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The Evolution of the Afterlife

Even for those who do not believe in a life after death, the idea of the afterlife that a past culture held can serve as a marker in the evolution of human consciousness. Like a demarcation that begins a process of map-making, the description of the time and space of the life after death starts a process of exploring the nature of consciousness and the cultural ideas of individuation that derive from it. World literature is the chronicle of this cultural process of individuation, and literary works of the past serve as milestones on the historical path of the moral and psychological development of humanity.

Our earliest literary mapping of the boundary between the realms of the living and the dead is expressed in ancient Sumerian literature as the journey by the living to the underworld of death, specifically in 'Inanna's Descent into the Netherworld' and Enkidu's descent in the poems of the Gilgamesh cycle.¹ Inanna is a goddess, and her descent into the underworld is a cosmological function, the passage of the evening star under the horizon to arise after its journey through darkness in the underworld as the morning star, but Enkidu in the Gilgamesh cycle is a mortal, and his experience of the journey into the realm of the dead is no triumphant reconstitution of cosmic order but a very sad confrontation with a realm of physical and emotional appetites that are frustrated by the lack of a body with which to satisfy them.

. . . the house where none leave who have entered it . . . Where dust is their fare and clay their food. (Wolkstein and Kramer, 1983, p.159)

This sublunary world is the enclosure for mortals. For the Old Kingdom Egyptians during the period of the construction of the Great Pyramids, a god or a god-like Pharaoh might think of transcending the world of the physical body and its associated subtle body of life-energy, the *ka*, to return in his star body, or *Sahu*, to his native star in the belt of Orion, but commoners and heroes were doomed to remain in the form of their shade, their *ba*, restricted to the sublunary world.²

[1] For detailed discussions of this literature, see Thompson (1981; 1998).

[2] The Middle Kingdom experienced a democratization with the expanding population. 'The Coffin Texts eliminated the royal exclusivity of the Pyramid Tests, putting the texts at the disposal of all deceased persons and thus making the enjoyment of the afterlife something that all could attain; now, every deceased person was an Osiris NN' (Hornung, 1999, p. 9).

Even the ghost of the great hero Achilles laments his existence as a shade, as he cries out to the living Odysseus who does not, like the Sumerian Enkidu, actually descend into the underworld but merely stands at the sacrificial pit that serves as the threshold between the worlds of the living and the dead:

‘We ranked you with immortals in your lifetime,
We Argives did, and here your power is royal
Among the dead men’s shades. Think, then, Akhilleus:
You need not be so pained by death.’

To this

He answered swiftly:

‘Let me hear no smooth talk
of death from you, Odysseus, light of councils.
Better, I say, to break sod as a farm hand
for some poor country man, on iron rations,
than lord it over all the exhausted dead.’ (*Odyssey*, Book XI, ll. 571–81, p. 201).

As a product of culture, human existence is collective in its very nature, and just as it was collective in life, so is it in death. A king or a hero may reign among his servants in a shadowy copy of his former personality, or a tribal man may rest among his ancestors, but enlightenment and personal transcendence of the world of appetites and passions in the shame-culture of the tribe is beyond imagining. The soul of man is still caught in the evolutionary residue of a folk soul, or animal group soul, and the best one’s shade can hope for is to gain a momentary florescence in the act of being remembered by one’s group or descendants — and this is still the case today in Mexico with the archaic rituals of *el dia de los muertos*.

The Axial Age, with its global epiphany of prophets, from Orpheus and Pythagoras to Isaiah II, Buddha, Lao Tzu and Quetzalcoatl, seems to mark a critical turning point in the evolution of consciousness, for now the individual soul seems capable of knowing and expressing a higher truth than the received wisdom of the ancestors, the idols of the tribe. Eric Havelock has described this transition as the evolution from the life-force of the Homeric *thymos* to the Socratic *psyche*:

At some time toward the end of the fifth century before Christ, it became possible for a few Greeks to talk about their ‘souls’ as though they had selves or personalities which were autonomous and not fragments of the atmosphere nor of a cosmic life force, but what we might call entities or real substances (Havelock, 1991, p. 197).

Orphism was the vehicle in which this transition from *thymos* to *psyche* became articulated in hymns and instructions to the living on how to make their passage in the realm of the dead.

Orphism was a religion with a belief in immortality and in posthumous rewards and punishments. So far so good. But it had a more individual doctrine than that. Hades, with its prospect of torment and feasting, was not the end. There was the doctrine of the circle of birth, or cycle of births, and the possibility of ultimate escape from reincarnation to the state of perfected divinity (Guthrie, 1993, p. 164).

