

**NATURE, THEOPHANY AND THE
REHABILITATION OF CONSCIOUSNESS**



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Nature, Theophany and the Rehabilitation of Consciousness

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Cover photograph by *Clive Hicks* © (The Bamberg “Green Man.” In: Anderson 1990. Pg 114)

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“The order of nature has recalled over the ages and across many religious frontiers the order both within us and beyond us. Nature has not only displayed the wisdom of God through her order and harmony but has also carried out incessantly a discourse about those spiritual realities that constitute the very substance of our existence. Her order has been nothing other than our order, and her harmony that inner harmony which still chants the eternal melody at the center of our being despite the cacophony of our ego dispersed in its world of forgetfulness. The limbs of nature are our limbs, her life our life, and her destruction our destruction” – **Seyyed Hossein Nasr** ¹

“There is a balance, an ‘essential community being visible and invisible things’ and it is the function of theophanic perception to reveal this community as it is within the power of each being to perceive. To train our senses to recognize this community even dimly, is to begin to realize the ‘cognitive function of sympathy’ and to sense in the presence of the beings of this world the harmonies that resonate through all the worlds beyond. To live in sensate sympathy with the beings of the world requires that we experience the spaces that extend singing between the Terrible Majesty of the Unattainable *Deus absconditus* and the Beauty and Glory of the *Deus revelatus*” – **Tom Cheetham** ²

“Difficult relationships, discordance or conflict, whether between individuals or societies, implies incompatible components, states and systems that do not connect or relate. Natural order is based on connectedness, harmony and appropriate linkages. Whatever we encounter in existence is maintained through the invisible connecting threads of the unifying field of life. The supreme consciousness energises creation, both at a hierarchical level, as well as heterarchical. There are vertical transmissions, as well as lateral and multidimensional. Although we often perceive divine power emitting from top to bottom, it is equally true to see it from bottom to top, as well as from the centre to the peripheries and vice versa. God is in all and all is in god...” – **Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri** ³

“On the Earth are Signs for those of assured faith, as also in yourself. Will you not then see?” – **al-Qur’an** ⁴

¹ Nasr 1996. Pg 24

² Cheetham 2005. Pg 78

³ Haeri 2006. Pg 159

⁴ 51:20-21

Preface

We have more degrees but less sense; more knowledge but less judgements; more experts but more problems; more medicines, but less healthiness. We've been all the way to the moon and back, but we have trouble crossing the street to meet the new neighbour. We build more computers to hold more information, to produce more copies than ever, but we have less communication. We have become long on quantity but short on quality. These are the times of fast foods, but slow digestion; tall man, but short character; steep profits, but shallow relationships. It is a time when there is much in the window, but nothing in the room.⁵

We live in a time of immense social, psychological and environmental change. Enrapt by politically heroic (and yet unsustainable) solutions; multi-national research bias; "PowerPoint" presentation charts (aspiring to ninety-degree trend-lines); new "World Records" on "*BREAKING NEWS!*"; precision-guided missiles; broadband uploads / downloads on hyper-threaded CPUs (with "*the world at our fingertips*"); "think-tank" video conferencing; post-human bio-technology; "*Scientifically Proven!*"; "*NEW!*"; "*NOW!*"; "*WOW!*"; "Wi-Fi" mobile connectivity; "*That's Entertainment!*"; "*must-have*" manufactured needs; Celebrity TV; Pop-Quiz Game-Show; high-speed car chases with guns blazing; "Wrestle Mania;" "Da Vinci" porcelain veneers; "heroin-chic" anorexia on fashion cat-walks; silicone sunsets on Miami Beaches – and munching on a cheeseburger delivered by a clown in a yellow and red costume, to the theme tune of "*We are the Champions*" – it seems as though we are sufficiently desensitized to the extreme realities that surround us. "*What-eh-va!*" is fast becoming our most admired and most broadcast catchphrase. If the corporate boardroom doesn't get to us first, we can be sure that the product packaging or the metrosexual fashion-police will. No-thanks to the latest in pop-psychology, it is clear that hyper-entertainment and hedonism are gaining ground as prescription for our current malaise; regular doses of this medication are enough to distract anyone who might sense any madness in global affairs. It appears we are so high on "*YES!*" we have forgotten the value of "*No.*"⁶

Having worked in environmental support and observed the wanton destruction of nature and its associated ecosystems (intricate feed-back systems integral to human survival on earth), I am undoubtedly concerned as to the future of all things natural on this planet. However, I am equally concerned about human perception, the paradigms or technologies that shape our

⁵ Dalai Lama

⁶ See also: Wilkerson, J. 2006. *Energy and Psyche: Resource Addiction in the Technological Age*: <http://www.ecopsychology.org/journal/ezine/archive3/addiction.pdf> (accessed 2006)

perception, and the degree to which this perception impinges on the outer world. Like many others I have come to realize that an ecologically “sustainable” future cannot be achieved merely through Environmental Law, Protected-Area Management and the rehabilitation of degraded ecosystems. Parallel to these undeniably important and laudable disciplines, it is essential that we move towards an understanding and rehabilitation of *consciousness* – the reality of which will be briefly discussed in the introductory chapter that follows.

If, according to the most progressive fields of study, human consciousness is shown to be interconnected and interdependent with the natural world and thus natural order, then a significant part of the ecological crisis – if not the primary cause – is the *way* in which we view the natural environment; *how* we perceive of, or ascribe value to, nature and cosmos. Thus, ecological stability is invariably related to the *degree of ontological stability and integration* within human consciousness. It is within this context of globalization, a deteriorating natural environment and a crisis of consciousness, that “*Nature, Theophany and the Rehabilitation of Consciousness*” [hereafter referred to as *NTRC*] has been produced.

NTRC is a continuation on themes already developed in the works of Seyyed Hossein Nasr (*In the Beginning was Consciousness; Religion and the Order of Nature*), Martin Lings (*Symbol and Archetype: A Study of the Meaning of Existence*), Tom Cheetham (*Green Man, Earth Angel: The Prophetic Tradition and the Battle for the Soul of the World*), William Anderson (*Green Man: The Archetype of Our Oneness with the Earth*), René Guenon (*Fundamental Symbols*); Frithjof Schuon (various works) and – as relates to the cosmology of self and soul – Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri (*The Journey of the Self; Witnessing Perfection*).⁷

NTRC is not intended to be a polished thesis – in fact the author is not an academic – it aims to bring awareness to certain contemporary issues and to stimulate discussion on the themes presented. In appealing to a wide spectrum of readers, there may be some who feel the work fails to effectively address ecological issues, owing to the inclusion of spiritual, metaphysical or mythical principles; or conversely that it fails to honour the Divine Absolute by expounding secular ecosystemic thought (or is perceived as promoting ‘pantheist’ ideals). There is no satisfactory answer, other than (for the scholars), “*We are all still learning;*” and (for the religious), “*We are all returning.*”

In order to highlight the essential reality of divine order, it has become necessary to use terms such as “supra-sensory,” “meta-historical,” “supra-rational,” “trans-personal,” etc. Please

⁷ I have also recently read a sample offering of a new publication by Camille Helminski (*The Book of Nature: A Sourcebook of Spiritual Perspectives on Nature and the Environment*). While I have yet to obtain and read in full this work, the Table of Contents suggests it to be a meaningful and valuable anthology.

note that this is not an attempt to repudiate the senses, historical record, the rational mind, or the personal self; neither is it to imply that the divine order is a distant and/or disconnected state. On the contrary, prophetic tradition speaks of divine *presence* and has indicated that the “Ground of Being” (i.e. pure consciousness) is “nearer to [us] than [our] jugular vein.”⁸ On this point, the perceived distancing factor between the conditioned self and the unconditioned Spirit is considered proportionate to the degree of “egotism” of the self.⁹ If an image in a mirror seems vague or impossible to discern, this may be due to the extent of the layers of dust obscuring the image / mirror. To polish the mirror or to clarify the lens of perception is to bring into view and into proximity, that which was thought to be far. Hence, human proximity or remoteness to the divine reality must be considered from a qualitative perspective and not reduced to a quantitative “nearness” or “distance.”

On a final practical note: within the footnote sections, when web-site (date) details are noted as “accessed,” this is to indicate the date the website data / research was accessed, and not the publication date of the article / paper.

⁸ Qur’an (50:16)

⁹ What is meant by *egotism*, *self*, and *spirit / soul* will be discussed in the following chapters.

Introduction

This publication is built upon the premise that everything in existence, whether in the seen or unseen worlds, is an expression or distortion, in some form or degree of manifestation, of *consciousness*.¹ According to Seyyed Hossein Nasr, consciousness was not only “In the Beginning...” but is also “in principle” and is thus true currently.²

Consciousness is... the most primary reality through which we know and judge every other reality... It is logically absurd to deny the primacy of consciousness, because as soon as we do so, we do it through consciousness.³

When discussing consciousness, what is being referred to – from an ontological standpoint – is the very substance of Being.⁴

Consciousness, for traditional civilizations, for religions and traditional philosophies, is not only a state. It is a substance and not a process. It is something that *is* [like Being itself] which at its highest level of reality is at once luminous and numinous. Consciousness at its elevated levels is at once knowing and knowing that it knows, knowledgeable of its own knowledge. It is at once the source of all sentience, of all experience, and beyond all experience of the knowledge that something is being experienced [emphasis mine].⁵

¹ Seyyed Hossein Nasr. *In the Beginning of Creation was Consciousness*. Harvard Lecture, May 2003: <http://www.hds.harvard.edu/news/bulletin/articles/nasr.html> (accessed 2006). Originally published as: Nasr, S. H. 2003. In the Beginning was Consciousness. In: *Sophia: The Journal of Traditional Studies*. Volume 9 Number 1. The Foundation for Traditional Studies.

[For some people the term 'consciousness' is problematic in that it is often associated or equated with what, in the field of psychology, is commonly referred to as the "conscious mind" (i.e. as different from the 'subconscious', 'unconscious' or 'supra-conscious' mind). I will be using the term, as defined by Nasr in the main text above]

² Ibid

³ Ibid

⁴ Further understanding may be gained if we consider consciousness from the viewpoint of the traditional sciences, where it was approached through the symbol of light. Today's study of consciousness is, in many respects, a continuation of yesteryear's "science of lights." Light is still the symbol *par excellence* for consciousness [see: Scott, T. 2006. Weaving the symbolism of light. In: *Vincit Omnia Veritas* II, 1:

<http://religioperennis.org/documents/Editorial/Issue4/issue11.pdf>]

Unfortunately we are living in an era where our academic frameworks for understanding appear to be *solely* that of worldly 'logic' and 'rationality', and it is important that this "science of lights" be afforded some representation within current research frameworks; hence its contemporary psycho-spiritual rendering as 'consciousness' [There is certainly nothing wrong with the faculty rationality – it is an important part of our human constitution. What makes it inappropriate is when it is exercised to the pathological exclusion of all other faculties, or if the divine reality (for example) is reduced to pure rationalism]. What tends to put many people off is the *idea* of 'consciousness', not consciousness *as it is in itself* (as ontological substance) or as it manifests within the cosmological order. In this regard we need not step outside of reality to see the order of reality. It is not a case of putting on another pair of tinted eye-glasses; it is about taking them off. It is not about acquisition, it is about 'unveiling' – it is about realization of what *is*: seeing things as they truly are. Hence the Prophet Mohammed's (p.b.u.h.) statement: "*Lord, show me things as they truly are*" (*arini haqaiq al-ahsya kama hiya*)

⁵ Seyyed Hossein Nasr. *In the Beginning of Creation was Consciousness*. Harvard Lecture, May 2003: <http://www.hds.harvard.edu/news/bulletin/articles/nasr.html> (accessed 2006). Originally published as: Nasr, S. H. 2003. In the Beginning was Consciousness. In: *Sophia: The Journal of Traditional Studies*. Volume 9 Number 1. The Foundation for Traditional Studies.

It will be argued that human consciousness – at both an individual and collective level – is suffering from varying degrees of dispersal, fragmentation or dissociation and that this in turn continues to affect the state and health of the world we live in.⁶ The multi-disciplinary field of Ecopsychology has shown that the human mind is inextricably intertwined with the natural world and therefore responds to ecological integrity – as well as affects it.⁷ Our environmental and socio-political crises are thus considered, fundamentally, to be the result of a crisis of consciousness.⁸ It has further been asserted, notably by the *religio perennis*, that the root of this crisis is to be found in the (conceptual) collapse of the supra-physical and the Divine Absolute into a reductive⁹ Cartesian scientism,¹⁰ which has further paved the way for a rampant techno-industrialism, a loss of awareness of the sacred, a loss of (meaningful) connection and a loss of ‘soul’.¹¹

That is sacred which in the first place is attached to the transcendent order, secondly possesses the character of absolute certainty, and thirdly, eludes the comprehension of the ordinary human

⁶ It is important to note that by stating physicality – and by extension a physical world in time and space (subject to duality and plurality) – we are simultaneously acknowledging (to a certain degree) the reality of dispersion. The manifest world is not an absolute solid / permanent order of reality and is thus continually subject to varying degrees and states of dissolution and re-creation, and hence movement and dynamism. Dispersal, through a process of involution into time, space and physicality, is thus an inevitable factor in the physical, manifest or created realms. However, integral to our understanding of these space-time domains, and the health thereof, is a dynamic state of *equilibrium*, which ensures and maintains order (i.e. *kosmos*) within the seen and unseen domains. To acknowledge, in the Platonic sense, that “beauty is the splendour of the true,” is to inevitably acknowledge *harmony* and *equilibrium* (both reflective of permanent divine attributes) as being desirable states in a multi-dimensional and multifaceted cosmos. Therefore, equilibrium and the cosmological order are essential to the rehabilitation of human consciousness due to them being interconnected and interdependent. For an informed account of the nature and purpose of creation / existence and the cosmology of the self and soul, please refer to: Haeri 2006

⁷ Roszak 1992; Fox 1995; Kanner 1995; Lazlo 1996; Capra 1997; Kidner 2000; Fisher 2002; de Quincey 2002; Winter 2003

[*Ecology* (mainstream or “shallow”) is the science and study of species interrelationships and the environment within which they relate. *Deep Ecology* developed out of the ecological crisis through recognition that humans are invariably connected to all living entities and ecosystemic processes (hence the terms *interconnectedness* and *interdependence*). Deep Ecology sees the ecological crisis as a crisis of anthropologic ‘consciousness’ whereby ecological functioning and health is affected by humanity’s perception of itself, the world and our value systems. *Ecopsychology*, as a multidisciplinary field (e.g. Deep Ecology, Psychology, System’s Thinking, etc), is the attempt to understand the often ignored / misunderstood reality of consciousness, and its interconnected, interdependent relationship with the physical / material world, within the context of the present ecological crisis.

⁸ In view of the fact that the ecological crisis has been linked to a crisis of consciousness – namely a fragmenting human consciousness – many well-meaning scholars and ecologists have tended to distance themselves from any further study of consciousness. As indicated earlier, the problem is not consciousness *per se* but that we tend to either deny the reality and significance of consciousness while fixating on a “positivist” empiricism, or merely equate it with the “Conscious Mind” of mainstream psychology, or reduce it to solely the content of the discursive mind: consciousness then becomes ‘thought’ and ‘thought-process’. Thus when spiritual concepts such as theophany are presented within the framework of consciousness, there is an immediate (though understandable) distrust. According to the framework being presented, the rational mind and its associated reason / logic only occupy a limited zone of a multidimensional and multifaceted spectrum of consciousness, which may appear quite “irrational” according to rational logic. In this way, an epistemological bias in favour of positivism, empiricism or rationalism signals the depreciation of consciousness, both in quality of substance and insofar as this term is used as a *signifier* of ontological substance.

⁹ “Reductionism” (in general) is the idea that “any phenomenon can be arbitrarily well approximated by an explanation in terms of microscopic physical laws;” or “the explanation of the whole in terms of its parts.”

¹⁰ Sherrard 1991; Nasr 1996 [See also: Kalin, I. 2007. The Sacred versus the Secular: Nasr on Science: In: *Vincit Omnia Veritas* III, 1: <http://religioperennis.org/documents/Editorial/Issue5/IssueIII1.pdf> Pp 73-91]

¹¹ Ibid; Cheetham 2005

mind... The sacred is the presence of the centre in the periphery... The sacred introduces a quality of the absolute into relativities and confers on perishable things a texture of eternity.¹²

The 'real work' for us is simultaneously a spiritual, ethical and physical struggle. 'Like' can only be known by 'like': this means that thought and being are inseparable, that ethics and perception are complementary. The form of the soul is the form of your world. This fundamental unity of the faculties of human cognition and the world to which they give access is that eternal pagan substrate of all religion... This sympathy is at once perceptual and cognitive and requires an attitude towards reality that the modern world has nearly completely forgotten. It is a stance towards reality that gives weight to the display of the image, denying the schism between the inner and the outer, the subjective and the objective.¹³

The environmental crisis has a religious, theological, spiritual basis, and is not just the result of bad engineering, as some people still think. But the crisis has a deeper root. I think that it has everything to do with what we think of the world around us. What is this tree that I am looking at through the window? If it is just wood for my fireplace, or if the fox is just skin to put around my wife's neck, or this mountain is just the place to extract iron ore and make cars, that is a very different attitude than if I look upon these things as *sharing my own reality, including consciousness* [emphasis mine].¹⁴

The central ideological claim of scientism, that the only reality is that which can be superficially observed and measured, strips the displayed Book of Nature of its sacred significance. Thus divested of purpose or meaning, its beautiful and majestic signs and similitudes, whether in the "farthest horizons" or within ourselves, are no longer seen as indications of an originating intelligence but only as phenomena referring to nothing outside their own self-sufficient laws and mechanisms.¹⁵

From the perspective of traditional metaphysics¹⁶ there is no need for humans to subvert natural order in the quest for development or civilization; we just need to respectfully realize our unique

¹² Schuon 1994

¹³ Cheetham 2005. Pp 109-110.

¹⁴ Seyyed Hossein Nasr. *In the Beginning of Creation was Consciousness*. Harvard Lecture, May 2003: <http://www.hds.harvard.edu/news/bulletin/articles/nasr.html> (accessed 2006). Originally published as: Nasr, S. H. 2003. In the Beginning was Consciousness. In: *Sophia: The Journal of Traditional Studies*. Volume 9 Number 1. The Foundation for Traditional Studies.

¹⁵ Jeremy Hanzell-Thomas. 2004. *Mythical Meaning, Religion and Soulful Education: Reviving the Original Sense of 'Intellect'*. Pg 17. <http://thebook.org/tep-articles/uploads/edinburgh.pdf>

¹⁶ Nasr (1996, Pg 103) comments: "[M]ost of the so-called metaphysical systems in European thought, certainly the most well-known ones, were based on a philosophy of nature 'which was the mechanistic hypothesis of the physico-mathematical method.' This was not metaphysics in the traditional sense as one finds in the works of Śankara or Ibn 'Arabī or within the Western tradition in a Plato or Plotinus or in more recent times in a Böhme or von Baader. Rather, it was a generalization based upon the mathematization and quantification of nature that separated the order of nature from the intelligible world in the Platonic sense, from the moral principles dominating over human life, and from any spiritual reality that human beings and nature could share save through the physical reality of matter and

position within this intricate “web-of-life” (i.e. *kosmos*) and accordingly align ourselves with divine purpose.

While it is true that some traditional doctrines speak of cycles of time, tradition itself is not opposed to the temporal or created realm. Rather, tradition advocates a “cleansing of perceptions” so that we can perceive this realm as the sacred effusion of the divine. It is not a particular age that tradition opposes but a particular blindness or insensitivity.¹⁷

[Firstly,] the order of nature is related to an order ‘beyond’ itself, to what we might call ‘spiritual principles’... Second, the order of nature has a purpose, a meaning, and this meaning has spiritual and moral significance for human beings. Third, the human and natural orders are intertwined in a bi-unity in such a way that their destinies are interrelated, not only here and now but even in that ultimate state that is eschatological. Fourth, the laws of man and the laws of nature are not totally distinct but are again closely interrelated and in some traditions, the same, as seen in such key concepts as *Tao*, *rta*, *dharma*, *Dyke*, *al-Shariah*, and *sunnah*. Finally, Earth is man’s teacher and man can learn from the order of nature not only quantitatively but also morally, intellectually and spiritually.¹⁸

Surely in the variation of the night and the day, and that which God¹⁹ has created in the heavens and the earth, there are Signs for a people who keep their duty.²⁰

Likewise, according to the hermetic principle “as above, so below” or “as within, so without,” we have no inherent need to subvert or commercially manipulate archetypal patterns or principles of consciousness;²¹ we just need shift our attentive awareness from the lower (egocentric) self²² – with its petty concern for worldly power, wealth and fame – towards the

motion. The consequences of such a perspective for the human condition and its catastrophic results for the very survival of life on earth were immense, but they are only now becoming evident for all to see.”

