Universal Consciousness of the universe, called *Jah* by the Rastafarians. I call it Jah, "God".

[Amun, Ra, Atum, Ka and Ba are Ancient Egyptian; Gaia and Jah (Jahweh) are Ancient Greek and Hebrew.]

These seven "gods" together constitute "the Ray of Creation", which traces the evolution of the universe from the Void to the Absolute. Each "god" contains all the others below it in a nested hierarchy. They are like the layers of an onion, like the *koshas* (sheaths) of Vedanta. Each "god" denotes the unified consciousness of the realm or level it presides over: Jah is the god of the universe, which contains Gaia, goddess of the Earth, which contains Ba, god (or soul) of the organism, which contains Ka, god of cells, which contains Atum, god of atoms, which contains Ra, god of energy, which contains Amun, god of Emptiness.

Each time I have an experience of one of these parts of the elephant, I think to myself, "THIS is it!" The experience eventually and inevitably fades and then, at some other point I have a different experience and an equally compelling conviction that "THIS is it! I must put all my faith and devotion into THIS!"

When I experience one part of these realities, I give myself to it heart and soul, and exclaim with the *credo*, "I believe in ONE God". In that moment of communion, nothing else exists. This is God for me now. But once the experience has passed, I realize that it was only one dimension of something much larger, only one part of the elephant.

There is another old story about a mountain and a mountain climber. It was a very difficult mountain to climb, but the mountain climber was determined to find a way to the summit. After much effort and exertion, he managed to find a way to the top. He had imagined that once he reached the summit, he could plant his flag and be done with it. However, back home again, he felt a strong urge to climb the mountain again, but by a different route. So he climbed up the mountain again. He did this over and over again for years, always climbing via a different route, until he had covered the whole mountain. Only then did he realize that the goal was not after all the summit of the mountain, but the mountain itself.

Appendix 4: Reading List

January : THE ROAD LESS TRAVELLED by M. Scott Peck (+A)

February : A NEW EARTH by Eckhart Tolle (+B)

March : THE VARIETIES OF PSYCHEDELIC EXPERIENCE by Masters and Houston (+C)

April : THE PHILOSOPHERS' SECRET FIRE by Patrick Harpur (+D)

May : THE IDEA OF THE HOLY by Rudolf Otto (+E)

June : MYSTICISM by F.C. Happold (+F)

July : THE EXPERIENCE OF GOD by David Bentley Hart (+A)

August : THE DIMENSIONS OF EXPERIENCE by Andrew P. Smith (+B)

September : THE COURAGE TO BE by Paul Tillich (+C)

October : THE SICKNESS UNTO DEATH by Søren Kierkegaard (+D)

November : JESUS OF NAZARETH by Pope Benedict XVI (+E)

December : SELECTED WRITINGS of William Law (+F)

A = THE MIRACLE OF MINDFULNESS by Thich Nhat Hanh

B = BEING ONESELF by F.W. Whiting

C = ON HAVING NO HEAD by Douglas Harding

D = WORD INTO SILENCE by John Main

E = THE PRACTICE OF THE PRESENCE OF GOD by Brother Lawrence

F = STEPS TO CHRIST by Ellen White

Every morning: HOLY BIBLE

Every evening: THE IMITATION OF CHRIST by Thomas à Kempis

Appendix 5: The Meditation

Preparation

Breathe, feel; relax, release; let go, let God.

Breathe, feel; relax, release; let go, let be.

Grounding (1), settling (2);

balancing (3), centering (4);

tuning (5), aligning (6), refining (7).

Part One

OM MANI PADME HUM

ANATTA ANICCA ABHAYA (1)

KARUNA KARUNA KARUNA (2)

DOSA NIRODHA KARUNA (3)

TANHA NIRODHA KARUNA (4)

DUKKHA NIRODHA KARUNA (5)

UPPEKHA UPPEKHA UPPEKHA (6)

KARUNA MUDITA METTA (7)

Part Two

AHAM (0) HODOS (7) ALETHEIA (4) ZOE (10 & 11)

AMUN (1) RA (2) ATUM (3) KA (4) BA (5) GAIA (6) JAH (7)

AHAM (0) KENOSIS (7) PISTIS (4) GNOSIS (10 & 11)

AMUN (1) RA (2) ATUM (3) KA (4) BA (5) GAIA (6) JAH (7)

AHAM (0) PARASHIVA (7) SHIVA (4) SHAKTI (10 & 11)

AMUN (1) RA (2) ATUM (3) KA (4) BA (5) GAIA (6) JAH (7)

Part Three

CLARITY (7) KINDNESS (1) BRAVERY (8) GENEROSITY (9)
HONESTY (10) DIGNITY (11) COMPASSION (4)

HUMILITY (7) GENTLENESS (1) PRUDENCE (8)
TEMPERANCE (9) PATIENCE (10) DILIGENCE (11)
GRATITUDE (4)

MYSTIC (7) SHAMAN (1) WARRIOR (8) MONK/NUN (9)
PHILOSOPHER (10) KING/QUEEN (11) FRIEND (4)

FAITH (7) FORGIVENESS (1) CONFIDENCE (8) TRUST (9)
WISDOM (10) INTEGRITY (11) JOY (4)

PEACE (7) LOVE (1) GOODNESS (8) BEAUTY (9) TRUTH (10)
CONSCIOUSNESS (11) BLISS (4)

Key: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 refer to the seven chakras from base to crown;

8, 9 refer to the left hip and right hip; 10, 11 refer to the left shoulder and right shoulder.