The figure of Orpheus, like that of Pythagoras or Quetzalcoatl, is a being of legend, so his story is more myth than history and serves as an allegorical performance of the truths to be passed from an initiate in the mysteries to the aspiring novice. Like Quetzalcoatl in Mesoamerica, he is a reformer who seeks to eliminate human sacrifice and carry humanity forward in its evolution from sorcery and blood magic to myth and a more stellar spirituality.³

Just as Enkidu was warned not to partake of the food of the dead, lest he be trapped in their underworld, so Orpheus is warned not to look back as he seeks to bring his beloved into light. In the esoteric practice of yoga nidra — the yoga of sleep meditation — the realm of imagery is an intermediate world of perception and deception, and only the realm of the *nadam*, of the cosmic sound, can enable the practitioner of yoga to reappropriate the realm of deep dreamless sleep in the waking state of clear mind — a state of consciousness called *samadhi*.

Orpheus, as a musician of the heavenly harp given to him by Apollo, is an initiate of this cosmic sound — this music of the heavenly spheres — but according to the mysteries, our human star nature has been mixed with the ashes of the Titans at our emergence on Earth, and so humanity is a dyadic and contradictory creature. Our spirit is split between body and soul, between Orpheus and Eurydice. Because our star spirit has been captured in the vestiges of the elemental spirits of earth and matter, we must rescue it by shifting consciousness away from the concrete density of visual imagery to the higher realm of imageless music. But Orpheus looks back, seeking to hold his soul in sight, and so he loses her entirely. As he returns to earth, alone and embittered, he spurns the love of women and becomes a lover of men. The metaphoric complementarity of male and female as a trope for the polarity of the incarnate being is lost.

This mythic trope, as allegory for initiates, is describing a blocking of the union of ego and psyche, or waking mind and dreaming mind, in a psychological implosion of the ego in narcissism: same is bonding to same in a projected form of self love. But the male body, beautiful or not, can never serve as an answer to the problem of death. Just as the Goddess Ishtar sought her revenge against the male-bonding and defiance of the heroes Gilgamesh and Enkidu, so now the Maeneads seek their revenge against the violation of archaic women's mysteries. The blood sacrifice that the reformer Orpheus had sought to eliminate is inflicted on him as he is torn to pieces by the Maeneads — those vestiges of the neolithic matrilineal culture of the sacrificial dying male and the enduring Great Mother.

In the terms of Jean Gebser's schema for the evolution of consciousness, Orpheus is the figure that marks the transition from the Magical to the Mythic

[3] For translations and an introductory essay, see Thompson (1983). For a different interpretation, see Florescano (1999); see p. 135 for his discussion of Olmec ceremonial centres. For the presence of the iconography of the Plumed Serpent in Olmec culture, see Gurthrie (1996), p. 84. My own poetic and speculative interpretation is that the poetry and the artifacts show a conflict between an archaic shamanic tradition and an emergent prophetic religion. In the archaic tradition of animal possession, the shaman projects his subtle body into a jaguar and brings about the birth of a half-human, half-jaguar baby. To propitiate this spirit, human sacrifice of fetuses in the womb are offered up — hence the presence of all these infants with jaguar features. Quetzalcoatl tries to suppress this tradition with a higher morality, and he establishes his palace and temple, but the sorcerers come to bring him down and return to their archaic ways of human sacrifice.

structure of consciousness.⁴ But the collective wins out, and just as the Renaissance was followed by the Inquisition and a new baroque economy of slavery with its extravagant display of wealth, so Orpheus's Apollonian reforms are followed by sacrificial rituals and his story is reappropriated into a cultural narrative of Dionysian ecstasy. The *psyche* remains trapped in the intermediate realm of imagery and the mind's identification of consciousness with imagery — the familiar world in which 'seeing is believing'.

But human spiritual evolution is not entirely stopped, and the reforms of the Axial Age are partially absorbed as Greek culture carries on with its transition from the Homeric *thymos* to the Orphic *psyche* — from the Bardic oral culture of the Archaic era to the new literate culture of the sacred text of the Classical era. As Steve Farmer has argued, it is the very portability of the new writing materials that serves to construct the Axial Age and spread the new values from India to Greece with Pythagoreanism in one direction, and from India to China with Buddhism in the other direction of the Silk Road.⁵ Indeed, in the evolution of consciousness from oral culture to literate civilization, the sacred text itself becomes the oxymoron that embodies our contradictory human nature. The text exists in the realm of imagery and is visually read, but it calls us back to a recollection (*anamnesis*) of our stellar nature. Death itself becomes less biological and collective — as it was in the neolithic and megalithic eras of collective burials — and becomes in the Classical era, more *psychological* and personal.