¹⁷ Lakhani, M.A: Umberto Eco, Fascism and Tradition. In: *Sacred Web: A Journal of Tradition and Modernity*, Vol. 11. Sacred Web Publishing, Canada.

¹⁸ Ibid. Pp 64-65

¹⁹ “We must understand that this word ‘God’ has the following synonyms: Reality, The Source of Life, The Most Subtle State of Everything. The love of God is the love of the greatest Truth. This quest concerns Reality, not religion. The ‘love of God’ is our essential relationship with what is most Real.” In: Helminski, 2000. Pg 4. It is with this ‘God’ in mind that this publication uses the term.

²⁰ Qur’an (10:6)

²¹ From the viewpoint of traditional metaphysics, an ‘archetype’ is principally a permanent *divine* attribute (i.e. Ideal or Supernal Archetype) within the trans-personal realm of Spirit. It is pure divinity, pre-existent and undiminished by “time” or “space” [these attributes are aspects of the Unmanifest Absolute / Divine Essence in the act of self-manifestation (Izutsu 1984. Pg 11)]. Through a process of emanation into the (supra-rational / supra-sensory) *causal* realm of consciousness, the archetype is established as *principle / force / organizational stability* with potential for creation and creational patterns / relations within time / space constructs. Cosmological principle and pattern are actualized (i.e. given discernable, but still supra-physical and trans-rational, form) through the *imaginal* realm (*mundus imaginalis*): the *formation* of prototype, image, symbolic and subtle energy inter-relations. The archetypes are given final expression in the *physical* form of cosmos and nature and are refined in sacred symbol.

²² By “egocentric” or “ego-oriented” I am not referring to the “ego” of formal psychological definition (i.e. the development of *self*); I am referring specifically to the narcissistic (and divine-denying) “commanding” self (*al-nafs al-*

pre-eminent divine attributes already resplendent within the very core of our being: an order of reality that is ultimately trans-personal.²³ With this essential ontological recognition and alignment (viz. *dhikr / zachor / simraan*), there comes a corresponding *transformation of self*,²⁴ worthy of the terms “development;” “civilized progression;” “accomplishment.” In this regard when the term “authentic self” or “essential self” is being examined, this is in reference to the human self (*nafs / nephesh / jivatma*) that has been positively transformed by virtue of awakening to the “vertical” reality or presence of the divine and is thus receptive or responsive to the Ground of Being (*rûh al-qudsi / rûah ha-qodesh / paramatman*) in its state of “Oneness” or “Gatheredness” (*ahadiya / wahadiya*). As will be made clear, the term “essential self” should not be interpreted as meaning “I am God.”

In short then, human nature is comprised of the personal, conditioned, limited, ephemeral consciousness of the *self*²⁵ – which has potential for development – and the trans-personal, unconditioned, unlimited, eternal consciousness of *Spirit / Soul / Pure Consciousness*,²⁶ “the connecting point of these two distinct domains [being a psycho-spiritual organ of perception known as] the Heart,²⁷ where the rational self meets the soul’s consciousness.”²⁸ Hence, an informed and balanced perspective with an understanding or actual cognition of the transformed higher self and its relation to the Divine Absolute is essential to the life-transaction (*dîn*) of all human beings.²⁹

ammara). Self-absorption in a two year-old is a natural and understandable disposition, but narcissistic tendencies or the egocentric “commanding self” in adults, who have not as yet taken to a development of ‘self’, is a particularly destructive stage to have fixated on.

²³ These divine orders of consciousness and divine attributes are often not perceived due to the fact that our attention is constantly being distracted by commercial stimuli that are typically outside of ourselves and seemingly always beyond reach, such as the “newest model” or the “latest update,” which forever keeps us spellbound and leads our consciousness astray (i.e. in vastly dispersed states).

²⁴ *nafs al-ammara* (the commanding self)... *nafs al-mulhama* (the inspired self)... *nafs al-kamila/safiyyah* (the complete/pure self) [For a more informed account of the cosmology/journey of ‘self’, please refer to: Haeri 1991 & 2006]

See also: Helminski, K. 2004. *What is a Human Being: The structure of the self within spiritual psychology*. <http://thebook.org/tep-articles/uploads/humanbeing.pdf> (accessed 2006)

²⁵ Known as *an-nafs* in Arabic, and as *jivatma* in the Vedantic tradition.

²⁶ “Pure consciousness” is considered ‘pure’ in that it is beyond subject-object polarity. In the Vedantic tradition, “pure consciousness” is referred to as *atman* (or *paramatman*); in Arabic-Islam as *rûh* (or *rûh al-quddûs*); in Hebrew-Judaism as *ruah ha-qodesh* (or *yechidah*); in the Christian metaphysical tradition, it is referred to as *spirit* or *spiritûs* [the term “soul” is generally used in reference to those domains of consciousness Carl Jung classified as the “psyche”]. In classical Greek, Spirit is referred to as *pneuma*; Plato refers to it as *agathon* (First Logos) or *Inner Man*; Philo as the *Soul of the soul*; Plotinus as *First Intellect* or *Divine Intellect*. It is the Egyptian *Amon* and the Nazorai-Mandaeen *Primal Adam / Hidden Power*; it is the *pleroma* of Gnosis. Within many contemporary psycho-spiritual frameworks, “Soul” is often interchanged with “Spirit.” This variation and crossover in terminology often causes confusion. In these instances, it is of value to refer contemporary terminology back to traditional metaphysical frameworks for clarification. For the purposes of NTRC, and in keeping with current conventions, I will be using the terms *Spirit, Pure Consciousness, Ground of Being* or *the One Reality* (depending on the appropriate context / perspective).

²⁷ *qalb* in Arabic

²⁸ Haeri 2006. Pg 80

²⁹ See: Haeri 1991 & 2006

One of the many disastrous consequences of an ongoing repression of this trans-personal Ground of Being³⁰ – and the mistaken assumption of the Absolute by a relative entity or self – is epitomized in our techno-industrial pursuit to convert the earth into one large global factory – reinforced by multinational monopoly.³¹ Herein, nature is viewed simply as exploitable “raw material” for a “manufacturing” process aimed at churning out “products” for the “consumer.” This apparent narrowing of human perspective is the logical result of paradigmatic trends linking back to the so-called Age of Enlightenment.³² With the advent of Positivist philosophy, Cartesian dualism and the resulting scientific reductionism – and hence an increased denial of all metaphysical realities – these paradigmatic trends were naturally followed by a human failure to correctly grasp the reality of the Divine Absolute and a corresponding inability to perceive nature and cosmos as sacred theophany.³³ These misperceptions and repressions consequently and inevitably created destructive *inversions* of essential timeless truths, and these distortions now find projection in society as inflated “absolutisms” – psychologically and ideologically perpetuated by the materialist self as it wanders in narcissistic ignorance.³⁴

At its core, the misunderstandings of traditional doctrine arise from a basic misreading, whether superficial or abusive, of the traditional view of reality. The authentic Self in tradition is spiritual, which is to say that it is one with the substance of all reality. All spiritual questing is at once a search for an Origin (to which one returns) and a Center (in which one reposes), which are in substance identical. These correspond to the Heart of oneself, the genuine Self which is in essence the One Spirit that subsists in all reality. It is this Self that must be understood as the *Urbemensch* (the Nietzschean “Superman”), as Ananda K. Coomarswamy noted in his essay on Nietzsche, not the psychic or sensational self of common parlance or of the ill-termed “Nazi gnosis.” The Nietzschean “Will to Power” or its Blakean equivalent of “Energy” (symbolized by the “Tyger” whose “immortal symmetry” cannot be framed) are thus to be understood strictly as faculties of the authentic Self or the “Inner Man,” and not as the personal cravings or lower impulses of the “Outer Man.” Mistake the source and it is easy then to misunderstand the impulse emanating from

³⁰ In this context, the terms “trans-personal,” “Absolute” or “Ground of Being” are used in the manner of psycho-spiritual definition (i.e. as relates to *Being* [what is tentatively called “the relative Absolute”], which is beyond ‘self’ [i.e. *pure consciousness* / *rûh* / *yechîdah* / *paramatman*]); but not “trans-personal” in the sense of the Unmanifest Absolute (i.e. the *Unattainable* or *Unknowable* Essence, which is Beyond-Being / *dhât* / *para-brahma* / *ayin* / *Deus absconditus* / *supra-esse*). The trans-personal Absolute (i.e. pure consciousness) is thus considered ‘absolute’ in relation to creation, existence and the ‘self’ but is conceptually ‘relative’ to the Unmanifest and Unknowable Supreme Absolute (i.e. God).

³¹ Cheetham 2005

³² Nasr 1996. Pp 80-190

³³ According to Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *theophany* can be defined as “a symbolic showing of God in the mirror of created forms”

³⁴ One such related example being the genetic manipulation of critical natural resources, whereby large corporate entities seek total control and patented “authorship” of the Earth’s resources. Another example being institutionalized racism: in the past (e.g. colonialism, anti-Semitism and Apartheid) and more recently (re: the Rwandan genocide, as well as the current crisis in Sudan where a religious ‘Arabism’ is responsible for the deaths of thousands of indigenous Africans and the further social displacement of millions).

it. It is this misreading that informs the view of those who mistake licentiousness for freedom and amorality for virtue.³⁵

Until humanity attains cognition of the fact that the eternal and unbounded Spirit is primary and hence sovereign to the limited and temporal self, and that every human, and indeed the entire seen and unseen cosmological order, is sustained by this *trans-personal* Divine Absolute (the true domain of “Greatness,” “Majesty” and “Oneness”), then human vice will continue to be the governing factor in a consequently imbalanced and unjust world. It is important to note at this point that no human has more, or less, Spirit than any other; we just have more, or less, *selfishness* masking the divine centre or reality of Being. For example, perceived racial superiority is misguided in the sense that only the Spirit (*rûh*) is truly superior (*al-Azim / al-Mutakabbir*) and sovereign (*al-Malik*) in relation humanity, nature and cosmos. These recognized divine attributes should not be taken out of context and assumed as an appellation or attribute of the relative / temporal self, race or corporate entity.

Commercial attempts to “exploit” and ultimately oppress nature in the name of ‘development’ or ‘progress’ and to establish a (now) promethean human species as the only (believed worthy) species in the universe, are clearly reflected in statements of the following kind:

Our goal is to destroy, to eradicate the environmental movement... We want to be able to exploit the environment for private gain, *absolutely*...and we want people to understand [that this] is a noble goal.³⁶

Evidently this is a misguided and ultimately destructive reading of the natural environment; a distorted interpretation of the human as “steward” or “guardian” of cosmological order.³⁷ Not only are our natural landscapes fast being degraded and replaced by overbearing marketing billboards – selling artificial, ever-elusive or impossible dreams – but our bodies and minds are

³⁵ Lakhani, M.A: Umberto Eco, Fascism and Tradition. In: *Sacred Web Journal*, Volume 11. <http://www.sacredweb.com/vol11.html> (accessed 2006)

³⁶ Ron Arnold (founder of the industrial front “Wise Use”). Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ron_Arnold

³⁷ The implications of this guardianship are quite far-reaching, especially if we are to factor in one of the assertions of Quantum-Psychology: that the way we think and perceive of the world actually manipulates the very fabric of reality. This is a topic worth expanding in relation to “Ethics and the Media,” since the Media and Advertising Industry continue to flood our sensory receptors with commercial data, thereby shaping our perception, opinion and (inevitably) our actions. Our ‘reality’ is thus subject to distortion.

becoming increasingly eroded by seemingly disconnected consumer-related agendas and abstract “post-human” techno-philosophy.³⁸

When we live immersed in the modern world of generalized communication, where every natural boundary is violated, we are constantly assaulted by images, messages, ideas, all of them having their origins outside the boundaries of our responsibility and control, all of them having been crafted by someone for some purpose of their own, and all of which in the end serve to manipulate us. The profound and magical news of the human that Shakespeare once brought, has now degenerated, at the end of literacy, into advertising and mere ‘news’.³⁹

How can the best-fed, finest clothed, most literate, and scientifically nurtured people in history be so miserable? ...The notion that human beings are themselves getting better is quite obviously wrong. The quality of human beings is declining, even while the web of man’s infrastructure grows around him. Modern man is a Wizard of Oz, a shrunken soul in a mighty machine. Thus modern man has multiplied his means of communication with mobile phones, satellites, email, SMS – a whole array of devices – but then finds he has nothing to say or no one to whom to say it. He has a diminishing capacity to make any real contacts. He has prolific external means but no inner reality to share. Ours is the age of the space tourist: truly awesome technology devoted to truly trivial human beings.⁴⁰

The attempts by marketing interests to hijack and commercially manipulate influential archetypal principles, the resulting corruption of psyche, the lack of meaningful connection to the realm of the divine attributes, and the (conceptual) collapse of the Absolute, find reflection in clinical psychosis, violent crimes both domestically and socially, ongoing ecological destruction and a forever increasing narcissism. In this scenario there is no anchored perspective of ‘self’; no guiding reference to the Divine Ideals (by which, universal law and the cosmological order is governed); no ultimate aspiration towards an inherently unified pure consciousness that is our sacred centre of Being. In other words we seek guidance from the fickle and morally-bankrupt worlds of marketing, fashion, soap-operas and consumer research – all of which are based on adversarial politics and a divisive economics, rather than an ethos of interconnectedness and harmony.⁴¹

³⁸ See also: Wilkerson, J. 2006. *Energy and Psyche: Resource Addiction in the Technological Age*: <http://www.ecopsychology.org/journal/ezine/archive3/addiction.pdf> (accessed 2006)

³⁹ Cheetham 2005. Pg 116

⁴⁰ Blackhirst, R. 2007. The Transcendent Connection and the Problem of Loneliness. In: *Vincit Omnia Veritas III*, 1: <http://religioperennis.org/documents/Editorial/Issue5/Issue111.pdf> Pg 122

⁴¹ And so it is with the ‘religion’ of globalization: the conceptual collapse of the Divine Absolute and the supra-physical domains into multinational monopoly, “corporate ladders,” “pyramid schemes” and penthouse apartments. The new ‘gods’ are corporate CEOs, advertising executives, cosmetic surgeons, genetic engineers, bank managers and “life-coaches;” the ‘divine’ gifts and ‘grace’ that they offer humanity are Coke, Viagra, oversized breasts, ego-

Difficult relationships, discordance or conflict, whether between individuals or societies, implies incompatible components, states and systems that do not connect or relate. Natural order is based on connectedness, harmony and appropriate linkages. Whatever we encounter in existence is maintained through the invisible connecting threads of the unifying field of life.⁴²

Our swarming cities consist of atomized individuals who have few and only superficial connections with others. The money nexus that drives the modern swarm cheapens all relationships. At work we are wage-slaves and at home our mortgage is more meaningful than our marriage. When calamity strikes in life we have no extended networks of close relations to gather around and so we turn to “counselors,” people we pay by the hour to be our friends, just as – in what is, in fact, the paradigmatic modern relationship – we pay a whore by the hour to pretend they are our beloved. Modernity, stripped of all deep and formal relationships, such as all forms of bonded service, becomes a “whore culture” where casual trade is the prevailing nexus between most people at most times. An aggravated existential loneliness is also characteristic of our era. The old religious frameworks and certainties of the past have been diminished or destroyed by the ideologies and pretensions of modernity. We are not raised in a framework of metaphysical certainties any more. We stand on quicksand.

reinforcement, dazzling “bling,” home-theatre entertainment systems, winning football teams, “frankenfoods,” “a foot in the door” and “guaranteed business success” [blind to the fact that these so-called “successes” are often achieved unethically]. The Supernal Divine Principles (‘archangel gatekeepers’) are reduced to smooth-talking politicians who, with their ‘miraculous’ rhetoric, are able to “fast-track” socio-political corruption. The ‘angelic hosts’ are actors, singers and football stars: their glamour, glitz and flashy smiles represent their “charms” – like ever-present “guardian angels” they grace our children’s bedroom walls. Transcendent awakening / freedom is thus reduced to bikinis, skimpy underwear and sexual promiscuity. To see Spirit in all her unveiled glory in the Lord’s mansion [i.e. the unbounded pure consciousness] is now the stuff of Playboy models in Hugh Heffner’s mansion. Shopping-malls are the new churches / temples / mosques where we meet the brethren, take communion and perform daily atonements or economic “sacrifice.” For many people, their *qibla* (direction of prayer) is the cash register or credit card machine. Clinical Psychology is the new branch of ‘theology’, churning out an enormous clergy of dedicated priests / priestesses who administer the sublime Eucharist of anti-depressants to the masses: the socially-integrative Word (Prozac) “became flesh and dwelt among us.” Admittance into ‘heaven’ is when you win the lottery, or receive a gift voucher, or when you finally get that home loan. If not, glimpses of ‘heaven’ can be found in a bowl of ice-cream or in idyllic scenes on TV sitcoms and advertisements: ‘heaven’ has become a spectator sport. The ‘divine’ playgrounds of the ‘gods’ and ‘angels’ are Las Vegas, Ibiza, Palm Springs / Hollywood, Miami, St Tropez, Long Beach arena etc. The sublime light of Spirit is reduced to catatonic firework displays [the so-called “triumph of light over darkness” now being humanity’s ability to terrorize animals and pets with explosive devices in the name of “religion”]. The instantaneous nature of Spirit is sought in the fastest motor vehicle or CPU. The “Ground of Being” or “Oneness” is reduced to Internet transaction. Omnipresence and interconnectivity are reduced to the cell-phone transmission grid: companionship and physical intimacy are now sought in internet chat-rooms and “phone-sex.” The absolute “hidden god” is believed to be the enigmatic formulator of global economic policy. ‘Faith’ becomes “market faith” – dutifully expressed by the religious consumer in the amount of credit cards he/she has and the amount of money he/she spends on manufactured products: verily, the righteous consumer is he/she who hath many good (title) deeds! *Prophesy* becomes trend forecasting: our new *prophets* are the editors of magazines, talk-show hosts and “News” anchors. The new *saints* are salesmen or corporate die-hards, working overtime. *Sages* now give advice on how to save / accumulate funds and stocks. *Healers* are those who get you drunk or doped-up on a Saturday night. In a strange turn of events, *sorcerers* are now believed to be metaphysicians who try to steal you away from the designer flock, your ritual hedonism, your tasty burger and your celebratory glass of champagne – they insert dangerous ideas in your head, such as ecological awareness, animal protection and resignation to a divine order of consciousness that is greater than our whimsical ego. One could agree that this is a somewhat ridiculous scenario – for to repress the divine sublimity of Spirit, is precisely to exalt the ridiculousness of the ephemeral ‘self’.

⁴² Haeri 2006. Pg 159

...We are locked in our own fetid egos seeking solace in the novelty of our desires and fulfillment in shoddy consumer goods.⁴³

Given the fact that human consciousness is considered *interconnected* and *interdependent*⁴⁴ with the cosmological order – as the most ‘enlightened’ of our sciences / studies are revealing⁴⁵ – the aforementioned degenerate tendencies are not surprising.

Carl Jung – one of the fathers of contemporary psychology – indicated that the archetypal principles, which are trans-egoic in nature, cannot be completely eliminated but may be repressed to varying degrees, or these influences manipulated as they begin to find expression through the fluidic consciousness of the psyche:

What we have outgrown are only the word-ghosts, not the psychic facts which were responsible for the birth of the gods. We are still possessed by our autonomous psychic contents as if they were gods. Today there called phobias, compulsions... neurotic symptoms. The gods have become diseases; Zeus no longer rules Olympus but the solar plexus, and creates specimens for the physician’s consulting room, or disturbs the brains of the politicians and journalists who then unwittingly unleash mental epidemics.⁴⁶

What is being referred to in this publication more specifically are the supra-sensory structures or principles of consciousness, which are effectively divine emanations of the supernal Ideals (traditionally referred to as Divine Names / Attributes).⁴⁷ In view of the fact that these principles and primary attributes are meta-historical in disposition, it is not being suggested that humanity regress into archaic worldviews, nor should we start classifying contemporary experience and understanding according to Apollo and Aphrodite. Likewise, human consciousness need not reduce itself to ‘oak’ or ‘lizard’ consciousness. However, we should recognize the fact that regardless of the last four thousand years’ social development, the last four hundred years’ scientific advancement and the last forty years’ insight into vitamin technology; an apple (for argument sake) is still an ‘apple’, with an ‘apple’ form, ‘apple’ taste, and this apple continues to provide adequate nutritional sustenance. In other words, there is something to be said for

⁴³ Blackhirst, R. 2007. The Transcendent Connection and the Problem of Loneliness. In: *Vincit Omnia Veritas* III, 1: <http://religioperennis.org/documents/Editorial/Issue5/IssueIII1.pdf> Pp 123-124

⁴⁴ *Interdependence*: A relationship of mutual dependence, characterized by mutual sensitivity, mutual receptivity and mutual vulnerability on the part of all the parts involved. This means that any change to one part of the system leads to, or results from, changes to one or more other parts present within the Whole.

⁴⁵ Capra 1983 & 1997; Roszak 1992; Kanner 1995; Lazlo 1996; Kidner 2000; Fisher 2002; de Quincey 2002; Winter 2003

⁴⁶ C.G. Jung. In: Wilhelm 1984. Pg 113

⁴⁷ Izutsu 1984. Pg 11: aspects of the Unmanifest Absolute / Divine Essence “in the act of self-manifestation”

organic / whole foods following a natural pattern / pace of growth (i.e. *fitra*),⁴⁸ including the fact that these foods are still entirely relevant to the nutritional needs of contemporary society. Similarly we need to respect the fact that meta-historical (i.e. archetypal) principles, patterns and relations *still exist* as integral structures of an interconnected and interdependent spectrum of consciousness. Correspondingly, and in harmony with the principle “as above, so below,” we need to *co-exist* with other species on this planet, in spite of our assumed privilege as humans. All of the above is implicit in the human constitution as *microcosm* and in the prophetic reference that ‘Adam’ (the archetype / prototype of human consciousness) was taught the “Names” of everything in existence.

And He taught Adam the Names of all things.⁴⁹

...You presume that you are a small entity, whereas within you is enfolded the entire universe. You are indeed the evident book, by whose alphabet the hidden becomes manifest...⁵⁰

The peculiar position of the human being can also be illuminated by recourse to the traditional cosmological principle of the microcosm / macrocosm, expressed most succinctly perhaps in the Hermetic maxim, “as above, so below.” In brief, man is not only in the universe but the universe is in man: “there is nothing in heaven or earth that is not also in man.”⁵¹

If we accepted the Cartesian view, that [animals] are mechanical objects and they do not share in our reality, we would do with them what we have been doing with the macro-nature around us, decimating it in the name of human needs – sitting on a limb of a tree and cutting it without knowing that we are going to fall down and break our neck very soon, through this very process.⁵²

While it is a fact, as Kabir Helminski succinctly points out in his essay on *Soul Loss and Soul Making*,⁵³ that “the greatest truths and aspirations are perpetually at risk of being subverted from their highest possibilities” due to a “spiritual rhetoric lacking a spiritual center” resulting in “psychological polytheism, mythological paganism, mystical eroticism, get-what-you-want-

⁴⁸ Essential nature / original disposition / innate divine blueprint

⁴⁹ Qur'an (2:31)

⁵⁰ Imam Ali Ibn Abi Talib

⁵¹ Kenneth Oldmeadow. *The Firmament Sheweth His Handiwork: Re-Awakening a Religious Sense of the Natural Order*. <http://www.religioperennis.org/documents/Oldmeadow/Firmament.pdf> (accessed 2006)

⁵² Seyyed Hossein Nasr. *In the Beginning of Creation was Consciousness*. Harvard Lecture, May 2003: <http://www.hds.harvard.edu/news/bulletin/articles/nasr.html> (accessed 2006). Originally published as: Nasr, S. H. 2003. In the Beginning was Consciousness. In: *Sophia: The Journal of Traditional Studies*. Volume 9 Number 1. The Foundation for Traditional Studies.

⁵³ Helminski, K. *Soul Loss and Soul Making*: <http://www.sufism.org/books/sacred/soulloss.html> (accessed 2006)

mysticism,”⁵⁴ we must be careful to ascertain exactly what degenerate influence is at work in this “spiritual rhetoric” that “misplaces the center.”

Notwithstanding anchorless New Age propositions, money-making “life coaching” programmes and “Extreme Makeover” television shows (parading under the banner of “self-transformation”), surely it is the popular *consumer / entertainment* paradigm and its runaway trends that are turning the human psyche into a distractive and spiritually ineffective pageant. We should, however, be careful not to confuse this commercial parade with the ontological orders of consciousness, or risk suppressing authentic symbolic processes which may be fostered through the psyche. A dolphin performing tricks with balls and hoops in an inland entertainment complex may be considered a depreciation of natural form and a corruption of natural habitat, but this does not negate the *real* or *actual existence* of the dolphin or the context of natural habitat (viz. the ocean). The problem ultimately lies in the distortion of the human perceptive lens. The degree to which this distortion is achieved is arguably determined or exacerbated by the prevailing paradigm/s governing our societies. Currently it appears that the world of economics (and economic metaphor) governs most socio-political endeavours, and we can be sure that the entertainment / consumer industry generates billions in currency – as does war.⁵⁵

...So dolphins jump through hoops; Hollywood / music / sports companies produce glittering gods who grace our “High-Definition” “Silver Screens;” meditation turns into the latest Las Vegas trip; and the president of the west becomes absolute. So it is with the unabated desire to convert wilderness and psyche into mere platforms for entertainment, or new Disneylands, as some tourist ventures seemingly aspire to do.

The remedy, surely, is not to deny the existence of wilderness and to consequently disrespect biodiversity but rather to implement the corrective awareness and ethos whereby the natural or cosmological order is viewed and respected within a theophanic framework: an

⁵⁴ Ibid

⁵⁵ Cf. In a recent statement to *The Associated Press* (21 December 2006), the U.S. Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, said that Iraq (i.e. the Iraq War) is “*worth the investment*” in American lives and dollars. Source: *BBC World News*. It is also of interest to note that some of these military interventions / occupations are being now referred to as “political capital.” In addition, the *Sky News* channel recently reported (21 April 2007) an incident of a mother encouraging her two young toddlers (aged 2 and 3) to kick and punch each other to the delight of her women friends who were watching on. The incident, which was also filmed, shows that the children were clearly distressed by the brutal “show” and yet were repeatedly forced to continue and further chastised by the mother who called them “wimps” or “faggots.” The filming of the “event” seems to reflect a growing trend, in which personal / home videos are uploaded and broadcast on internet sites dedicated to so-called “interesting” or “cool” video clips. Incidentally, in the same *Sky News* report, a man was arrested and jailed for organized dog-fighting – a decidedly cruel and barbaric “sport.” These two latter News reports reveal the extent of our obsession with entertainment, and this idea of “entertainment first” [but at what cost?] clearly indicates a paradigmatic trend.

earthly glorification of supra-physical forms, principles, patterns and relationships – themselves being successive expressions of an otherwise eternally unified Divine Absolute.

Nature, then, is a teaching, a primordial Scripture. To “read” this Scripture, to take it to heart, is “to see God everywhere,” to be aware of the transcendent dimension which is present in every cosmic situation, to see “the translucence of the Eternal through and in the temporal.”⁵⁶

To behold the cosmos as theophany is not to deny either the laws or the chain of cause and effect which pervade the cosmos but to view the cosmos and the forms it displays, with such diversity and regularity, as reflections of Divine Qualities and ontological categories rather than a veil which would hide the splendor of the face of the Beloved.⁵⁷

We will show them Our Signs upon the horizons and in themselves until it is quite clear to them that it is the truth.⁵⁸

It is thus critical that we do not misread or distort these sacred archetypes and theophanies in unexamined pursuit of entertainment, or hanker after subjective expression within the limited confines of the personal psyche believing this to be the objective goal in life, or lose awareness of the more subtle zones of higher consciousness, all of which is ultimately sustained by the primary, unconditioned and unbounded pure consciousness: the divine ground. Kabir Helminski brings necessary clarity to the issue:

When it is proposed that modern man has lost his soul, one meaning is that we have lost our ability to perceive through the Active Imagination⁵⁹ which operates in an intermediate world, an interworld between the senses and the world of ideas. This Active Imagination is the imaginative, perceptive faculty of the soul, which cannot be explained because it is itself the revealer of meaning and significance. The Active Imagination does not produce some arbitrary concept standing between us and ‘reality,’ but functions directly as an organ of perception and knowledge just as real as – if not more real than – the sense organs. And its property will be that of

⁵⁶ Kenneth Oldmeadow. *The Firmament Sheweth His Handiwork: Re-Awakening a Religious Sense of the Natural Order*. <http://www.religioperennis.org/documents/Oldmeadow/Firmament.pdf> (accessed 2006)

⁵⁷ Nasr 1981. Pg 197

⁵⁸ Qur'an (41:53)

⁵⁹ The Active Imagination is also referred to as the “Imaginal”: *mundus imaginalis* (Latin); *alam al-mithal* (Arabic) [not to be confused with what we generally know as the fantastical imagination]. “A level of reality in which ‘meanings’ are embodied as images which have a kind of autonomous existence... It is an “interworld” in which visions, which are simultaneously meanings, are experienced by a psycho-spiritual faculty, the active imagination, or what Sufis would simply call the ‘heart’...” In: Helminski, K. *Soul Loss and Soul Making*. <http://www.sufism.org/books/sacred/soulloss.html> (accessed 2006).

Henry Corbin (an avid scholar of the imaginal, who studied the works of the Iranian Hermeticist, Sohrawardi, as well as the Andalusian Shaykh Ibn ‘Arabi and the Christian mystic, Emmanuel Swedenborg) called this faculty, “*mundus imaginalis*”: “a suprasensory world, insofar as it is not perceptible except by the imaginative perception, and insofar as the events that occur in it cannot be experienced except by the imaginative or imaginant consciousness.”

transmuting and raising sensory data to the purity of the subtle, spiritual world. Through the Active Imagination the things and beings of the earth will be made incandescent. This imagination does not construct something unreal, it unveils the hidden reality. It helps to return the facts of this world to their spiritual significance, to see beyond the apparent and to manifest the hidden.

...For some, whom I will call the psychological polytheists, the *mundus imaginalis* is the playground of “the gods.” They have appropriated the concept of the interworld for very limited purposes. The *mundus imaginalis* is not to be unlocked by either fantasy or intellect, but by the purified heart, understood here as a subtle but penetrating cognitive faculty of mind beyond intellect. [Please note that in the tradition of *sophia perennis*, this faculty of ‘heart’ is referred to as the (higher) Intellect – not to be confused with what is commonly known as intellect (which is referred to as ‘reason’ or ‘rationation’)⁶⁰]

The function of this power of the soul is in restoring a space that sacralizes the ephemeral, earthly state of being. It unites the earthly manifestation with its counterpart on the imaginal level, and raises it to incandescence. Isn’t this what is sought by most of those who are drawn to paganism, mythologies, and mystical eroticism?⁶¹

Going by the principle “as above, so below” or “as within, so without”: just as gases, minerals and the successive developmental stages of vegetative and animal consciousness *still continue to exist* alongside human consciousness, so too the archetypal ideals, principles, images, patterns and relations (of which, these physical forms are an immanent glorification) continue to exist alongside contemporary forms and states of consciousness. The same might be said for the “mythical consciousness,” which still today is able to process visionary revelation and mythical symbolism and transform it into contemporary psycho-spiritual understanding;⁶² it forms part of the relationship between the past, the invaluable present and the future, as well as providing necessary containment for the transcendent, within the immanent, through creative medium.

Myth is the penultimate truth, of which all experience is the temporal reflection. The mythical narrative is of timeless and placeless validity, true nowhere and everywhere.⁶³

⁶⁰ Frithjof Schuon refers to the higher “Intellect” as follows: “*Intellect and Spirit coincide in their essence in that the former is like a ray of the latter. The Intellect is Spirit in man; the Divine Spirit is nothing other than the universal Intellect*” (Schuon 1994). “[I]t is... essential to distinguish between the intellect, which is intuitive, and reason, which is discursive; reason is a limited faculty, whereas intellect opens out upon the Universal and the Divine. For metaphysical wisdom, reason only possesses a dialectical, not an illuminative, usefulness; reason is not capable of grasping in a concrete way that which lies beyond the world of forms, though reason is able to reach further than imagination. All ratiocination condemns itself to ignorance from the moment it claims to deal with the roots of our existence and of our spirit.” [Schuon, F. Tradition and Modernity. In: *Sacred Web: A Journal of Tradition and Modernity*, Volume 1. Sacred Web Publishing, Canada].

See also: Dr Jeremy Henzell-Thomas. 2004. *Mythical Meaning, Religion and Soulful Education: Reviving the Original Sense of ‘Intellect’*. <http://thebook.org/tep-articles/uploads/edinburgh.pdf> (accessed 2006)

⁶¹ Helminski, K. *Soul Loss and Soul Making*: <http://www.sufism.org/books/sacred/soulloss.html> (accessed 2006)

⁶² e.g. “the Garden,” Mt Qaf, Hurqalya, Shambhala, “virgins,” “Living Water,” “Philosopher’s Stone,” “Holy Grail,” Khidr, Boraq, etc.

⁶³ Coomaraswamy, 1996. Pg 6

...Myth embodies the nearest approach to absolute truth that can be stated in words.⁶⁴

While we need to heed obvious rational developments in human consciousness and continue to attend to the socio-political issues of our day, it should not simply be a case of discarding an “old historical version of reality” for a “new modern outlook;” it is not as straightforward or exclusive as this. Now that we have the development of the flower or fruit, can it be said that we no longer require the leaves, branch, trunk, roots or the acorn, all of which exist *simultaneously* as an integrated functional unit? Human consciousness, I believe, still ‘feeds’ from the mythical ‘tree’ so-to-speak; these meta-historical structures of consciousness are still extant and functional within the human spectrum of consciousness, and this is of relevance to the latter theme of the “Green Man” as symbol and archetype. While this archetype’s specific form or contemporary expression may be argued, we should be mindful not to throw out the archetypal baby with the profane bathwater.

In Jung’s theory of compensation, an archetype will reappear in a new form to redress imbalances in society at a particular time when it is needed. According to this theory, therefore, the ‘Green Man’ is rising up into our present awareness in order to counterbalance a lack in our attitude to Nature.⁶⁵

...When an image of great power such as the Green Man returns as he does now in a new aspect after a long absence, the purpose of its return is not only to revive forgotten memories but to present fresh truths and emotions necessary to fulfilling the potentialities of the future.⁶⁶

...Now, perhaps, the Green Man signifies the coming together of the two modes of awareness in a new experience of conscious participation, one that will bring into being a science that works in accord with the spirit and laws of nature, and an art, deepened by the objectivity of science, that escapes from the expression of private experience to utter truths, sounds and images founded in a shared and universal joy.⁶⁷

The Green Man, as is more popularly known and studied, is evidently rooted in a mythical archetype, as in the case of Osiris, Attis, the European Green Man, al-Khidr, etc. However, this archetype *still* provides valuable containment and representation (in organic form) of certain divine attributes and cosmological principles / patterns / relations that are either being repressed or else subverted in contemporary society, and yet they remain essential contributors towards a balanced development of self. In other words we can also view the “Green Man” as the

⁶⁴ Ibid. Pg 33

⁶⁵ Anderson 1990. Pg 25

⁶⁶ Ibid. Pg 14

⁶⁷ Ibid. Pg 164

vegetable kingdom, plant ecosystems and the biosphere;⁶⁸ “Green Man” as the *ecological self* (i.e. where the bio-physical / bio-chemical human is shown to be interconnected and interdependent with nature and ecological order); “Green Man” as *cosmological theophany* (i.e. the “Book of Nature,” wherein human consciousness and the cosmological order are considered interconnected and interdependent, to the degree that contemplation of the natural order brings about cognition of one’s place in the cosmos and a theophanic confirmation of the divine attributes); “Green Man” as symbol for the *essential self* (i.e. when the self [*nafs* / *jivatma*] is in harmonious agreement with Spirit [*rûh* / *paramatma*] and is thus receptive to and reflective of the divine attributes [symbolically represented as “the Garden”]); “Green Man” as symbol for the *integrated self* (i.e. the microcosm in relation to the macrocosm; the ecological self in relation to the essential self; the “horizontal” in relation to the “vertical”); and lastly, “Green Man” as symbol (e.g. al-Khidr) for the *Ever-Living* or *Eternal Divine Consciousness* – the Divine Word / Logos.

This symbolic containment is linked to what has been identified as the “green signature;” to be discussed in a later chapter in association with *interconnectedness, harmony, balance / equilibrium, sustenance / nourishment, renewal / transformation* and *unity*.

The commercial importance of the advertising industry in pitching mythological motive or narrative – as well as growing interest in films such as *The Lord of the Rings / The Chronicles of Narnia / Harry Potter / Pan’s Labyrinth / The Fountain / Holy Grail* documentaries, etc – must *surely* indicate the need for an understanding of the mythical or imaginal domains of consciousness and their role in human development. The burgeoning entertainment industry, one could argue, is a manifest reaction (at a materialist level) to the loss of (or lack of qualified

⁶⁸ According to Andrew Rothery: “At a global level the Green Man can therefore be seen as representing plant ecosystems, particularly forests. We now know how important trees and forests are in maintaining our climate through their conversion of carbon dioxide into oxygen and their release of water into the atmosphere. The key component in this process of photosynthesis is of course the chlorophyll molecule which gives leaves their green colour. In this way the Green Man also represents the ability to transform the energy of the Sun into life supporting outcomes such as climate stability and food production for animals. This partnership between plant life and the Sun reinforces the Green Man as a positive masculine influence since the Sun is often seen an embodiment of male characteristics... Another important aspect of the Green Man is his composite image of a human face and leaf foliage. This echoes the inherent unity which exists between the vegetative world of plants and that of us humans and all other animals and respiring organisms. This unity is born out by our knowledge that while plants release oxygen into the atmosphere to support respiring life forms, we then convert that oxygen back into carbon dioxide which enables the plants to make the necessary sugars which they need to survive. Thus, photosynthesising plants and respiring animals have a globally symbiotic relationship which is played out across the whole biosphere. Through embodying such unity, the Green Man shows that we humans are an important part of this ecosystem, not because we now wield the power to destroy it, but because we have the ability to co-exist and co-evolve within it... I am therefore suggesting that there is a possibility that our human experience of Gaian self consciousness is somehow grounded in our relationship with plants, possibly with trees in particular, and that our mental symbiosis with plants is part of a much wider relationship between all plants and animals resulting in a biospherical consciousness which reflects the unity and integrity of the Earth as a single ecosystem. The image which best describes this relationship is a green aura which encircles the globe supporting and encouraging the intelligence of life upon it – the Green Man” In: Rothery, A. *The Science of the Green Man*. http://www.ecopsychology.org/ezine/green_man.html (accessed 2006)

awareness of) sacred symbol, the supra-sensory archetype and the immense awe that these domains of consciousness inspire. As can be observed in the “extreme” entertainment genre, the innate drive towards the supra-physical and the human desire to awaken into the timelessness of Spirit has collapsed seemingly entirely into purely physical or sensory adrenalin-rush events, such as sky-diving, bungee-jumping and “Need for Speed” motor racing. The *forms* that these various entertainments take are indicative of the *type* of loss / collapse that has occurred.⁶⁹

When you cut human beings off from that cosmic world of consciousness – when that world is no longer considered relevant – myth is converted to science fiction and the vision of angels to the experience of extraterrestrial beings and UFOs. A myth then becomes something unreal rather than real. Myth used to be a sacred reality, but now it is seen as unreality. In its place have now come all kinds of pseudo-myths, such as science fiction itself, which is an attempt to try to fill the void with, you might say, pseudo-sacred writings. Why do children want to see strange, extraterrestrial looking beings in films? These are extremely profound issues that deal with the total psyche of a society that has been banned from even thinking that it is possible to have contact within a universe in which there are other forms of not only life but also intelligence and consciousness.⁷⁰

It is argued that the entertainment / consumer industry is seemingly able to usurp an authentic development of self because there has been a materialist reduction, depreciation or subversion of the imaginal and mythical domains of consciousness:

The word “myth,” like the word “intellect,” has suffered the same semantic degeneration and loss of original meaning typical of so many words since the so-called “Enlightenment.”⁷¹

...In D.H. Lawrence’s words, “Myth is an attempt to relate a whole human experience, of which the purpose is too deep, going too deep in the blood and the soul, for mental explanation or description.” Eugene Ionesco speaks eloquently of the truth of myth: “There is nothing truer than myth: history, in its attempt to ‘realize’ myth, distorts it, stops halfway; when history claims to have ‘succeeded’ this is nothing but humbug and mystification.” One is instantly reminded of the

⁶⁹ For example: Hollywood icons; superhero comic books; gaming consoles such as PlayStation, Nintendo, Gameboy and X-BOX; alien/monster movies; soap operas; sports heroes; animated feature films; fantasy novels; T.V. animation and game-cards; WWE Wrestling personas [in fact, “News” broadcasts and television in general: we seek consolation and replacement ‘meaning’ and ‘connection’ through commercial media stories, famous icons and the lives of celebrities. The precious ‘light’ in many people’s lives often turns out to be the flickering pixels on their TV and computer screens. See also: Helminski, K. *Space, Cyberspace, and the Spaceless*. <http://www.sufism.org/society/articles/Space.html> (accessed 2006)]

⁷⁰ Seyyed Hossein Nasr. *In the Beginning of Creation was Consciousness*. Harvard Lecture, May 2003: <http://www.hds.harvard.edu/news/bulletin/articles/nasr.html> (accessed 2006). Originally published as: Nasr, S. H. 2003. *In the Beginning was Consciousness*. In: *Sophia: The Journal of Traditional Studies*. Volume 9 Number 1. The Foundation for Traditional Studies.