The shift from aural to alphabetic consciousness, as articulated by cultural historians like Marshall McLuhan, Eric Havelock and more recently Leonard Shlain (1998), is an external, sociological way of perceiving this cultural transformation. Steve Farmer's argument that the portability of writing materials served to stimulate the efflorescence of archaistic syncretisms in the face of innovation is another way of expressing McLuhan's triad that one new medium obsolesces a current medium and retrieves a previously obsolesced medium. In my own work and in Paolo Soleri's work in the 1970s — through the influence of Teilhard de Chardin's concepts — we termed this process 'miniaturization'.⁶

The inheritor of the contributions of the Axial Age of Pythagoras and Orpheus is, of course, Plato. But Plato does not put his faith in music as the yoga for uniting body and spirit; his distrust of the world of the senses leads him to reject the passionate stirrings of modal music and for his perfect utopian society, he send the poets into exile. In the place of Orphic music and poetry, he celebrates the abstract and the sublimed geometrical, fleshless figure in the new genre of philosophy. Plato's myths are not the kind that they were for Orpheus; they are mythic allegories as the new mental code of the soul — 'likely stories' that bridge the divide separating the Sensible and Intelligible worlds. The text that

[4] Gebser's is one of an unfoldment of structures of consciousness through Archaic, Magical, Mythical, Mental and Integral. See Gebser (1984).

[5] Lecture given at the Ross Institute, New York, August, 2001. See Farmer (1998), p. 96.

[6] 'What will enable the meta-industrial village to become more than a stagnant pond is the interiorization of consciousness, through new forms of contemplative education, and the miniaturization of technology' (Thompson, 1978, p. 93).

embodies this transition from the Gebserian Mythic to the Mental level of consciousness is the ‘Myth of Er’ from Plato’s *Republic*.

In this ‘likely story’ with which he ends this dialogue, Plato shifts from the dialectical search for the nature of truth, to the dramatic mode of myth and story. In a way, the dialogue has prepared us for this shift, for it opens with a description of the Panathenaic procession in which horseman passes the torch to horseman, and this serves as a trope for the rational soul seated atop the beast of the physical body and passing the torch of the search for truth from speaker to speaker as the dialogue progresses. But logic and the dialectical method only take us so far. Ultimately the Orphic and Pythagorean Plato returns to myth and ends his dialectical inquiry into the nature of justice with a tale of karma, forgetfulness and souls falling like shooting stars to their next birth, and their next chance to redeem themselves in a process of metempsychosis and moral refinement of their coarse appetites and passions. This essential text marks more than the first imagining of a political utopia, it expresses in itself the evolutionary shift from the shame-culture of the tribe to the guilt-culture of the individual (see Dodd, 1951), for the afterlife Er describes is now presented in moral and karmic terms of reward and punishment for one’s individual actions in life. Escape from the collective in individual transcendence and enlightenment can now be envisioned for any man, and not just a Pharaoh, a Pythagorean initiate or the yogic hermit of the Upanishads.

A more physiological and internal way of considering this cultural transformation from the Homeric *thymos* to the Orphic *psyche* was articulated in the seventies by the psychologist Julian Jaynes in his book *The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind* (1976).⁷ Indeed, one can argue that the whole movement of Consciousness Studies that followed — of which this journal is a prime expression — was greatly advanced by this seminal work. Jaynes argued that Achilles’ somnambulistic consciousness came from the projection of the processing of the imagistic mode of the right hemisphere into external space. Visions were experienced as literally taking place, so in the ‘Anger of Achilles’ Athena could be seen and felt by Achilles to restrain his anger and sword, though no one else saw Athena. Jaynes further argued that the corpus callosum was not yet functionally orchestrated to integrate the activities of the hemispheres and to recategorize hypnagogic activities exclusively to the dream-state.