⁷¹ Henzell-Thomas, J. 2004. *Mythical Meaning, Religion and Soulful Education: Reviving the Original Sense of ‘Intellect’*. Pg 13. <http://thebook.org/tep-articles/uploads/edinburgh.pdf>

desperate attempts, so common today, to find “logical” or “historical” explanations for mythic and spiritual truths. The humbug and mystification to which Ionesco refers are all too evident in a whole genre of contemporary books and television programmes purporting to “solve” ancient mysteries. These typically centre on such mysteries as Atlantis, The Holy Grail, the Ark of the Covenant, the Garden of Eden, Noah’s Ark, and so on, all of which, it is claimed, have been “located” or “explained.” The crushing sense of anti-climax which accompanies such banal revelations should alert us to their impotence and total lack of explanatory power. The innate intuitive capacity of the human psyche knows better and sees further. For Thomas Mann, “myth is the foundation of life; it is the timeless schema, the pious formula into which life flows...” And Nietzsche was surely right when he said: “Here we have our present age...bent on the extermination of myth. Man today, stripped of myth, stands famished among all his pasts and must dig frantically for roots...”⁷²

Demythologisation...is therefore necessary to preserve the deeper meaning of the mythic symbol itself. *Demythologizing*...is a constant and necessary process, while *demythizing* is ultimately destructive of the particular nature of religious symbols” [emphasis mine].⁷³

The revival of the qualitative education of the soul and the restoration of mythical meaning are none other than the rediscovery of an authentic intellectual life, of an Intellect enthroned not in the head but in a Heart that sees beyond the surface of things to the essential principles and archetypes which animate our lives. This symbolic understanding of reality is at the heart of mythic, spiritual and religious traditions, and we need to discover the common ground shared by all such traditions.⁷⁴

There are some who would argue that mythical expression is archaic or “pre-rational;” outdated as far as the modern world is concerned. For this author it appears that the (meta-historical / trans-cultural) mythical *principles* of consciousness are still embedded in a supra-rational domain of consciousness and continue to show influence at varying degrees within various different individuals, societies and cultures.⁷⁵ This influence can clearly be discerned in the entertainment and advertising industry, both of which take advantage of it.

Our modern psychology tells us of lost wells of the [U]nconscious, and the significance of their loss. Our century has seen more incredible images of the wasteland than any other in history. And seen them live and in living color as it happens anywhere in the world. McLuhan’s Global Village has turned out to be a global slum, a technological collective labor camp where the

⁷² Ibid. Pp14-15 (footnotes)

⁷³ Ibid. Pg 10

⁷⁴ Ibid. Pg 12

⁷⁵ By analogy: Just because human life on Earth developed after the stages of mineral, vegetable and animal, this does not mean that we should no longer recognize or allow the sustained existence of these previous lines of development. Just because we have sufficiently developed the “rational” mind, this does not mean that we should now ignore or repudiate the *extant* primordial sub/supra-strata of consciousness. Now that we have the flower or the fruit, does this indicate that the leaves, branch, trunk or roots now no longer exist (or are unrequired to sustain the greater ecological order)?

Wasteland is institutionalized by the unassailable fact of an unfillable void, an ache so deep that all the consumer goods in the world can never touch it. To us – the dwellers in this techno-slum – the grail maiden, holding her golden bowl of redemption and rejuvenation, looks suspiciously like the girl at the drive-thru window dispensing Coke in a bright yellow cardboard cup. Perhaps for us, even the Holy Grail and the Paradise of Logres would resemble nothing more than a thrill ride at the latest theme park.

...Unfortunately, myth in the wasteland has been degraded to just another consumer venue. For a price, the girl at the drive-thru can supply you with your very own mythological action figure right along with your happy meal. In this context, folklore and ancient truths melt into pop culture tabloid icons. Culture then becomes a comic book canon of super men and wonder women, all sleek with surface glitz and sexual power. These archetypal flash points jab us with bursts of emotional intensity, rushes of pure feeling, without supplying us with any sort of perspective. At this level, all of us dwellers in the wasteland are like junkies, endlessly searching for the next sensational emotional fix.⁷⁶

Of course, a rehabilitation of consciousness or a renewed appreciation of the *mundus imaginalis* should not necessitate a revival of the lunatic fringe, nor does it call for an indulgence in misguided mysticism, nor does it condone the idea that anything is acceptable or that anything goes.

The muddling of the psychic realm of the subconscious with the mystical potentialities of the human soul and the infinite reaches of the Intellect has given birth to all manner of confusions. There is indeed a science which reveals the way in which the play of the psyche can communicate universal realities; this is one of the fields of traditional pneumatologies. *But, and the proviso is crucial, such a science cannot flourish outside a properly-constituted metaphysic and cosmology* [emphasis mine].⁷⁷

In *NTRC* it is further argued that, just as organic whole-foods are considered a most suitable form of physical nutrition – and just as an ecosystemic natural order stands in monument to interconnectedness and interdependence – so too it is critical that the cosmological archetypes (reflected as these physical *energies, patterns* and *relationships*) are not successfully distorted or inverted by disconnected and adversarial marketing metaphors within the prevailing consumer / entertainment network. Just because we have vitamin technology, should we no longer aspire towards soil-grown vegetables and fruit? Now that water can be represented on paper as the

⁷⁶ Vincent Bridges. 1997. *The Death of the Feminine: Sex Crimes, Celebrity and Sainthood in the Wasteland of the Technological Collective*. <http://www.sangraal.com/dethfim.htm> (accessed 2005)

⁷⁷ Oldmeadow, K. *The Critique of Modernism: scientism, evolutionism, psychologism and humanism*. Pg 17. <http://www.religioperennis.org/documents/Oldmeadow/Critiques.pdf> (accessed 2006)

elemental equation H₂O, or spatially (digitally) rendered on G.I.S applications, do we no longer require (or should we no longer care for) clean streams, rivers or lakes? Now that we have an oxygen tank in the hospital, do we no longer need the trees, vegetation and the corridors / forests / ecosystemic processes that ensure their and our physical survival? Now that we have the English letters “c-o-n-n-e-c-t-i-o-n,” do we no longer need integrated and functioning ecosystems? Now that we have Cable / Satellite TV in our homes, do we no longer need to experience the world outside first-hand? Now that we have air-conditioned offices, do we no longer need to protect the earth’s ozone layer or reduce our “greenhouse” emissions? The fact that human “consumers” and supermarkets currently occupy vast portions of the planet, are we now justified in the eradication of other species on this planet? Do we have an authentic reading of cosmos and self?

...The key issue is what is appropriate and to what end. If it is to realise, both individually and socially, the importance of balancing inner and outer realities and needs, then we are heading towards a healthy and fruitful evolvment. Otherwise, we will collectively suffer from a diminished world of suffocating brutality: a materially-efficient global village without the open spaces, village green and celebration of life; an industrial park with plastic flowers and plants visited by unhappy and overstressed grey people, pretending to be smart.⁷⁸

...sitting on a limb of a tree and cutting it without knowing that we are going to fall down and break our neck very soon, through this very process.⁷⁹

In addition it is argued that in order to establish the integrity of the “essential self” and to acknowledge divine order it is not necessary to blow-out the entire mid spectra of consciousness as a solution to the current dispersal and fragmentation of consciousness. Radical solutions such as the above have much in common with hyped ‘antibiotic’ trends⁸⁰ – in many ways analogous

⁷⁸ Haeri 2006. Pg 197

⁷⁹ Seyyed Hossein Nasr. *In the Beginning of Creation was Consciousness*. Harvard Lecture, May 2003: <http://www.hds.harvard.edu/news/bulletin/articles/nasr.html> (accessed 2006). Originally published as: Nasr, S. H. 2003. *In the Beginning was Consciousness*. In: *Sophia: The Journal of Traditional Studies*. Volume 9 Number 1. The Foundation for Traditional Studies.

⁸⁰ Incidentally, I am not against an informed use of antibiotics, especially in dire circumstances. All too often, however, doctors prescribe antibiotics simply because it is an easy “quick-fix,” or they do so in obligation to perks obtained from pharmaceutical companies. Often there is no nutritional recourse, no advising of alternative lifestyles and no supplementary programme for physical fitness. The obvious long-term effects of over-prescribing antibiotics are a weakening of the human immune system and the spread of resistant bacteria. The same applies to antibacterial trends in the western world: we have a pathological attitude towards human and natural physiology; antibacterial agents also kill positive strains of bacteria, which would otherwise keep the physical body in healthy balance. If people led cleaner lifestyles and traded their laziness for a proper cleaning of their households with natural cleaning agents, there would be no problem with harmful bacteria and no need for a culture of ‘antibacterialism’. It is unacceptable that we would rather pharmaceutically *suppress the symptoms*, than to acknowledge and actually *heal the causes*. Furthermore, if a so-called ‘civilized’ society fosters a belief that the

to releasing napalm on the entire Serengeti National Park in order to attend to a localized rat infestation.⁸¹ Owing to the interconnectedness and interdependence of ‘outer’ and ‘inner’ consciousness: a lack of awareness of the realm of divine attributes, a corresponding depreciation of the imaginal realm, and a subversion of archetypal principle or pattern, *is precisely* what results in (i.e. is reflected in) the destruction of fragile ecosystems, the loss of valuable biodiversity and the establishment of a dissociated / burdened society.

The Earth is bleeding from wounds inflicted upon it by a humanity no longer in harmony with Heaven and therefore in constant strife with the terrestrial environment.⁸²

‘Like’ can only be known by ‘like’: this means that thought and being are inseparable, that ethics and perception are complementary. The form of the soul is the form of your world. This fundamental unity of the faculties of human cognition and the world to which they give access is that eternal pagan substrate of all religion... This sympathy is at once perceptual and cognitive and requires an attitude towards reality that the modern world has nearly completely forgotten.⁸³

Within the (intermediate) imaginal realms of consciousness we find the archetypal forms, patterns and cosmological relations, of which the physical cosmos stands in immanent glorification.⁸⁴

Nature, in its aspect as the cosmic environment, expresses a symbolic constitution that is both essential and effective: essential, as the Cosmos is none other than ‘one vast complex Mythos, or symbolic representation’; and effective, as symbolism provides the structure and key for the return of the human to the Divine. This is to recognize Cosmic Existence as theophany, where this term, as Seyyed Nasr notes, has the literal meaning of “to show God” and “does not mean the incarnation of God in things but the reflection of the Divinity in the mirror of created forms.”⁸⁵

On Earth, as It is in Heaven.⁸⁶

natural world is dangerous and unhealthy for humans – that human physiology is somehow in combat with natural physiology – then this misinformed perception is going to manifest in a variety of biophysical and psychological pathologies.

⁸¹ It is interesting to note how this trend extends into the political arena: recent aerial bombardments of towns and cities in Lebanon (July / August / September 2006) have been internationally criticized for lacking “surgical” tactic. The vast majority of those killed were innocent civilians, especially children; furthermore, hundreds of thousands of people were displaced in the process. These bombardments have been likened to “a large sledgehammer trying to open a walnut.”

⁸² Nasr 1996. Pg 3

⁸³ Cheetham 2005. Pg 109

⁸⁴ Nasr 1996; Cheetham 2005

⁸⁵ Scott, T. *The Traditional Doctrine of Symbol*: <http://www.religioperennis.org/documents/Scott/Symbol.pdf>

⁸⁶ Matthew (6:10)

In this regard, we need to examine our human species' inferiority complex, which is subsequently becoming ingrained in techno-industrial ideology: this, as monopolizing interests – commercial or otherwise – attempt to assert (misguided) authority and superiority over the natural environment. On the other hand, dogmatic or literalist religiosity and, conversely, misguided spiritual syncretism, suffer similar dis-ease in their instatement of “the one” or “oneness.”

Seeing that there is but one truth, must we not conclude that there is but one Revelation, one sole Tradition possible? To this our answer is, first of all, that Truth and Revelation are not absolutely equivalent terms, since Truth is situated beyond forms, whereas revelation, or the Tradition which derives from it, belongs to the formal order, and that indeed by definition; but to speak of form is to speak of diversity, and so of plurality; the grounds for the existence and nature of form are expression, limitation, differentiation. What enters into form, thereby enters also into number, hence into repetition and diversity; the formal principle – inspired by the infinity of the divine Possibility – confers diversity on this repetition.⁸⁷

God is the same for all the religions only in the Divine ‘stratosphere,’ and not in the human ‘atmosphere’.⁸⁸

Absolute sovereignty (*al-Malik*), greatness / majesty / superiority (*al-Azim / al-Mutakabbir / al-Ali*) and oneness (*al-Ahad / al-Wahad*) need to be understood as permanent attributes of the divine origin, within which everything in existence is sustained and ultimately gathered. If this universal ground – essentially pure consciousness – is denied its reality and oneness within the appropriate trans-personal or supra-physical context, then, ironically, one greatly disturbing consequence is going to be an increasing outer erosion of biodiversity and everything natural in the world: this, as the fragmented and consequently inept (lower) self attempts to assert ‘oneness’ at the reduced level of the material world and often through the most violent or artificial means possible.⁸⁹ Then there are the eco-spiritualists who, in a final attempt to preserve

⁸⁷ Fritjof Schuon. In: Scott, T. 2007. One word, many tongues. In: *Vincit Omnia Veritas* III, 1: <http://religioperennis.org/documents/Editorial/Issue5/IssueIII1.pdf> Pg 21

⁸⁸ Schuon 1981. Pg 55

⁸⁹ The “evolved,” “transformed” or “essential” self is capable of reflecting the divine attributes, *but* it does so by virtue of the fact that it has cognition of, or is aligned with, the trans-personal Spirit. Spirit is not only the source of one particular human (or group’s) existence, but is simultaneously (this moment) the absolute source and sustainer of all humanity, as well as all of creation. If these divine attributes are incorrectly assumed (out of context) by the lower egocentric self, they become negatively inverted and oppressively projected into the world through the agency of vice. For example, there are those who have no concept of, or aspiration towards, the inner delights and sanities of their religion but are driven by their own fear, hate and anger. These are the ones who aspire towards terrorism and torture as a means by which to “purify” the world. They are simply projecting their own lower tendencies, confusion and inner fragmentation onto the outside world – just a small step away from idolizing the atomic bomb as god and saviour: an insanity born of philosophical distortion. There are also those who preach about boundaries and yet have

what is left of the natural environment, try to blend a multiple or plural into a magical singular and thus ultimately disrespect the sacred boundaries of earthly diversity.⁹⁰ The same can be said about competitive religions that literally fight to establish *their* “only true” doctrine on earth – they lack the metaphysical framework required to grasp the reality of Oneness and Truth.⁹¹

And among His Signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the variations in your languages and your colours: verily, in that are Signs for those who know.⁹²

Instead of seeing divine unity as the source of all earthly and heavenly diversity, these merciful and beneficent “signs” on the horizons and within ourselves are often obliterated in the wake of a materialist or egocentric reductionism. Consequently, all those who are considered different to ourselves or our cultural / religious upbringing are then subjected to tyranny and suffering.⁹³

The commercial rape of nature – and an ensuing loss of biodiversity due to mismanaged social and agricultural development – indicates a depreciation of sacred theophany and consequently a reduced imaginal state (or a profound ignorance thereof) within our collective consciousness. More importantly, exploitation and degradation reveal a disregard for, or a feeble *inversion* of, the principal divine attributes.

The soul [Spirit] is the source of all divine qualities and attributes including sight, beauty, ability and other knowledges relating to earth and heavens.⁹⁴

no real cognition of boundaries; who preach about submission and yet have no cognition of modesty as relates to personal whims and political idea-ology. On this point, *al-ahad* (the One) and *al-quddūs* (the All-Pure) are attributes of the trans-personal Spirit (*rūh*); they should not be viewed as a personal and deadly ‘napalm’ to inflict upon the world – a one-eyed monster that cannot see or appreciate the divine beauty in others. As the great saint-poet Rumi once remarked: “Ill-disciplined people set fire to the landscape.”

⁹⁰ By saying this, I am not denying the reality of interconnectedness and interdependence, but refuting the idea of a *unique* material / physical ‘oneness’ [except at the subatomic or quantum level (unified wave theory), which is another ‘domain’ entirely and subscribes to a different order of physics]. For example, essential light is colourless and translucent in its unconditioned, undifferentiated fullness: blending all colours together will not produce the primary *essential* light. Neither is essential-light ‘white’ or ‘black’ (or ‘green’): if essential light were ‘white’ (or any other colour) we would not be able to see each other or anything else because the ‘space’ between us and everything else would be completely white (or any other fought-for colour). Essential light is, therefore, pure light before refraction into any differentiated colour; it is also *pre*-reflection (i.e. white-full) and *pre*-absorption (i.e. black-full). Looking at it from the perspective of music (as another example) if one were to simultaneously play every note (if it were possible) on the fret-board of a monochord, this would produce a cacophonous racket, it would not produce the pure sound/note of the ‘open’ (unfingered / ‘unfretted’) string. The Whole is more than the mere sum of its parts.

⁹¹ It is interesting to note that most religious cultures have access to their respective religious texts or religious leaders. Amongst these there are many who would genuinely consider themselves dedicated religious followers, and yet despite their religious access and their daily performing of religious ritual, many still fail to understand the central tenets of their religion (and this includes some of the religious leadership).

⁹² Qur’an (30:22)

⁹³ Similarly, severe asceticism, ‘religious’ mortification of the physical body and a vilification of women or the natural environment are a result of the *conditioned* self’s misidentification with the *unconditioned* supra-physical divine attribute known as *al-Quddūs* (the All-Pure).

⁹⁴ Haeri 2006. Pg 48

...The self's desire for power, knowledge, wealth, immortality and other attributes simply echo the treasure within the soul being broadcast through the heart.⁹⁵

...The self can take on the negative attributes of meanness, arrogance and other egotistic traits when it faces the black hole of self assertion. The self will only stop mimicking and being a parody of the soul when it realises it is totally dependent upon it and gives up its pretending to deserve acknowledgement and honour.⁹⁶

In view of the multidimensional and multifaceted spectrum of consciousness – and the importance of maintaining a *harmonious balance* within this spectrum – the “green signature” is explored as symbolic container, by means of which to represent or connect this intricate network of principles, forces, patterns and relationships, especially as pertains to *interconnectedness* and *equilibrium*. The author is acutely aware of the fact that other colours exist besides green and that they are also wonderfully present within the light spectrum. What this current work wishes to highlight is an important *signature, archetype* and related *cosmological principle* for *contemporary times* – one which anchors the concept of *balance, harmony, interconnectedness, sustenance / nourishment* and *renewal*, and one which remains true to harmonic principle, as is reflected in light, sound, cosmos, ecosystemic relation and ultimately consciousness.

In the latter sections of this publication, the author briefly investigates a selection of mythical symbols, such as the *Green Man, Celestial Dew, Herb-of-Immortality, Philosopher's Stone, Emerald Grail*, etc. It is argued that the organic structuring of these symbols grounds them in the cosmological order of theophany: there is a symbolic and spiritually legitimate borrowing from, or resonance with, the macrocosm in order to reflect on that which is the human microcosm – not a product of creative whim but rather it is divine revelation. Cosmos and nature are thus considered to be the primordial language of the divine: a sacred script, a glorious ‘mirror’ held up to human consciousness in order to provide evidence, knowledge and an understanding of divine order.

I was a hidden Treasure;
and out of Love to become *Known*
I *created* the *worlds* [emphasis mine].⁹⁷

God gives evidence of his existence through his creation, and by making his creation come into being indicates his eternity.⁹⁸

⁹⁵ Ibid. Pp 72-73

⁹⁶ Ibid. Pg 139

⁹⁷ Hadith Qudsi

It is He who sends down rain from the skies: with it we produce vegetation of all kinds... And then there are gardens of grapes and olives, and pomegranates, each similar (in kind) yet different (in variety): when they begin to bear fruit, feast your eyes with the fruit and the ripeness thereof. Behold! In these things are Signs for people who believe.⁹⁹

Importantly, this living, fertile language – in a process somewhat akin to sympathetic resonance – gives valuable expression to supra-physical, supra-sensory and supra-rational structures or influences inherent within human consciousness, which evade empirical method and are otherwise exceedingly difficult for the conditioned self to comprehend or connect with due to the ontological limitations of the rational mind and its discursive logic (i.e. failure to show effective meaning of, or bring connection to, those domains of consciousness that are ultimately beyond the range of the psyche and the comprehension of so-called “reason”).

Traditional metaphysics sees the universe not as a multitude of facts or opaque objects each possessing a completely independent reality of its own, but as myriads of symbols reflecting higher realities. Before the Divine Reality nothing can be said to exist; but on the plane of manifestation, the light of the intellect, sacred in its own essence and also sanctified by revelation, penetrates into what appears as fact to reach its inner significance and meaning so that opacity is transformed into transparency. Phenomena thus become transparent to realities that transcend them and that they reflect on their own existential level. Phenomena become gateways to noumenal realities. The universe, both religious and cosmic, is realized as being constituted of symbols reflecting the archetypes or supernal realities that belong to the Divine, and not simply the psychological order.¹⁰⁰

NTRC further investigates archetypal patterns and relationships, as expounded in various religious, mystical and metaphysical doctrines, and considers how these in turn relate to what has been identified as the “green signature” and the “Green Man archetype.” Please note that it is not intended for the reader to view the author’s reflection on these relations as being *the* offered framework for awakening to Reality; psycho-spiritual methodologies already exist for this noble purpose.¹⁰¹ The accumulation of mystical or mythical facts without developing an ontological understanding and grounding in Absolute Reality has been described as spiritual consumerism or spiritual syncretism, which is to indicate the endless pursuit of various

⁹⁸ Prophetic Hadith

⁹⁹ Qur’an (6:99)

¹⁰⁰ Nasr 1996. Pg 15

¹⁰¹ For example: Haeri 1991 & 2006

disjointed mystical facts and subjective ecstatic states that are erroneously pursued as objective goals in themselves.¹⁰²

‘Syncretism’ as Guénon remarks, ‘consists in assembling from the outside a number of more or less incongruous elements which, when regarded, can never be truly unified; in short, it is a kind of eclecticism, with all the fragmentariness and incoherence that this always implies.’ He contrasts this with synthesis, which, ‘on the other hand, is carried out essentially from within; by this we mean that it properly consists in envisaging things in the unity of their principle, in seeing how they are derived from and dependent on that principle, and thus uniting them, or rather becoming aware of their real unity, by virtue of a wholly inward bond, inherent in what is most profound in their nature.’ ‘Syncretism,’ says Guénon, ‘is something purely outward and superficial; the elements taken from every quarter and put together in this way can never amount to anything more than borrowings that are incapable of being effectively integrated into a doctrine worthy of the name.’ In contrast, the synthetic analogy between forms in no way indicates “borrowings” but pertains to ‘the Primordial Tradition from which these forms have issued either directly or indirectly.’¹⁰³

¹⁰² One finds similar digression with regard to spiritual syncretism: “Oneness” is ultimately an attribute of the Divine Absolute; it should not be collapsed into a “one world religion.” Similarly, “interconnectedness” and “interdependence” – though pertaining to the cosmological or creational matrix – are ultimately informed by ontological relationships / resonances / correspondences; they refer neither to a *unique* material / physical ‘oneness’, nor to a general epistemological synthesis. Similarly (as an example) although sharing certain underlying *ontological* resonances, Shamanism does not equal *doctrinal* Hinduism, ≠ Judaism ≠ Pythagoreanism ≠ Buddhism ≠ Hermeticism ≠ Christianity ≠ Islam ≠ Quantum Physics, etc. In a different sense, though ancient traditions variously used (as a totem symbol for the Great Spirit) the sun, ocean, mountain, snake, swan, eagle, fish, etc, it is obvious that the Spirit / Soul is neither animal nor element; neither can one say that the sun = ocean = mountain = snake = swan = eagle = fish; nor does the sum of all the parts equal the ‘Whole’].

¹⁰³ Scott, T. 2007. One Word, many tongues. In: *Vincit Omnia Veritas* III, 1: <http://religioperennis.org/documents/Editorial/Issue5/IssuelI1.pdf> Pg 34

Creation, Symbol and Archetype

The Nature and Purpose of Existence

According to the framework being presented, the physical universe is an (ongoing) outer manifestation in creational fulfilment of the supernal archetypes – all of which find its source and sustenance in the unified Ground of Being (read: *Spirit, Alam al-Lahût, Olam Atziluth, the Real*, etc).¹⁰⁴ This unified reality (essentially pure consciousness) is in no way reduced during the process of emanation; neither should one think of this Origin as existing solely at the very beginning or end of time / creation: as pure divinity (beyond subject-object polarity) it is not diminished by space-time constructs, and since it permeates the entire seen and unseen worlds, it can be thought of as being profoundly ‘present’ within the eternal ‘now’.¹⁰⁵

In all traditional civilizations, there was a mentality in which ‘in the beginning’ did not imply only a beginning in time somewhere back there but also a metahistorical truth. That is very important. It is very significant that while in English we say, ‘In the beginning was the Word,’ in the Latin Vulgate it says, ‘*In principia erat verbum*’. So in principle was the Word, and not only temporally... When we turn to traditional philosophies all over the world, we see this almost remarkable unanimity in this matter. We think of the point beyond all forms and numbers associated with the *Lambda* of Pythagoras, or of Plato’s *Agathon* (First Logos), or Aristotle’s *Divine Intellect*. We can think of the *esse* of St. Thomas Aquinas, which is also consciousness, which is the origin of all things and knows all beings, and corresponds to *wujud* in Islamic philosophy... And outside of the circle of Western Asia, Europe, and the Abrahamic world, we can turn to *Atman* in Hindu metaphysics, which is *pure consciousness*, the Self, which is the origin of all things, and also the role of *Tao*, and the Neo-Confucian philosophies of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. One can go on and on in providing examples.¹⁰⁶

This ontological process [emanation / creation] repeats itself indefinitely and endlessly. At every moment, and moment after moment, the same eternal process of annihilation and re-creation is repeated. At this very moment, an infinite number of things and properties come into being, and at the next moment they are annihilated to be replaced by another infinity of things and properties.

Thus we cannot experience the same world twice at two different moments. The world we actually experience is in perpetual flow. It changes from moment to moment. But this

¹⁰⁴ For an insightful essay on Involution/Evolution and Emanationism, please refer to, Cutsinger, J. *On Earth as it is in Heaven*: <http://www.religioperennis.org/documents/cutsinger/earth.pdf> (accessed 2006)

¹⁰⁵ “And certainly We created man... and We are nearer to him than his jugular vein.” Qur’an (50:16)

¹⁰⁶ Seyyed Hossein Nasr. *In the Beginning of Creation was Consciousness*. Harvard Lecture, May 2003: <http://www.hds.harvard.edu/news/bulletin/articles/nasr.html> (accessed 2006). Originally published as: Nasr, S. H. 2003. In the Beginning was Consciousness. In: *Sophia: The Journal of Traditional Studies*. Volume 9 Number 1. The Foundation for Traditional Studies.

continual and perpetual change occurs in such an orderly way according to such definite patterns that we, superficial observers, imagine that the same one world is there around us.¹⁰⁷

...The Absolute is continually manifesting itself in the infinity of 'possible' things. This is done by the ontological 'descent' (*nuzul*) of the Absolute towards the lower levels of Being, first to the archetypes and then to the 'possible'. But the same process of perpetual 'descent' is, when looked at from the side of the 'possible', turns out to be a perpetual process of ontological 'ascent'. Everything, in this sense, is perpetually 'ascending' towards the Absolute by the very same descending of the latter.¹⁰⁸

Thus, the physical world exists and persists not merely as a linear extension of the "Big Bang" phenomenon but more specifically and essentially as an outer glorification of more subtle states, presences or principles, which are themselves successive divine emanations of the *eternal, unified and universal* consciousness – classically referred to as *spiritûs / rūh / rūah ha-qodesh / atman*.¹⁰⁹ Accordingly, everything in the seen and unseen worlds comes from the One, is being sustained by the One and at some decreed moment in time will return to the One: Pure Consciousness – the supreme Light of lights.

Consciousness is the primary power, which brings about sentiency to created beings, enables them to become aware and to be able to respond to stimuli. Pure consciousness is like visible light before refraction and reflection into colours and shades. It is the primal power and source of every level of consciousness, awareness and experience. The human soul is energised by this divine pure consciousness; in turn it is modified, conditioned and produces personal consciousness and the human experiences and life. Pure consciousness is the essence of life and personal consciousness is what gives individuality and specific qualities to a creation. The soul is the connecting point between personal-conditioned-changing consciousness and the eternal-supreme-divine consciousness.¹¹⁰

The entire cosmos – both seen and unseen – is a diverse multitude of stepped-down degrees of consciousness; each domain or degree reflecting subtler or higher presences. These form an elaborate interconnected web of complementarities;¹¹¹ a dynamic spectrum of consciousness, which finds its definitive root in the ground of pure consciousness.¹¹² It is within this

¹⁰⁷ Izutsu 1983. Pg 205

¹⁰⁸ Ibid. Pg 206

¹⁰⁹ Spirit (*rūh / atman*) is a pre-existent manifestation (tentatively referred to as "the relative absolute") of the "unknowable/unattainable" Absolute (*Deus absconditus / dhât / ayin / para-brahma*)

¹¹⁰ Haeri 2006. pg 54

¹¹¹ Primary complementarities include inner-outer; form-meaning; heavenly-earthly; gathered-dispersed etc. Source: Academy of Self Knowledge. 2005. Patterns in the Map of Existence. In: *Module 1: Cosmology of the Self*. Lesson 6. <http://www.askonline.co.za>

¹¹² Ibid

multidimensional and multifaceted process of divine emanation, creational principle, formational prototype and physical manifestation that the soul finds context, and within which our impermanent and conditioned ‘self’ (*nafs*¹¹³) is developed as it progresses through time and space towards an essential, primary, unified consciousness that is beyond space-time.¹¹⁴

There is indeed a falling away... from Spirit, from the primordial Ground... This falling away is called involution... And once involution has occurred – and Spirit becomes unconsciously involved in the lower and lowest forms of its own manifestation – then *evolution* can occur: Spirit unfolds in a great *spectrum of consciousness*, from the Big Bang to matter to sensation to perception to impulse to image to symbol to concept to reason to psychic to subtle to causal occasions, on the way to its own shocking self-recognition, Spirit’s own self-realization and self-resurrection. And in each of those stages – from matter to body to mind to soul to spirit – evolution becomes more and more conscious, more and more aware, more and more realized, more and more awake, with all the joys and all the terrors, inherently involved in that dialectic of awakening.¹¹⁵

It is important to grasp the fact that Spirit, or pure consciousness, is not something we are growing from the world of matter upwards (as a secondary by-product or “ghost in the machine”); rather, it is the absolute source and sustainer of all existence, permeates all of existence and is thus *primary*. Pure consciousness – as Ground of Being – is unified, eternal, unbounded, unlimited, unconditioned and unaffected by any space-time creational contingents. This trans-personal domain is also the pre-existent wellspring of the permanent divine attributes, such as oneness, ongoingness, beauty, freedom, generosity, mercy, abundance, knowledge, power, stability, majesty, etc – qualities which the temporal self desires, mimics or reflects according to its evolvment.¹¹⁶

The soul [*Spirit*] is like a divine hologram containing and reflecting all the higher qualities and attributes, which the self admires and loves. A holographic image usually depicts a visible entity but in this case, the example of the hologram is used in a qualitative sense.¹¹⁷

...The paradigms of holograms and mirrors are helpful in understanding the relationship between the self and soul. The soul is like an authentic holographic image of the universal soul or god. It contains the knowledge, patterns of archetypes, all the energy fields and whatever there is in creation. The soul beams its light upon the self and produces a modified or semi-holographic

¹¹³ In Arabic, the ‘self’ is referred to as *an-nafs*.

¹¹⁴ Haeri 2006

¹¹⁵ Wilber 1997. Pp 55-56

¹¹⁶ Haeri 2006

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.* Pg 14

image, which needs development, evolvment and spiritual growth in order to perfect its intended destiny. The self also acts like a mirror with a dark side, which is the ego. It is on this side that human vices erupt into undesirable outer conduct when the self is confused and not aligned with the perfect soul.¹¹⁸

The divine attributes are thus the primary pre-existent Ideals upon which the successive emanated divine presences (*hadarât*) are based; one could also say that these successive planes are a theophany of the divine attributes through each emanation. It is these attributes – and the extended archetypal (causal) principles / forces – that lie behind what we consider natural law. In order for the creational principles to actualize, they require the formational medium of prototypes and relational patterns within the imaginal domain.

According to prophetic tradition, the divine presences unfold as follows [please note that these respective traditional frameworks may differ slightly, but for the purposes of *NTRC* this basic outline should suffice]:

Tasawwûf	Qabalah	Description ¹¹⁹	Other
<i>Alam al-Hahût</i>	<i>Ayin</i>	The plane of Essence (<i>dhât</i>), the world of the non-manifest Absolute (<i>al-ghayb al-mutlaq</i>) or the Mystery of Mysteries.	Unmanifest Absolute; <i>Deus absconditus</i> ; <i>supra-esse</i> ; <i>Para-Brahma</i> ; <i>Tao</i> ; '0' (The "Unknowable"); "Beyond Being"
<i>Alam al-Lahût</i>	<i>Olam Atziluth</i>	Pure Consciousness / <i>rûh al-qudsi</i> (Supreme / Pure Spirit); <i>ahadiya</i> ; <i>haqiqat mohammediyya</i>	Manifest Absolute; <i>esse</i> ; <i>Paramatman</i> / <i>Brahma</i> ; <i>Yechidah</i> ; '1'
		The Presence of Divinity (<i>uluhiyah</i> ; <i>wahadiya</i>); the plane of the Attributes / Names. Undiminished by Time / Space creational contingents.	"Being;" <i>Atman</i>
<i>Alam al-Jabarût</i>	<i>Olam Briah</i>	The Creational Plane, the Presence of Lordship (<i>rububiyah</i>). The zone of Power: the 'Throne' and origin of patterns. Archetypal 'Force' / 'Movement'; Archetypal 'Form' / Stability'; Archetypal Time and Space; Archetypal Principle: <i>That</i> which is symbolized. The connecting point between pure Attributes / Divinity and Creational 'substance'.	Causal World
<i>Alam al-Malakût</i>	<i>Olam Yetzirah</i>	The plane of Formation, Images (<i>amthal</i>) and Imagination (<i>khayal</i>). Creations unseen, including subtle entities / energies; paradigms of Heavens and Earth. Actualized archetypes: the symbolic.	Imaginal World (<i>mundus imaginalis</i>); Subtle World
<i>Alam al-Nasût</i>	<i>Olam Assiyah</i>	The plane of actions, senses and sensible experience (<i>mushahadah</i>). The sensible world of causality, including the subatomic. The manifest symbol.	Physical World

¹¹⁸ Ibid. Pg 85

¹¹⁹ Adapted from: Izutsu 1984. Pg 11

These five planes constitute among themselves an organic whole, the things of a lower plane serving as symbols or images for the things of the higher planes. Thus, whatever exists in the plane of ordinary reality (which is the lowest of all Divine Presences) is a symbol-exemplification (*mithal*) for a thing existing in the plane of Images, and everything that exists in the world of Images is a form reflecting a state of affairs in the plane of the Divine Names and Divine Attributes, while every Attribute is an aspect of the Divine Essence in the act of self-manifestation.¹²⁰

One word of caution is here required. It must not be supposed that these worlds are above one another in space and time... This is one of the main drawbacks of diagrammatic representations. They are realms of consciousness each having an appropriate vehicle of matter, some more subtle, others more dense, than the other... their substance is not of the same degree of density, although spatially they may occupy the same position. The distinction, however, is of quality of matter, not of position in space.¹²¹

It is advised that the reader not fixate on this cosmological framework to the detriment of its ontological significance: ultimately this diagrammatic outline relates to orders of consciousness inherent within the human being; they should not be relegated to vague mystical speculation or reduced to the level of psychic entertainment. Furthermore they should not be thought of as being exotic ‘worlds’ to travel to: the physical world we occupy is our travelling world; these so-called other ‘planes’ or ‘domains’ are varying states of ontological unveiling or ‘inner’ realization within the spectrum of consciousness and they function according to a radically different space-time ‘logic’. What this model basically outlines is that the human entity – while originally in a pre-existent state of unconscious but unified Divine Being – must, through a process of involution and physical birth, ‘descend’ into creational plurality, duality and relativity and must (by divine design) ‘return’ to the pre-existent state of unified Being, but in *knowledge* of the Absolute and in unison with pure consciousness.¹²²

Although Adam was in the garden he did not realise its perpetual blissfulness. The descent to earth and the experiences of pain and pleasure, good and bad, light and darkness are necessary foundations to understanding the nature of harmony and unity. Thus, our experience of distance from the original divine ‘gatheredness’ and restless worldly dispersion is in order to ascend back to the original oneness, which is encoded within every human soul.¹²³

¹²⁰ Ibid

¹²¹ REGARDIE 1992. Pg 123

¹²² i.e. This Knowing / Knowledge is traditionally known as *ma'rifah / jnana / Gnosis*.