Jaynes drew heavily on the German Classicist Bruno Snell’s book, *The Discovery of the Mind* (1982). But like many Classical scholars, Snell was not familiar with contemplative practices or even with Egyptian ideas concerning the subtle bodies, so Snell did not recognize that the Homeric *thymos* was not a Greek invention but simply a Greek translation of the Egyptian *ka*. In his understandable enthusiasm for his own fascinating insights and discoveries, Jaynes let go of the reins of scholarly restraint and tried to alter the chronology of literary texts to fit his theory. So the *Gilgamesh Epic* — which seemed too

[7] In my own lectures from this time, I was more critical of Jaynes — because of his Procrustean bed approach — than I would be now. Now I am more appreciative of his contribution in stimulating the growth of the new field of consciousness studies. See Thompson (1981/1996).

psychologically advanced to be so early — had to be redated and made to take on the date of its last copy in the Library of Ashurbanipal. Thus for Jaynes, the cultural transformation of the Axial Age was not caused by the rise of alphabetic and ideographic technologies or their transcultural portability; these were outward expressions of an evolutionary mutation in cerebral organization. It would not be until the 1980s and '90s that the new sciences of complexity, as popularized by the Chaos Collective at the University of California at Santa Cruz and the Santa Fe Institute, would help people to see that causation is rarely singular and linear, and that most often an emergent domain is brought forth through bottom-up chains of multiple and mutually interacting agents. Gebser, McLuhan, Havelock, Jaynes, Steve Farmer and I were all seeing aspects of the cultural phenomenology of the evolution of consciousness, but were focusing on what was closest to our own immediate world of experience.

Nothing is clearer when one goes from the epic of the *Iliad* to the *Odyssey* than that something has happened in the world view of humanity. Indeed, one of the reasons that I accepted the old eighteenth-century idea of 'Die Homerische Frage' — in which there are two Homers and not one — is because the *Odyssey* is so different in world view from the *Iliad*. Crafty Odysseus does not have the archaic somnambulistic consciousness of Achilles; his mind is clear, corporeal and discreet; he stands at the threshold of the underworld, but does not cross over or descend. Aeneas, the demigod as son of Venus, is able to descend, into the underworld, but even he must be accompanied by the archaic figure of the Cumaen sybil. Yet even in the case of the shamanistic sybil, human consciousness is now so discreet and stable — and no longer fluid and astrally permeable — that the god has to break in upon her if she is to become conscious of the visionary realms and prophesy. The image that Virgil presents is of the god breaking in a wild stallion. In the simile of a horseman forcing a bridle into the mouth of a wild horse, the god is presented as a hostile mode of consciousness that must be thrust into the mind and mouth of the sybil if he is to control her and speak prophetically out of her body.⁸

It is this ancient Greek vision of the Elysian Field of Plato's Myth of Er that Virgil both inherits and recalls, and it is clear in the entire narrative of the *Aeneid* that the *kairos* of Virgil in its cultural process of individuation has passed from the *thymos* of Homer to the *psyche* of Plato and on to the worldly ego with its dutiful sense of self in the illustrious example of '*pious Aeneas*'. In fact, the architectonic structure of the *Aeneid*, with its movement from Western Asia to Western Europe, and its soldierly rejection of love for a female Queen in favour of the founding of a patriarchal empire, is a recapitulation of an earlier movement from matrilineal to patriarchal, and is a newly energized performance of the shift from collectivist Asia to individualistic Rome with its grand imperial theatre of personal ambition, of arms and the man. But implicit in this shift from East to West is also an archetypal shift from *psyche* to *ego*. It is not the love of woman, or the experiences of the soul in subtle and immaterial realms that are to matter now; it

[8] See *Aeneid*, Book VI, ll. 75–80: 'tanto magis ille fatigat/ os rabidum, fera corda domans, fingitque premedo'.

is duty and action in the world; it is the world of Empire. Ego and Empire are co-dependantly originating psychological structures, in which humanity now leans more heavily towards rationality than towards psyche.

In terms of cultural evolution, for which mythological and literary texts serve as fossil records, we see here a developmental movement through three stages, or structures, *thymos*, *psyche* and *ego*. With *thymos*, the focus of attention is on the subtle energy body, the Egyptian *ka*, or the *pranayamakosha* in yogic psychology (see Mookerjee, 1982, p. 12). In this cultural complex, death seems to be collective, as if humans were still closely identified with the structure of a group soul rather than an individual one. With this formation in archaic Greece and ancient Egypt, we seem to be looking back towards an even more ancient formation of shamanism and animal possession. In Ice-Age art, the shaman is pictured in cave paintings and carvings as a human in animal form, or half-human, half-animal. Religion often preserves an ancient structure and envaluates it to see new formations or levels of cultural organization as evil. In the ancient culture of animal possession and blood sacrifice, Orpheus and Quetzalcoatl are threats to the ways of sorcery and magic. They represent a movement away from possession and group consciousness towards individuation.