¹²³ HAERI 2006. Pg 9

...We had to descend to the world of multiplicity so as to climb the ladders of consciousness to unity.¹²⁴

The human being has the allotted task, the primary purpose, of realizing and aligning with this “one true reality” (*la ilaha illa ‘Llah*: “There is no absolute, other than *the Absolute*”). On this point, prophetic tradition is clear:

I was a hidden Treasure [unknown];
and out of Love (to become *Known*)
I created the worlds.¹²⁵

To our Lord we shall return.¹²⁶

The Cosmology of the Self

The great [human] paradox will dissolve by the discovery that human nature comprises two divergent entities belonging to two different cosmological domains. One entity is the self, which is worldly and has physical and outwardly definable aspects; the other is the soul [Spirit], which is the seat of consciousness and the source of life; it is ‘heavenly’, unseen and intangible.¹²⁷

...The connecting point of our two distinct domains is the heart, where the rational self meets the soul’s consciousness... The uniqueness of the human being is its unified consciousness of both the gross specific aspects of the material world and pure consciousness relating to subtle intangible realities. The sublime and the ridiculous meet in the breast of the human being. We can be less than an ape and higher than an angel. We are both earthly and heavenly. This is the ultimate paradox.¹²⁸

According to prophetic tradition, the human being is unique in that it is the “meeting place” or “interspace” (*barzakh*) between the seen and the unseen, between the “heavens and the “earth,” between the Absolute and the relative. This is essentially in reference to an ontological organ of spiritual perception – traditionally known as the “Heart” (*qalb*) – located at this junction and capable of attaining *cognition / gnosis* of the divine ground (i.e. *rûh / paramatman*):

¹²⁴ Ibid. Pg 26

¹²⁵ Hadith Qudsi

¹²⁶ Qur’an (26:50)

¹²⁷ Haeri 2006. Pg 79

¹²⁸ Ibid. Pg 80

We offered the Trust to the heavens, the earth and the mountains. They refused it and were afraid, and man accepted it.¹²⁹

My heavens and earth do not contain Me, but the heart of a believer contains Me.¹³⁰

In order to appropriately realize / relate / respond to the ever-present truth of the unified divine reality, it is necessary for there to be a development of the self (*nafs*) towards its true centre (*qalb* / Heart) – even though, paradoxically, pure consciousness permeates the entire cosmos and is said to be “nearer to us than nearness itself.”¹³¹

In Sufi metaphysics the Heart [*qalb*] is the center of the psyche, the point at which it is intersected by the vertical ray of the Spirit (*rûh*). This symbolic image has obvious affinities with the act of constructing a circle using a compass and a sheet of paper. The Heart is who we really are in the sight of God; it is the central point of our full and authentic humanity. Whoever wants to rise along the vertical path of the Spirit, the *axis mundi*, first has to have reached the Center, the Heart, which is another way of saying that we can't relate to God with only a part of ourselves. A line drawn from any point on the circumference of a circle so as to intersect a line passing vertically through the circle's center can never be one with the infinite elevation which the vertical line symbolizes. It must intersect the vertical line at some point short of infinity. Furthermore, it only “represents” its own point-of-origin on the circumference; it can in no way stand for the circle and the whole. But the center of the circle does stand for the whole circle, since it is the point from which the circle expands, and to which it returns. And only the central point of the circle is available to the ray of infinite elevation which symbolizes the relationship between the human form and God.¹³²

The Journey of the Self

The newborn infant and early childhood would therefore be the starting point in the developmental process of ‘self’, in which the human is able to move towards, or unfold, its centre and “return” to its divine origin. As the pure consciousness of the infant learns to identify with the physicality of this existence, it develops ‘self’ consciousness in the process.¹³³ The

¹²⁹ Qur'an (33:72)

¹³⁰ Hadith Qudsi

¹³¹ “And certainly We created man – and We know what his mind suggests to him – and We are nearer to him than his jugular vein.” Qur'an (50:16)

¹³² Charles Upton: *Al-Tawhid, Unity*. In: Helminski 2006. Pp 34-35

¹³³ This is managed mainly through the interaction of the infant / child with its primary caretaker (usually the mother), who passes on, or facilitates the receiving of, worldly / sensory information to the infant / child who then receives this information through the agency of the five senses. The factors which influence this development of the child with its caretaker are known as ‘*mirroring*’, *bonding*, *attachment* and ‘*modelling*’. In: Academy of Self Knowledge. 2005. The

arrival of the child into this world is likened to the state of a *tabula rasa* (i.e. a clean slate) – also referred to by the metaphor of “a mirror in the making.”¹³⁴ Since the newborn arrives with pure consciousness – albeit he / she is unaware / unconscious of this fact – this state is considered to be like a clear glass mirror without any markings. Once the infant begins to interact with the world and attain consciousness of measurement and dimension through the five senses, these imprints or sensory signals of sound, temperature and movement become like the first markings on the glass mirror, forming what we would call the “self” or “self consciousness.” Pure consciousness, like clear glass, is consubstantial with the stillness and eternal ongoingness of pre-creation and, as such, precedes and continues beyond the five outer and five inner senses; thus, while it imbues and sustains human consciousness, it essentially transcends space-time dimension and thereby remains pure, unified and undiminished.¹³⁵

The different layers of self consciousness start from the potential of pure consciousness and then imprint consciousness of the environment, heat, cold, pain, change, etc; this can be considered consciousness of gross physicality. Since gross consciousness retains, in essence, its primary blueprint of pure consciousness and remains sustained by it, the various layers of human consciousness can falsely assume the reality of pure consciousness in its unitive, all-pervading and all-powerful state. This is why a two year-old has no patience: instant gratification and impatience reflects what is essentially the instantaneous nature of Spirit.¹³⁶ Similarly, the two year-old sees itself as the centre of the universe, thereby reflecting the unitive divine attribute of ‘gatheredness’, which is ultimately related to the Ground of Being. Yet it is through this sensory interaction, between the microcosmic child and the macrocosmic world, that a healthy mind can grow and influence the development of higher consciousness. It is precisely through this process of existential interaction and earthly disciplines – as minded, reminded and (hopefully) exemplified by the child’s parents – that the child begins to develop its consciousness, gradually from the gross towards the more subtle and spiritual domains. An example of a spiritualized state of consciousness, where the self begins to align with its eternal companion (i.e. Spirit), can be found in the patience of an older wise person: whereas before, the impatience of the child inversely reflected the “timeless now” of pure consciousness, the older

First Steps of Our Journey; Early Childhood. In: *Module 1: Cosmology of the Self*. Lesson 3. Pp13-14.
<http://www.askonline.co.za>

¹³⁴ Ibid. Pg 5

¹³⁵ Ibid

¹³⁶ It also says a lot about the state of a global culture that insists on instant gratification.

wiser person has now been ‘groomed’ through repeated interaction and experience in life to realize that “timelessness” is the all-encompassing reality permeating all existence.¹³⁷

Since Truth precedes, imbues and continues beyond all things, it can always be found.¹³⁸

For the most part, however, far from remembrance, realization and a return to unified Being, it appears as though we suffer from a catastrophic amnesia and have inherited millennia-long addictions to materiality and sensory pleasure – often at the expense of the many other subtle or more essential faculties, states or stations of self. Sadly, the transformation of the lower (egocentric) self¹³⁹ into a more evolved or integrated self¹⁴⁰ – in unison with pure consciousness – is becoming stagnant in an endless soap-opera adaptation of the ‘fall’ of Adam.¹⁴¹ Strictly speaking, ‘adam’ or the “adamic consciousness” is the human archetype and prototype; his ‘forgetfulness’ and dispersal of consciousness – our daily inheritance.

Yet the adamic story is neither complete nor the archetypal journey fulfilled without the revelation that a realized awakening (*dhikr / zakhor / simraan*) into pure consciousness is divinely programmed within us. The significance and irony of this prophetic life-transaction becomes clear when we refer to the phenomenon of Artificial Intelligence (A.I.) and the parallel quest for an obediently serving ‘robot’. Both can be said to be the sum of our own artificiality, animated by a poor projection or reflection of the *illumination* we deny within our own consciousness: a denial of the Light of lights.¹⁴² This primary unified consciousness has also been referred to as the “redeemed adamic consciousness” and, mythopoetically speaking, the “light” or “flaming gold” of the Holy Grail. If (we) cannot turn with *awareness, love, knowledge* and *gratitude* towards the Ground of Being, then predictably (but for the most part unconsciously) we will obsess about infusing a technological product with consciousness in order that (it) will come to *know, love* and *praise* (us) as its creator. This is a distorted inversion of the need for divine awakening, reflected in our ongoing quest to replicate consciousness, accrue fame and find social acceptance – currently being projected onto commercial products

¹³⁷ Academy of Self Knowledge. 2005. The First Steps of Our Journey; Early Childhood. In: *Module 1: Cosmology of the Self*. Lesson 3. Pg 8. <http://www.askonline.co.za>

¹³⁸ Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri

¹³⁹ *nafs al-ammara*

¹⁴⁰ *nafs al-mulhama... nafs al-kamila/al-safiyya*

¹⁴¹ From a unified consciousness into a space-time dimension of opposing duality, and the resulting ‘worldly’ dispersal / fragmentation to be endured.

¹⁴² In the tradition of Tasawwuf, this supreme prophetic Light is referred to as *an-Nûr Mohammedi*; in Christian mysticism it is known as *Christ Consciousness*.

and technological inventions.¹⁴³ This tendency has been referred to as a *projection of a repressed archetype*.

[T]he great productive surge of the modern revolution inevitably involves the further deterioration of man's primal integrity – machines exteriorize human faculties, technological man is hell-bent on a strangely misconceived quest to make himself redundant, thinking that this somehow fulfils all human dreams. But “transhuman” is really *sub-human*. “Robo-buddies” are the proposed solution to the biosocial loneliness of an advanced, atomized ultra-selfish society, but there is no technological solution yet – other than sedatives – for metaphysical longing.¹⁴⁴

At the very least, the inverted imitation offers evidence – although in somewhat brazen and awkward manner – that the *genuine* article, transformational process or true reality exists.¹⁴⁵

Symbol and Archetype

One cannot fully grasp the role and nature of theophany, the symbolic “green signature” and the “Green Man” as archetypal symbol, without first looking at the definition, role and nature of *archetype* and *symbol* and their relation to, or function in, the transformation of human consciousness towards the divine.

An archetype is principally a permanent *divine attribute* (i.e. Ideal / Supernal Archetype) within the trans-personal realm of Spirit. It is pure divinity, pre-existent and undiminished by “time” or “space” [these attributes can be said to be aspects of the Unmanifest Absolute / Divine Essence in the act of manifestation].¹⁴⁶ Through a process of emanation into the (supra-rational) *causal* realm of consciousness, the archetype is established as *principle, force* and *organizational stability* with potential for creation and creational patterns within time / space constructs. Principle, force and creational pattern are then actualized (i.e. given discernable but supra-physical and supra-rational form) through the *imaginal* realm (*mundus imaginalis / alam al-mithal*) with the formation of prototype, image and subtle energy inter-relations. The archetypes are given final expression in the physical form of cosmos and nature and are refined in sacred symbol. For the most part, we (self consciousness) can move into resonance with an

¹⁴³ “*I have a Vision! ... Television!*” [Pop-parody by “MacPhisto / Mirrorball-Man / The Fly”]: alter-ego stage persona of U2 frontman, Bono, during their “Zooropa” world tour.

¹⁴⁴ Blackhirst, R. 2007. The Transcendent Connection and the Problem of Loneliness. In: *Vincit Omnia Veritas* III, 1: <http://religioperennis.org/documents/Editorial/Issue5/IssueIII1.pdf> Pg 133

¹⁴⁵ Similarly, the fervent worldly pursuit of power, wealth, longevity, etc, are clear indications that real power, wealth, ongoingness, etc, exist – except that these attributes are only truly revealed within the trans-personal core of our Being. Whereas nothing is permanent in this world, the divine attributes, on the other hand, are eternal.

¹⁴⁶ Izutsu 1984. Pg 11

archetype but not successfully repress it. Any attempt at suppression, or the subversion of archetypal principle, results in inverted manifestations and various destructive or obstructive contradictions, such as phobias / compulsions / neuroses / dissociation (psychologically), disease (physiologically), poverty / discord (sociologically), anarchy (politically) and degradation (ecologically).

For an elucidation of *symbol* and its function in the nature and purpose of creation, I thought it best to refer the reader to the original source works of Martin Lings¹⁴⁷ and Timothy Scott.¹⁴⁸ Also provided, below, are relevant extracts from the works of these and other distinguished writers and scholars:

According to the understanding of the Traditions, the idea of “symbol” refers to a ‘sensible entity that directs the understanding from the physical towards the supraphysical levels of reality’.

...The symbol is the immanent expression of the Divine. Through participation in both the sensible and the metaphysical orders of ontological Existence the symbol acts as the vehicle by which the human may be lead back to the Divine. The symbol operates through the relationship of the intelligence and the Intellect. The unfolding or unveiling of Reality through a progression of symbolic initiations acts like so many rungs on a ladder leading “upwards” to the Divine. In this way the symbol is anagogic: from the Greek *anago* (“to lead up to”), as in leading the understanding up to a metaphysical meaning... The symbol differs from a “sign” *per se* in that the symbol partakes of its referent, whereas, in contrast, for a sign the signifier and the signified are necessarily and by definition distinct. This is due to the fact that they are at the same level of reality, ‘the domain of individual experience of particulars’.¹⁴⁹

The symbolic language of the great traditions of mankind may indeed seem arduous and baffling to some minds, but it is nevertheless perfectly intelligible in the light of the orthodox commentaries; symbolism – this point must be stressed – is a real and rigorous science, and nothing can be more naive than to suppose that its apparent naivety springs from an immature and ‘prelogical’ mentality. This science, which can properly be described as ‘sacred’, quite plainly does not have to adjust itself to the modern experimental approach; the realm of revelation, of symbolism, of pure and direct Intellection, stands in fact above both the physical and psychological realms, and consequently it lies beyond the scope of so-called scientific methods.¹⁵⁰

[A symbol is not merely] a ‘concrete’ image arbitrarily chosen by man to illustrate some ‘abstract’ idea; a symbol is ...the [actual] manifestation, in some lower mode, of the higher reality which it symbolizes and which stands in as close a relationship to it as root of tree to leaf. Thus water is

¹⁴⁷ Lings 2005

¹⁴⁸ Scott, T. *The Traditional Doctrine of Symbol*: <http://www.religioperennis.org/documents/Scott/Symbol.pdf>

¹⁴⁹ Ibid

¹⁵⁰ Schuon, F. 1974. No Activity without Truth. In Needleman, J. *The Sword of Gnosis*. Penguin, Baltimore. Pg 29.

Mercy; and it would be true to say that even without any understanding of symbolism and even without belief in the Transcendent, immersion in water has an inevitable effect upon the soul in addition to its purification of the body. In the absence of ritual intention, this effect may be altogether momentary and superficial; it is none the less visible on the face of almost any bather emerging from a lake or river or sea, however quickly it may be effaced by the resumption of ‘ordinary life’.¹⁵¹

The symbol partakes of both the Transcendent and the Immanent, both the Divine Unity and the diversity of Its realized or actualized expression. This participation in both levels of Existence allows the symbol to fulfil its function as the intermediary – the mode of communication – between the Divine and the human.¹⁵²

‘Unveiling means, in short, taking each of the sensible things as a locus in which Reality discloses itself to us...’¹⁵³

The ‘world’ of Images (*alam al-mithal*) is ontologically an intermediate domain of contact between the purely sensible world and the purely spiritual, i.e., non-material world. It is, as Affifi defines it, ‘a really existent world in which are found the forms of things in a manner that stands between “fineness” and “coarseness,” that is, between pure spirituality and pure materiality’.

...What is commonly called imagination is nothing but this world as it is reflected in the human consciousness, not in its proper forms, but obliquely, dimly, and utterly deformed. Images obtained in such a way naturally lack an ontological basis and are rightly to be disposed of as hallucinations.¹⁵⁴

The *mundus imaginalis* is a level of reality in which ‘meanings’ are embodied as images which have a kind of autonomous existence. The *alami mithal* is an “interworld” in which visions, which are simultaneously meanings, are experienced by a psycho-spiritual faculty, the Active Imagination, or what Sufis would simply call the ‘heart’.

...The function of this power of the soul is in restoring a space that sacralizes the ephemeral, earthly state of being. It unites the earthly manifestation with its counterpart on the imaginal level, and raises it to incandescence.¹⁵⁵

The *imaginal* world is the realm of the symbolic, the alchemical, the visionary, the wonder-ful. The imagination is a mediating function, an organ of the subtle body. Through the *theoria* that “pours forth a vast power,” it overflows the limited discursive meaning of words, and dissolves the

¹⁵¹ Martin Lings. In: Jeremy Henzell-Thomas. 2004. *Mythical Meaning, Religion and Soulful Education: Reviving the Original Sense of ‘Intellect’*. Pg 18. <http://thebook.org/tep-articles/uploads/edinburgh.pdf>

¹⁵² Scott, T. *The Traditional Doctrine of Symbol*: <http://www.religioperennis.org/documents/Scott/Symbol.pdf>

¹⁵³ Izutsu 1984. Pg 12

¹⁵⁴ Ibid. Pg 13

¹⁵⁵ Helminski, K. *Soul Loss & Soul Making*: <http://www.sufism.org/books/sacred/soulloss.html> (accessed 2006)

idolatry inherent in the experience of beings without transcendence... The nihilism and the death of God that is the heritage of the West is for [Henry] Corbin a direct result of the destruction of the functions of the imagination, of the shattering of the speculum.¹⁵⁶

With the advent of rationalism in the West we slowly banished symbolic consciousness and lost touch with our inner heritage. Time became just a succession of hours and days, rather than a part of the great round in which the seasons follow the constellations... Without being nourished by a world of symbols, we are left increasingly stranded in a materialistic world that does not reflect our deeper nature. Hungry for symbolic meaning we often try to find symbols in our outer life – we look for the gods on our television screen, we glorify our car or our computer.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁶ Cheetham 2005. Pg 83

¹⁵⁷ Vaughn-Lee 2001. Pg 112

Interconnectedness, Equilibrium and the Green Signature

The universe and all that exists within it are described by relationships and the power of interactions between them. Whatever exists relates to something else and is never isolated, even though it has a specific identity, autonomy or apparent independence. *Wholeness in life depends upon the harmonious dynamics of interdependence at all times* [emphasis mine].¹⁵⁸

Harmony is the imprint of Oneness upon multiplicity.¹⁵⁹

The secular fields of Quantum Physics, Ecopsychology and Integral Ecology have reminded us of the fact that a state of interconnectedness and interdependence exists – not only between human physical body and the physical environment, as is particularly evident in Deep Ecology and Systems Theory,¹⁶⁰ but more specifically between human consciousness and the so-called ‘outer’ world. In a way, these fields have begun to awaken to the reality and knowledge that has for many centuries been the heritage of traditional metaphysics. Jung comments:

Whereas the scientific attitude seeks, on the basis of careful empiricism, to explain nature in her own terms, Hermetic philosophy had for its goal an explanation that included the psyche in the total description of nature. The empiricist tries, more or less unsuccessfully, to forget his archetypal explanatory principles, that is, the psychic premises that are *sine qua non* of the cognitive process, or to repress them in the interests of ‘scientific objectivity’. The Hermetic philosopher regarded these psychic premises, the archetypes, as inalienable components of the empirical world picture... As the findings of modern physics show: the observer cannot be finally eliminated, which means that the psychic premises remain operative.¹⁶¹

Seyyed Hossein Nasr continues:

In the realm of quantum mechanics, paradoxically, we have to accept the reality of consciousness, because we cannot ever know anything without observing it. That is why some physicists now talk about psychons... The idea that we have psychic ‘particles’, consciousness ‘entities’ or ‘fields’, along with neurons and all the other particles that are around is itself a way of trying to come to terms with consciousness. We have ended up with the paradox that we cannot really understand the universe quantum-mechanically without a consciousness to observe the quantum.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁸ Haeri 2006. Pg 152

¹⁵⁹ Lings 1987. Pg 49

¹⁶⁰ Laszlo 1996; Capra 1997; Glasser 2005

¹⁶¹ Jung 1983. Pp 288-289

¹⁶² Seyyed Hossein Nasr. *In the Beginning of Creation was Consciousness*. Harvard Lecture, May 2003: <http://www.hds.harvard.edu/news/bulletin/articles/nasr.html> (accessed 2006). Originally published as: Nasr, S. H.

This is of particular relevance to the “green signature” in that it brings to us a deeper understanding of *balance* and *harmony* within a now expanded context of *interconnected-interdependent relations*: key attributes expressed through the symbolism of the green signature. Given that the progressive fields of Quantum Physics and Ecopsychology have revealed an intricate, interconnected and interdependent relationship between consciousness and so-termed ‘matter’, it is suggested that the human mind will inevitably respond to processes occurring within the physical world (and vice versa!) Furthermore, it is by virtue of these interconnected and interdependent relations that we are able to broaden and deepen our understanding of (i.e. to “taste”) certain valuable qualities such as *gatheredness*, *harmony*, *balance*, *beauty*, *nourishment*, *renewal*, etc – qualities, in natural theophanic form, that bring to human consciousness a remembrance of some of the exalted attributes of the divine origin.

Knowledge of interconnectedness brings the self closer to the source of the unifying power in life
– divine supreme consciousness.¹⁶³

The Green Signature

A fingerprint is the result of the relationship between a finger and the surface it connects with. In other words a fingerprint attests to the relationship that took place over the threshold between the two. To further develop this analogy: the green colour of chlorophyll (for example) within plants and trees attests to the presence of water and sunlight¹⁶⁴ – withdraw the influence (*sustenance / nourishment*) of either the sun or water, or disrupt the *harmonious balance* between the two, and the colour subsides, signalling the ill-health of the vegetation or its death. This *green signature* is symbolically apparent at many levels of consciousness; of great significance is when it symbolizes a healthy and balanced relationship between self and Spirit at the threshold of the Heart. As will be shown, some of the distinguishing characteristics of this signature – whether encountered in biology, ecology, or symbolically within the dimensions of psychology, mythology, mysticism and metaphysics – are the signalling of *harmony*, *balance* and *nourishment* within the context of *interconnected-interdependent* relations. This signature is also associated at a trans-egoic level with direct awareness of the divine presence. At a biophysical level this signature can be observed when an appropriate combination of soil nutrients, carbon-dioxide, sunlight and water meet at the heart of the botanical world to produce

2003. In the Beginning was Consciousness. In: *Sophia: The Journal of Traditional Studies*. Volume 9 Number 1. The Foundation for Traditional Studies.

¹⁶³ Haeri 2006. Pg 178

¹⁶⁴ Principally light and water, but also earth (soil/minerals) and air (carbon dioxide).

a living green mantle. If we are able to free ourselves from the straitjacket of prevailing paradigms, we will be able to detect the *presence* of what is considered nourishing or clarified – as was the case with water and light at a biophysical level – through an awareness and investigation of an essentially green ‘signature’.

Three things of this world delight the heart: water, green things and a beautiful face.¹⁶⁵

It is worth adding at this point that one of the world’s foremost organizations proactively working to protect and preserve the natural environment and to educate society on their destructive attitudes toward nature, is named *Green Peace*.¹⁶⁶

[We] have (at least) three eyes of knowing: the eye of flesh, which apprehends physical events; the eye of mind which apprehends images and desires and concepts and ideas; and the eye of contemplation, which apprehends spiritual experiences and states.¹⁶⁷

To begin with, from the perspective of visual observation, the colour green is considered “vibrantly peaceful.” This is why it is an acceptable colour to use in hospitals and healthcare, and why we experience a physiologically favourable reaction during the onset of the season of spring. Despite the negative connotations this colour has received through religious indoctrination, ‘pagan’ extravagance and industrial resistance, it is nonetheless here suggested as a colour symbolically representative of health and beauty.¹⁶⁸ In Dante’s *Divine Comedy* the colour ‘green’ symbolically expresses hope. It is also considered a colour of action, life, nourishment and renewal and is interacted with at an accessible eye-level, within nature: our physical habitat.¹⁶⁹

From a bio-botanical perspective the colour green indicates the presence of chlorophyll: chloroplast cells active within the structures of plant-life. Chlorophyll is predominantly green in colour with yellow-green and blue-green variations. Green light, while reflected and not actually absorbed, is however, indicative of chlorophyll and therefore of importance from the perspective of visual observation. The function of chlorophyll is to contain, convert and store the sun’s energy in order to chemically bond sugar molecules – in a process known as *photosynthesis*.

¹⁶⁵ Prophetic saying

¹⁶⁶ I am not suggesting that Green Peace has all the answers, but I am indicating the significance of its title and the importance of this function in contemporary society.

¹⁶⁷ Wilber 1997. Pg 32

¹⁶⁸ Of course, nothing relative can ever be absolute: bacterial infection and eco-fascism being cases in point.

¹⁶⁹ Besides obvious symbiotic relations, it is interesting to note how our lungs have a similar form as – and function in a similar fashion to – trees.

Plant, animal and human systems utilize these sugars as an energy source. During this process, oxygen, vital to human and animal life, is released into the atmosphere. This is not only important within the field of organic chemistry; it also provides an appropriate symbolic / theophanic reference closely associated with the Green Man and the hermetic arts.¹⁷⁰ Incidentally, the word “chlorophyll” is derived from the Greek *khloros*, which means not only green but importantly it includes the notion of “fresh, moist and blooming” – an appropriate description of the divine attribute known in Arabic as *al-Hayy* (the Ever-Living) and in Mandaic as *Hiia* (the Great Life).¹⁷¹

From the perspective of Hermeticism, botanical nature – owing to its relationship with light / heat, water, air and soil – provides a fitting discourse for the *interaction* and *harmonious balance* between the supra-physical and the physical. This is further reflected in Indian Yogic philosophy, where the colour green is found in symbolic association with the *Anahata Chakra*:¹⁷² a subtle energy point represented near the heart and lung portion of the body.¹⁷³ This chakra lies in the centre of the basic 7-Chakra system (see *Figure 1*) and is contemplated as a way of restoring *harmonious balance* to the system; it is also said to govern relationships.

¹⁷⁰ *Hermeticism* and *Alchemy* refer to the sacred science / art of transformation. Alchemists recognized transformation as a natural process and sought to explore this either through outer projection in a laboratory environment or through inner spiritual contemplation. The outer projection, as manifested in the laboratory retort, served as a focus / symbol for meditation (linking both the outer and inner sciences). Alchemy usually entails a ‘substance’ moving from its lower state, through various stages to a more refined or ‘elevated’ state, while observing the laws of nature. *Hermeticism* is essentially the preservation of the spiritual interpretation of alchemy, as opposed to a purely chemical one that either seeks to make mineral gold, or searches for an actual physical ‘elixir’ in order to produce physical / spiritual immortality. For more details on the “Alchemical Vessel as a Symbol of the Soul” please follow this link: <http://www.levity.com/alchemy/vessel.html> (accessed 2006)

¹⁷¹ It is interesting to note that one of the most sacred Hebrew Names of God is *Eheyeh* meaning “I will be” or “I Am.” The ancient Sumerian name for the Divine Absolute was similarly pronounced *EA* (*Eah* or *Heah*), and much like the Chaldean saviour Oannes, *Eah* his predecessor is referred to as “the eternal living,” the “god of wisdom” and “the Sublime Fish.”

¹⁷² *Anahata*: Sanskrit for “unstruck” or “eternal.” *Chakra*: Sanskrit for “wheel” or “disk.” General chakra theory points to a system of 7 chakras (subtle energy points) aligned ‘down’/‘through’ the central axis of the body, which function as conduits / gateways to various levels / orders of consciousness. These *may* find correspondence with Neo-Platonic cosmology, as expounded in spiritual alchemy (i.e. the ‘seven heavens’).

¹⁷³ Judith 1996

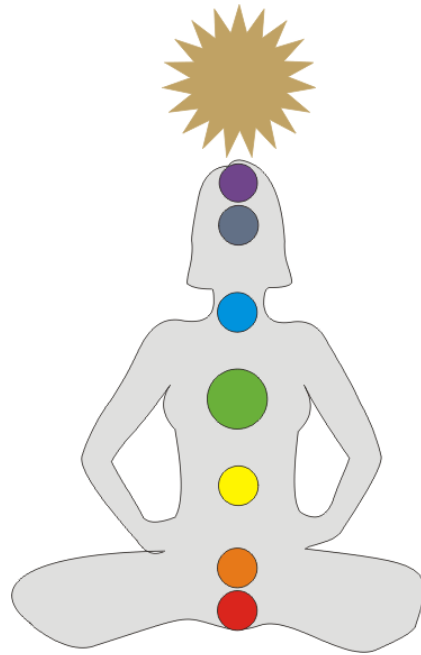


Figure 1

Interestingly, in the centre (“middle pillar”) of the colour spectrum – as observed in light dispersion via prism-refracted sunlight – we find the green bandwidth (see *Figure 2*); this finds further reflection in the 2:1 octave signature, as demonstrated on the monochord instrument (see *Figure 3*).

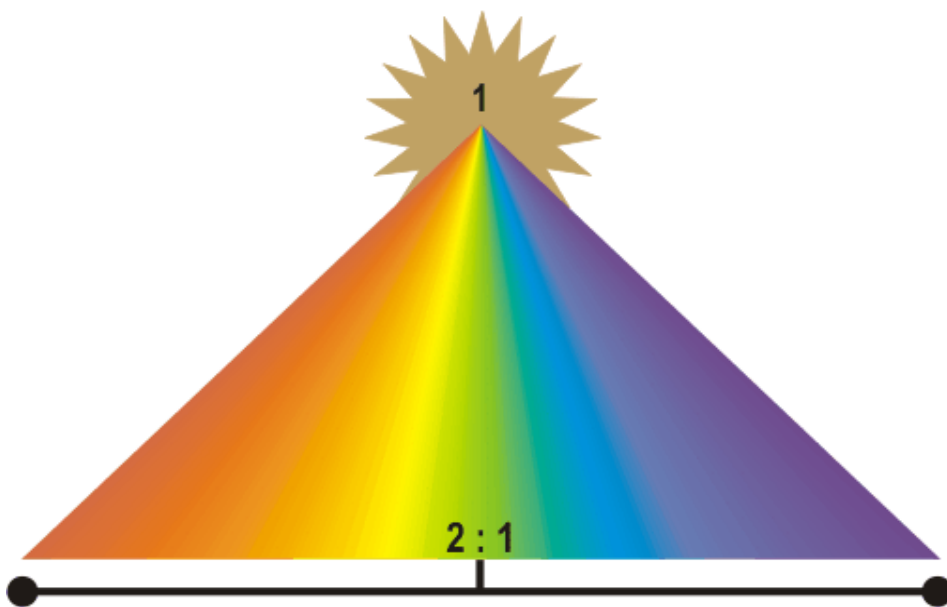


Figure 2

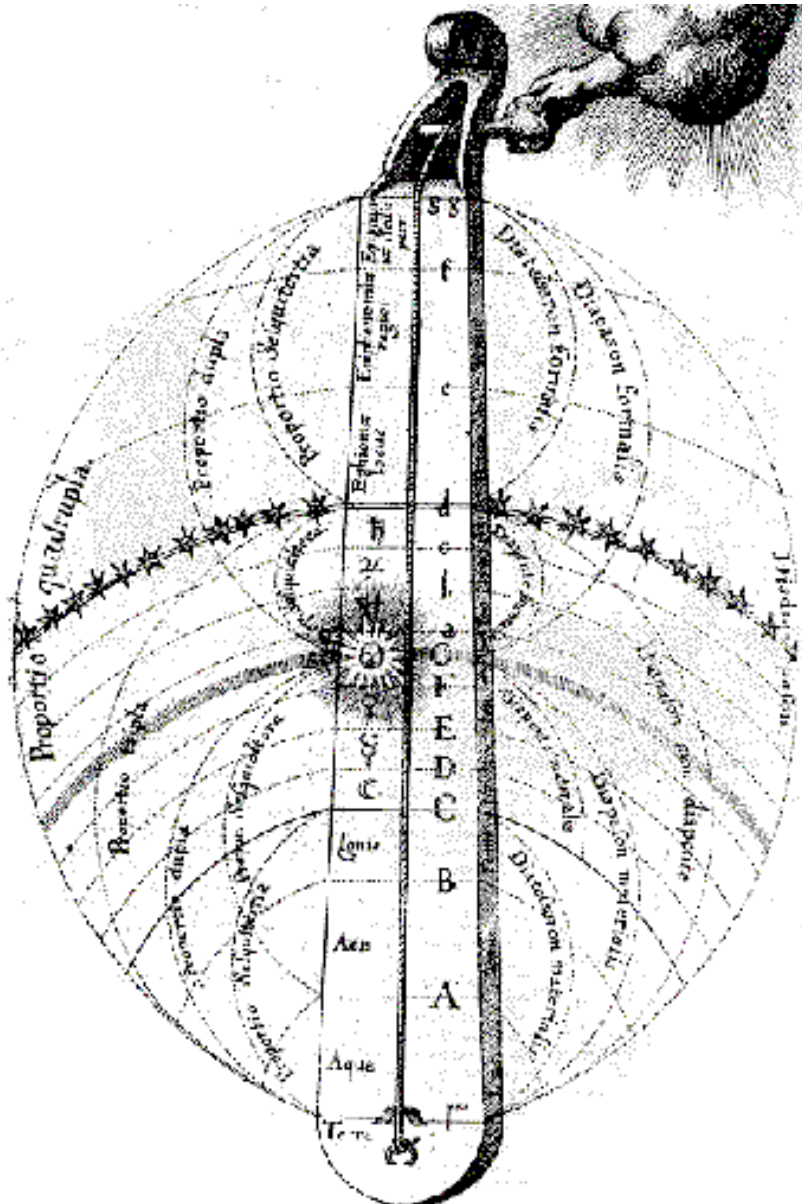


Figure 3

The monochord is the internal principle which, from the centre of the whole, brings about the harmony of all life in the cosmos.¹⁷⁴

The concept of centring, balancing, harmonizing and binding (or unifying) is contained within the green signature as it finds symbolic reflection throughout the spectrum of consciousness: in

¹⁷⁴ Robert Fludd. In: Roob 1997. Pg 95 [A monochord is an acoustic device constructed with a single string drawn across two 'bridges' and a soundboard, with a moveable bridge for dividing the string length. Formally introduced by Pythagoras (c. 540-460BCE), the monochord demonstrates the natural harmonic scale with its underlying mathematical principles, which find further expression in the structure of our solar system (see also: Berendt 1991). The most harmonic note of the 'fingered' (creational) scale lies in the 2:1 octave position (i.e. 1/2 of the total string length and therefore in the middle of the monochord) and is therefore the same note, albeit higher-pitched, as the open 'unfingered' (pre-existent / pre-creational) string]

photosynthesis, an essentially translucent light source engages with the green catalyst, chlorophyll, to form useable energy; ecologically, this energy rich vegetation sustains and provides habitat for many diverse life forms; in “white” [i.e. clear] light analysis, the colour green centres itself within the refracted spectrum; in mystical psychology the Green Man / Woman archetype symbolically images the threshold of Heart (*qalb*) from which the authentic self responds to the influence of Spirit; in traditional metaphysics: *Truth, Wisdom, Beauty, Harmony, Love, Justice, Compassion, etc* (i.e. some of the attributes that form the hermetic philosophers’ “Rose Garden”) are divine refractions of the supreme (undifferentiated) Light (*nûr al-qudsi*) of pure consciousness (*rûh al-quddûs*).

The green signature is therefore reinforced as being symbolically representative of *interconnectedness, balance, harmony, nourishment / sustenance* and supra-physical *binding* (i.e. the *Anahata Chakra* is associated with divine love / devotion). An interesting geometrical symbol connected to the *Anahata Chakra* further reinforces both its hermetic and yogic connection with necessary balance, harmony and binding. This symbol – the hexagram (see *Figure 5a*) – is ancient and is found within a variety of cultures. In the tradition of Qabalah,¹⁷⁵ the hexagram is known as the “Sign of the Macrocosm;” also known as *Solomon’s Seal* – a symbol still surviving in western esoteric Schools in association with the attainment of divine wisdom.¹⁷⁶ Furthermore, in the Qabalah the hexagram is symbolically linked to the sixth sephiroth, *Tifareth*, in the centre of the “Tree of Life” (see *Figure 4*). *Tifareth* is acknowledged as the sephiroth of *balance, harmony* and, as its name suggests, *beauty*.

¹⁷⁵ *Qabalah*: means “to receive;” also “a welcoming of God.” It finds its practical roots in the mysticism of *Merkabah* (Chariot) and *Hechalot* (Ascents). As a conceptual framework, it developed initially from the Jewish mystical text, the *sefer yetzirah* (Book of Formations), with some additional imagery coming from the philosophy of Philo-of-Alexandria. One of the more popular Qabalist texts thus far has been the thirteenth century (CE) Jewish production, the *sefer zohar* (Book of Splendour); it is also around about this time that we first get a glimpse of the Qabalah manifested as the “Tree-of-Life.” The Tree-of-Life, as we know it today (a symbolic glyph comprising of 10 Sephira [qualities/realms/states], 22 inter-leading Paths and 3 Pillars), is said to be the result of a collaborative effort between Jewish mystics and Sufis while living in exile in Spain, with later development occurring after CE 1492 in Safed, Galilee. The Qabalah is utilized as a framework for understanding and connecting with the mystery of Cosmos, Self and God.

¹⁷⁶ Burns, A. 2004. *Masonic Symbolism: Some Esoteric Considerations*. Lecture / Occasional Paper. South Africa. Pg 4

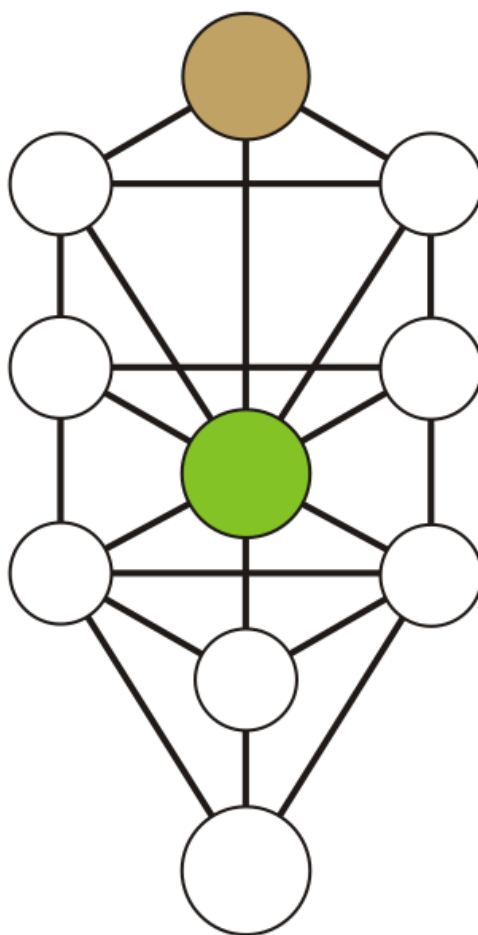


Figure 4

There are three important keys to the nature of Tiphareth. Firstly, it is the centre of equilibrium of the whole Tree, being in the middle of the Central Pillar; secondly, it is Kether on a lower arc and Yesod on a higher arc; thirdly, it is the point of transformation between the planes of force and the planes of form.¹⁷⁷

...The meaning of the Hebrew word Tiphareth is Beauty; and of the many definitions of beauty that have been proposed, the most satisfying is that which finds beauty to lie in a due and just proportion, whatever the beautiful thing may be, whether moral or material. It is interesting, therefore, to find the Sephiroth of Beauty as the central point of equilibrium of the whole Tree, and that one of the two Spiritual Experiences assigned to Tiphareth is the vision of the Harmony of Things.