At the psychic level of organization, the individual is represented as a dyadic being, one split between conscious and unconscious, between a social life of norms and duty, and a pull backward to the unconscious through erotic transfiguration and death. This dyadic mode of being is polarized between sex and death, so the archetypal iconography for this cultural construction is that of the male body as the waking consciousness and the female soul as the dreaming and visionary consciousness: Orpheus and Euridyce. But as the process of individuation continues to develop in the classical Roman world, there is a reversal of this signification of the soul as feminine and the ego as masculine. In the myth of 'Psyche and Eros', as retold in Apuleius' *Golden Ass*, it is the god who comes by night that is presented as masculine and the receptive personality that is presented as feminine. Indeed, the whole story of the invisible lover who must not be seen seems to echo with mystical allusions that take us back to Gnostic and Kabbalistic sources. The sisters of Psyche, who are jealous of her intimacy with the god, recall the angels who were jealous at the creation of man and refused to bow down and adore God's latest creation — as is told in both the Hebraic Midrash and the Koran. Since the angels and jinn were made of light and fire, they were repelled at adoring a creature made out of mud. If the sisters are thus an echo of the jealous angels, then Psyche is a trope for the uniqueness of the human soul and Eros is a metaphor for the indwelling god, the hidden god that is intimately embedded with its beloved individual being. The stricture that Psyche is not to try to 'see' the god is, of course, an echo of the interdiction to Orpheus that he should not try to turn and 'see' Euridyce as he leads her out of the underworld. The mystical significance of this trope is that the divine substratum of the human being is not experienced in the waking or dreaming consciousness, but only in the fullness of a non-perceptual mind that is experienced in deep, dreamless sleep. It is this state of mind that the yogi of the *Upanishads* is taught to try to

reappropriate in the *samadhi* of meditation — a mode of higher consciousness that is not dreaming or restricted to the perceptual field of wakeful consciousness. What ‘Psyche and Eros’ represents is an evolution of consciousness in which a higher self is only available to Mind — as opposed to conscious awareness — through the higher dimensional modes beyond three-dimensional perception.

In this evolution of Graeco-Roman culture from psyche to ego, there arises in the exoteric, secular realm of life a turning away from the female to the call of duties in the imperial world, and this is archetypally expressed in Aeneas turning away from Dido to found Rome and the beginnings of Western Europe. But coeval with this emergence of egohood in the classical world is a new mythic narrative in which the soul does not simply descend into the underworld, but journeys upwards through the solar and starlit heavens — as we see in the Jewish apocalyptic texts of *The Book of Enoch* and the Christian apocryphal *Vision of Paul* (see Barnstone, 1984, pp. 485, 537). Here the focus of consciousness seems to be shifting from the waking mind to another mode, one that is not unconscious or dreaming but rather of ‘spirit’ or a higher mind in which the world is no longer three dimensional, but has higher dimensionality. If we apply the yogic terminology of the energy sheaths that constitute the fully incarnate being, then the *thymos* is the Egyptian *ka*, or the Vedic *pranamayakosa*, and the *psyche* is the Egyptian *ba* or the Vedic *manomayakosa*, and the journey through the heavens is effected with the higher minds of the Pharaohonic *Sahu*, or the Vedic *vijnanamayakosa* and the *anatamayakosa*.

In ancient Egypt, Osiris became Lord of the Dead, but in the Judeo-Christian *kairos*, Christ is presented as more than the Lord of the shadowy realm of the dead; he is presented as the solar logos, the risen Lord of all the worlds. The text that marks this transition is the *Gospel of Nicodemus* that presents ‘Christ’s Harrowing of Hell’ (Barnstone, 1984, p. 374) and his release of Adam and Eve. Humanity is no longer bound to the sublunary world of life and death, the waking mind and the dreaming mind.

For this developing Christian tradition, it is important to emphasize that ‘spiritual’ experiences are not taking place in the psychic realm, or out-of-the-body astral travel. These modes of religious practice become devalued and placed down in the realm of sorcery and witchcraft. It is the witch who travels by night to out-of-the-body congresses with shades and demons. So it is important to the author of the third-century apocryphal text, ‘The Vision of Paul’, to emphasize that his vision of the higher worlds did not transpire while he was dreaming or was in some astral out-of-the body state: ‘While I was in the body in which I was snatched up to the third heaven, the word of the Lord came to me . . .’ (Jones, 1950, p. 4). In the Islamic continuation of this Judeo-Christian tradition, this journey to the heavens becomes Mohammed’s Night Journey — the *Miraj Nama* — and on the basis of this text, Avicenna develops a complex psychology of multiple states of perception and consciousness (see Heath, 1992, pp. 107–44). New directions in Islamic studies are beginning to show how deeply embedded Mohammed’s vision is in this Judeo-Christian tradition, and

that parts of the Koran in fact derived from pre-existing Christian and Aramaic texts; so, perhaps, world peace may be advanced if we come to appreciate the continuities more than the discontinuities within the Abrahamic religions.⁹

The consummation and, indeed, finishing of this journey through heaven and hell so intensely articulated in the Judeo-Christian and Islamic traditions comes, of course, with Dante's *Divine Comedy*. That Dante was familiar with popular Islamic renderings of Mohammed's Night Journey is now harder to deny than it was when Christians came to the defence of Christianity's supreme genius to reject Asin Palacio's contentions concerning Arabic influences (see Anderson, 1983, p. 277), but even granting these Islamic influences, it is important to recognize that Dante takes the journey to a whole new level of topological complexity. The three realms of hell, purgatory and heaven can be recognized as presenting the medieval architecture of consciousness of vegetative, sensitive and rational functions with their indwelling spirits — as opposed to the Vedic sheaths or *kosas* — that derives from Aristotle's *De Anima* (see Anderson, 1983, p. 109); but in presenting the nature of consciousness in heaven, Dante goes beyond even Aristotle and his Arab commentators in an intuitive and inspired vision of the higher dimensionality of a hypersphere. It was the physicist Mark Peterson who first pointed out that the geometry described in the vision of the *primum mobile* and the Angel sphere of Canto 28 of the *Paradiso* is that of a 3-sphere (Peterson, 1979).

Contemporary psychology recognizes conscious and unconscious realms, for the brain can respond to stimuli without bothering to go through the realm of the restricted field of conscious awareness. Electroencephalographs of sleeping infants, for example, have shown that an infant's brain is listening and responding to and learning the phonological distinctions of the mother's language even while it is sleeping (see Cheour *et al.*, 2002). Lullabies, therefore, are not a frivolous exercise for mother and infant! So the conscious/unconscious distinction of mental functioning is familiar to us. What is not so familiar — outside the esoteric circle of contemplative practitioners of yogic and Buddhist systems of meditation — is the conscious/superconscious distinction. In the field of normal awareness, consciousness is localized and focused; in *samadhi* or higher states of enlightened mind, consciousness is non-local. If one is in three-dimensional space, one can look at the square of a wall or floor, but be aware that one is in the room of the three-dimensional cube. In Dante's Canto 28, and also in Fra Angelico's painting, the Cortona *Annunciation*, the angel cannot fit into the confines of the three-dimensional space of Mary's room or the tight restrictions of linear flowing time. In the case of Fra Angelico's painting, the fall and the redemption are happening simultaneously as facets of a hypersphere crystal. The curve of the angel's wings that stick out of the cube create an arc that infers a larger circle, one that alludes to the circles of the prophet Elijah and the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove that are between the Angel Gabriel and Mary. The clue to the resolution of three-dimensional space and historical time by the

[9] See Alexander Stille's comments on the scholarship of Christoph Luxenberg in Germany in Stille (2002).

phenomenology of the hypersphere is hinted at in the brocade of the material covering Mary's chair, for it shows a two-dimensionally flattened rendering of a torus (see Abraham, in press). In the circulation of movement towards the basin of attraction at the centre of the torus, outside becomes inside and past and future become the sides of the torus, or the wings of the angel. Prebirth and afterdeath are simultaneously present in the hypersphere of — what shall we call it? — hyperconsciousness.

In many ways, humanity does not seem to have taken this artistic rendering of the evolution of consciousness further than in the work of Dante and Fra Angelico. James Joyce, in his *Finnegans Wake*, most certainly did give us a sophisticated biospheric modelling of the 'commodius vicus of recirculation' of conscious and unconscious in the transpersonal life of *Here Comes Everybody*, but he did not present us with the hypersphere of mystical states of *samadhi* or *satchitananda*. Looking around now at our most distinguished English language poets — writers such as John Ashbery or Seamus Heaney — it does not seem as if they or any other poet out there, male or female, is capable of picking up where Dante and Fra Angelico left off. The *genius* of contemporary humanity is wed to technology and not to the hidden god who comes to us by night or poetry and art, so we shall have to wait to see if this marriage is made in heaven — or not.

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