...[I]n the Yetziratic Text assigned to Tiphareth [it is said that] “The Sixth Path is called the Mediating Intelligence.” A mediator is essentially a connecting link, an intermediary; consequently Tiphareth, in its central position, must be looked upon as a two-way switch, and we must consider it both as receiving the “influxes of the Emanations” and as “causing that influence to flow into all the reservoirs of the blessings.”¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁷ Fortune 1987. Pg 189

¹⁷⁸ Fortune 1987. Pg 203

In Hindu religious symbolism, the hexagram is known as the *Satkona Yantra* and indicates, in geometric form, the sacred *union* between Shiva and Shakti: the masculine and feminine streams of divine consciousness respectively.¹⁷⁹ In the hermetic arts, these two interpenetrating triangles represent the *harmonious balance* between Water (Queen; lunar; ▽) and Fire (King; solar; △), with the sacred ‘child’ (the spiritually awakened Heart [*qalb*]) being thereby *resurrected*. Interestingly, this hexagram carries the numerical value of six, which is the same amount of electrons that a carbon atom, the *binding* block in nature, carries.¹⁸⁰ A Zulu variation symbolizing *love* and *unity* may be seen in *Figure 5b*.¹⁸¹

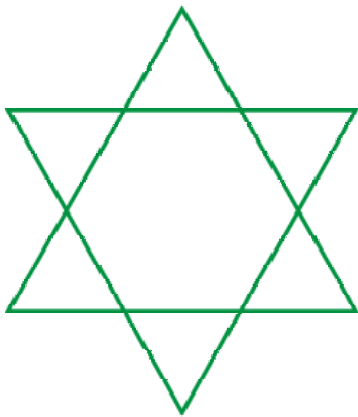


Figure 5a

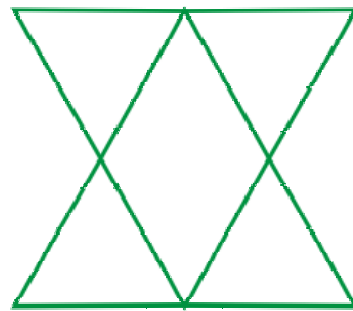


Figure 5b

The six-pointed star... tells the wise men of the birth of their philosophical child.¹⁸²

The hexagram is arguably also represented by the Masonic “Square” and “Compass,” as seen in *Figure 6*.

¹⁷⁹ Harrigan 1997

¹⁸⁰ Regardie 1992. Pg 133

¹⁸¹ Mutwa 1999. Pg 671

¹⁸² In: Roob 1997. Pg 37

[Honeycombs also incorporate the hexagonal principle. Both bees and honey are symbolically featured in Egyptian mythology, especially in relation to the sun. The hexagram’s symbolic association with ‘light’ is encountered at many levels; a simple example being the appearance of hexagon-shaped solar flares which become visible in camera lenses when directed toward sunlight)]

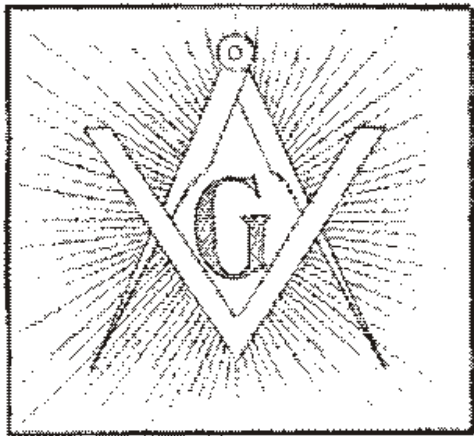


Figure 6

If one joins the ends of the Compass in a straight line and does the same with the Square, we are presented with a very mystical and powerful symbol: the Hexagram.¹⁸³

[T]he compass “as the symbol of the *Heavens*, represents the spiritual, intellectual, and moral portion of this double nature of Humanity; and the square, as the symbol of the *Earth*, its material, sensual, and baser portion.” The arrangement indicates that the compass takes the place of the sun, and the square substitutes for the moon. The union of these two instruments... therefore equal or stand for the Hermetic marriage of the sun and moon [i.e. basically to indicate the marriage of Heaven and Earth; outer consciousness and inner consciousness].¹⁸⁴

¹⁸³ Burns, A. 2004. *Masonic Symbolism: Some Esoteric Considerations*. Lecture / Occasional Paper. South Africa. Pg 3. [See also: Beresniak 2000]

¹⁸⁴ Hall 2006. Pg 266

Nature, Theophany and the Rehabilitation of Consciousness

Wild Nature is at one with holy poverty and also with spiritual childlikeness; she is an open book containing an inexhaustible teaching of truth and beauty. It is in the midst of his own artifices that man most easily becomes corrupted, it is they who make him covetous and impious; close to virgin Nature, who knows neither agitation nor falsehood, he had the hope of remaining contemplative like Nature herself.¹⁸⁵

The forest, the desert, hills and dales, mountains and rivers, sunrise and sunset, the moonlit night, and the shining stars are one aspect of nature. Before a mystic they stand like letters, characters, figures made by the Creator to read if one is able to read them. The sura of the Qur'an which contains the first revelation of the Prophet includes the verse, "Read in the name of your Lord... who taught with the pen." The mystic, therefore, recognizes this manifestation as a written book; he tries to read these characters and enjoys what they reveal to him.

...Nature does not teach the glory of God; it need not teach this, as nature itself *is* the glory of God.¹⁸⁶

When we 'think' or 'speak' of cosmos or nature, we usually perceive or portray it as an environmental form and substance existing in the world 'out-there' somewhere. In *NTRC* it is argued that cosmos and nature should be viewed and understood as an integral part of the spectrum of consciousness and intimately linked to human consciousness and the health of human consciousness. Not only have centuries of shamanism and metaphysics made this shared reality abundantly clear but also the secular fields of Ecopsychology and Quantum Physics have discovered interconnectivity and interdependence between consciousness and the so-termed material universe; to the point that we now need to collectively re-evaluate the perceived (Cartesian) schism between the two.

Our abominable treatment of nature is, I believe, a direct consequence of our alienation from a world in which there is no participation in a shared reality beyond the material. Even if you say, 'My body is made of stardust, and I share the dust of the stars,' this is a nice poetic utterance, but it does not mean anything in the prevalent scientific paradigm. What consciousness do I have of dust except as a reality within my consciousness? And when I identify myself with a star, it has to be something that identifies with my consciousness for such an assertion to be meaningful. In other words, the word 'd-u-s-t', what does it mean? It has to be something that has meaning within

¹⁸⁵ Schuon 1965. Pg 84

¹⁸⁶ Khan 1980. Pp 1-2

my consciousness, but this is what is lacking when we define stardust as simply dead matter in a dead universe devoid of consciousness.¹⁸⁷

Natural order, as a reality reflected in ecological balance and reflective of harmonic principle, consequently provides a grounded and wholesome ‘vocabulary’ for a global consciousness that is currently fragmented and rapidly deteriorating into extremely painful and unnecessary nihilism.

The idea of the natural order as not only sacred but as a symbolic language strikes the modern mind as somewhat strange, perhaps as ‘poetic fancy’. In reality it is the modern outlook which is idiosyncratic. Mircea Eliade, has noted how, for *homo religiosus*, everything in nature is capable of revealing itself as a ‘cosmic sacrality’, as a hierophany. He also observes that for our secular age the cosmos has become ‘opaque, inert, mute; it transmits no message, it holds no cipher’. The traditional mind perceives the natural world as a hierophany, a theophany, a revelation – in short, as a teaching about the Divine Order. It is so by way of its analogical participation in the Divine qualities, which is to say that natural phenomena are themselves symbols of higher realities.¹⁸⁸

We observe that natural phenomena have their own way of maintaining and caring for themselves, whilst reflecting the beautiful, glorious and all-pervading reality behind them. Nature is ever so true in its adoration and submission to that reality.

So our love and communion with nature is a reminder of the vast ecosystem which rules over all systems. It is a reflection that reminds us of that which is already within us – that primordial ocean of perfect unity, self-regulated and everlasting.¹⁸⁹

When directly contemplated as theophany,¹⁹⁰ nature provides living symbols for life, nourishment, interconnectedness, balance, harmony and beauty; reflectively it exemplifies and embodies (meaningful) *connection* through association with light / heat, water, oxygen, minerals and other life forms.¹⁹¹ Plants, trees and their ecosystemic relations appear as catalysts and gathering points for the physical and subtle elements of fire, water, air and earth; collectively they channel physical sustenance such as food, water, habitat, oxygen and growth. If theophany is said to be a “symbolic showing of God” then how better than this grand display of nature and

¹⁸⁷ Seyyed Hossein Nasr. *In the Beginning of Creation was Consciousness*. Harvard Lecture, May 2003: <http://www.hds.harvard.edu/news/bulletin/articles/nasr.html> (accessed 2006). Originally published as: Nasr, S. H. 2003. *In the Beginning was Consciousness*. In: *Sophia: The Journal of Traditional Studies*. Volume 9 Number 1. The Foundation for Traditional Studies.

¹⁸⁸ Kenneth Oldmeadow. In: *The Firmament Sheweth His Handiwork: Reawakening a religious sense of the natural order*: <http://www.religioperennis.org/documents/Oldmeadow/Firmament.pdf>

¹⁸⁹ Haeri 1991. Pg 168

¹⁹⁰ Seyyed Hossein Nasr defines theophany as “a symbolic showing of God in the mirror of created form.”

¹⁹¹ Incidentally, the word “religion” comes from the Greek *religare*, meaning “to unite / join,” “to bring together”

cosmos in immanent glorification of the divine attributes, the creational principles and the subtle supra-physical patterns / relations.

In sharp contrast to the modern view of nature which reduces the order of nature to everlasting change and impermanence, the traditional sciences look upon nature as the abode of both change and permanence. Although the common-sense experience tends to see nature as a perennially changing structure, the world of nature displays also a remarkable continuity, perseverance and harmony as we see it in the preservation of the species and the endurance of natural forms. For Nasr, this double-aspect of nature proves beyond any doubt the Divine quality in nature: the world of nature has not been left to the infinite succession of haphazard and senseless changes which admit no *telos* in the cosmos. On the contrary, nature contains in itself the principles of change and permanence simultaneously and points to a 'big picture' in which all of its parts are recognized as forming a meaningful unity and harmony. As Titus Burckhardt reminds us, 'the Greek word *cosmos* means 'order', implying the ideas of unity and totality. Cosmology is thus the science of the world inasmuch as this reflects its unique cause, Being.' Defined as such, the order of nature or the cosmos cannot be other than the reflection of a higher principle on the level of relative existence.¹⁹²

...For it is not necessary to strut about like a conqueror and want to give a name to things, to everything; it is they who will tell you who they are, if you listen, yielding like a lover.¹⁹³

Is there any need, therefore, for humanity to deny, degrade or destroy this ancient and divine revelation; for this 'language' (in its pure natural form) is an immanent glorification of the 'garden' that beams within the unified heart of existence itself: the wellspring that is pure consciousness, and from which the entire cosmological order draws its being and sustenance – the divine attributes / ideals.

I love the leaves wherewith is all enleaved
The eternal Gardner's garden, great and least,
In the measure of the good from Him received.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹² Kalin, I. 2007. The Sacred versus the Secular. In: *Vincit Omnia Veritas* III, 1: <http://religioperennis.org/documents/Editorial/Issue5/IssueII1.pdf> Pg 77

¹⁹³ Henry Corbin. *Theology by the Lakeside*. In: Cheetham 2005. Pg 63

¹⁹⁴ Dante's *Paradiso*, XXVI. Pg 64-66 (Laurence Binyon translation). In: Anderson 1990

The Ecological Crisis

Creation can be represented on a timeline of one year, to show five billion years. We can think of the birth of the earth as being on the 1st January. Life begins in single cell form at the end of February. Dinosaurs come around the 16th of December and die on the 26th of December. Mankind then appears a few minutes before the end of the 31st December... and in the last few seconds has nearly ruined the world.¹⁹⁵

To put it bluntly, we all know that the human impact on the planet's biosphere is threatening our own existence. Humans have destroyed about 30% of the natural world since the 1970s.¹⁹⁶

The world's population has tripled since the beginning of the twentieth century and is expected to reach the benchmark of 10 billion people by the year 2080. It is thus disconcerting to see an ever-increasing human addiction to "products" and "gadgets" and an almost pathological obsession with the latest fashions / trends – all of which require a significant amount of natural resources in order to manufacture.¹⁹⁷ Of additional concern is our willingness to manufacture "needs" in order to amuse or entertain ourselves, especially in order to distract ourselves from more urgent issues in life. In fact we have made an industry out of distraction and it appears we are hell-bent on turning the Earth into a large supermarket or playground; this has had devastating consequences for the Earth's ecosystems and its related climate.¹⁹⁸

What the Corporate Distraction Industry shows us as 'normal' becomes accepted as the model for 'normal' human life. Human life for centuries was shaped by values, divine revelation, high culture, and the wisdom of elders. These were not always free of man-made distortions, but at least they weren't merely an appeal to the lowest common denominator."¹⁹⁹

Ecosystems and Biodiversity

The Earth itself is the largest ecosystem and can be divided into terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems, each subdividing and so on. An ecosystem is commonly defined as a dynamic complex of plant, animal and micro-organism communities and the so-termed 'non-living'

¹⁹⁵ Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri. Opening Address on Global Spirituality. In: *Global Spirituality Today: Summary of 7th International Conference held by the Academy of Self Knowledge in Pretoria, South Africa, March 2006*. Zahra Publications, South Africa. Pg 3

¹⁹⁶ IUCN. 2002. *Johannesburg 2002*. IUCN media release: <http://www.iucn.org/en/news/media.htm>

¹⁹⁷ Fazlun Khalid. *The Response of Tradition*:

http://ifees.org.uk/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=42&Itemid=57 (accessed 2007)

¹⁹⁸ Ibid

¹⁹⁹ Kabir Helminski: <http://www.sufism.org/society/articles/Science%20of%20Witnessing.html>

environment, all interacting as a functional unit. Despite this “shallow” ecological definition, humans can be said to form an integral part of the planetary ecosystem and its various sub-systems. Healthy ecosystems provide and preserve a number of vital planetary services (e.g. purification of air, water, soil etc) and provide resources essential for physical survival, such as food, water, and oxygen. Basically, living organisms keep the planet habitable. Plants and bacteria, for example, carry out photosynthesis, which produces oxygen and energy; trees absorb carbon emissions, which further assists in buffering the effects of global warming; animals and micro-organisms participate in the regulation and overall balance of these intricate ecosystems.²⁰⁰

Biological diversity (*biodiversity*) can be defined as the variability among living organisms from all sources including, *inter alia*, terrestrial, marine and other aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes of which they are part; this includes diversity within species and a diversity of ecosystems.²⁰¹ Biodiversity plays an important role in ecosystem function: services include nutrient and water cycling, soil formation and retention, resistance against invasive species, pollination of plants, regulation of climate, as well as pest and pollution control by ecosystems. For ecosystem service and functionality, it matters which species are abundant, as well as how many species are present.²⁰²

The *Millennial Assessment Report* states that “over the past 50 years, humans have changed ecosystems more rapidly and extensively than in any comparable period of time in human history... This has resulted in a substantial and largely irreversible loss of diversity of life on Earth.”²⁰³ More land has been converted to cropland since 1950 than in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries combined, and since 1950 the use of fertilizer has grown tenfold to 141 million tonnes in the year 2000. Grassland areas, which are unfortunately perceived as being ‘under-exploited’ or ‘vacant plots’, on the contrary are thriving with life and provide important and unique habitat for migrating bird populations, which further regulate these ecosystems. Land degradation in drylands (i.e. desertification) is also a contributing factor to degradation of ecosystems and the loss of biological productivity. Approximately sixty percent of ecosystem services that support life on Earth are being degraded or utilized unsustainably. The biggest threats to ecosystems and biodiversity are habitat loss and fragmentation; over exploitation (extraction, hunting, fishing, etc); pollution; alien species invasion; global climate change; etc.

²⁰⁰ Sources: Reid *et al* 2005 and IUCN media release (Factsheets: *Ecosystem Management and Species Extinction*): <http://www.iucn.org/en/news/media.htm> (accessed 2007)

²⁰¹ Source: De Seliars, J. (Ed). *Facts on Biodiversity: A Summary of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment Biodiversity Synthesis*: <http://www.greenfacts.org> (accessed 2007)

²⁰² Ibid

²⁰³ Reid *et al* 2005. Pg 1

- In the last 500 years, human activity has forced 844 species to extinction.
- In the last several decades of the 20th century, approximately 20% of the world's coral reefs have been lost and an additional 20% have been degraded; approximately 35% of mangrove area was lost during this time.
- Scientists estimate that 12% of all birds, 23% of mammals, 25% of conifers, 33% of amphibians and more than 50% of all palm trees are threatened with extinction. Climate change alone could lead to the further extinction of between 15-37% of all species by the end of the century.²⁰⁴
- 15, 589 species are currently known to be threatened with extinction.
- One in every four mammals and one in every eight birds is facing a high risk of extinction in the near future.
- One in three amphibians and almost half of all tortoises and freshwater turtles are threatened.
- Of the 129 recorded bird extinctions, 103 are known to have occurred since the year 1800.
- Habitat loss and degradation affect 86% of all threatened birds, 86% of mammals, and 88% of threatened amphibians.
- All 21 species of Albatross are now under threat globally as a result of “long-line” fishing (compared to only 3 in 1996). “By-catch” threatens 83 species of bird.

Forests

About thirty percent of global total land area is covered by forests, which amounts to almost forty million square kilometres. More than fifty percent of the world's plant and animal species inhabit the seven percent of the world that is covered by rainforest. Primary forests account for over a third of global forest area but approximately sixty thousand square kilometres each year continue to be lost or modified by logging or by other human interventions. The remaining forests are either modified natural forests or semi-natural forests. Most of the tree species are found in the humid tropics.²⁰⁵

Not only do forests accommodate fifty percent of the world's biodiversity but these forests also have the ability to control climate change by regulating the amount of carbon in the air and reintroducing beneficial oxygen into the atmosphere for animal and human survival. Owing to the absorption of carbon through their leaves, branches and bark, they have been labelled as

²⁰⁴ Source: *The Independent* news. 11 February 2007:

http://news.independent.co.uk/world/science_technology/

²⁰⁵ Source: *GreenFacts.org. Scientific Facts on Forests* (A Summary): <http://www.greenfacts.org> (accessed 2007) and *IUCN media release (Factsheet: Forests Under Fire)*: <http://www.iucn.org/en/news/media.htm> (accessed 2007)

carbon “sinks.” Forests are further functional in that they stabilize the adjacent soil and prevent soil loss from storm-water runoff. The leading causes of deforestation have been subsistence farming and government backed conversion of forests to other land uses, such as large scale ranching. Poverty, unemployment and inequitable land distribution (which force many low-income communities to invade forested areas for resources) continue to add to deforestation.²⁰⁶

- Of the original forest that covered the Earth 8000 years ago, 80% has been cleared, fragmented or degraded by modern society.
- Most of the recent deforestation has been concentrated in the developing world, with nearly 200 million hectares being lost between 1980 and 1995. Between 1990 and 1995, *annual* forest loss in developing countries was estimated at 13.7 million hectares.²⁰⁷
- The rainforests and tropical woodland savannahs of the Amazon basin contain up to 30% of the terrestrial biological diversity; the Amazon also plays a vital role in the global climate system, storing very large quantities of carbon. Deforestation losses for the period from August 2003 to August 2004 amounted to about 23,000 square kilometres. In the last 11 years, the Brazilian Amazon alone has lost 200,000 square kilometres of forest.²⁰⁸
- Approximately 25% of all pharmaceuticals utilized by the American public are sourced in a tropical rainforest.
- Approximately 1% of forests are destroyed by fire each year. The majority of these fires are as a result of human negligence.
- Long-distance air travel and the international trade in agriculture and forestry have resulted in an influx of plant / tree diseases and an introduction of alien species of insects and vegetation, which continue to destroy large portions of forests.
- Erratic weather patterns due to exacerbated climate change have resulted in further damage to forests from wind, snow, ice, floods and drought.
- Nearly 34,000 plant species, many of which are found in tropical forests, are threatened with extinction.

²⁰⁶ Source: *World Resources Institute (WRI). Deforestation: the global assault continues.* <http://pubs.wri.org> (accessed 2007) Source: *GreenFacts.org. Scientific Facts on Forests (A Summary):* <http://www.greenfacts.org> (accessed 2007) and *IUCN media release (Factsheet: Forests Under Fire):* <http://www.iucn.org/en/news/media.htm> (accessed 2007)

²⁰⁷ Source: *World Resources Institute (WRI). Deforestation: the global assault continues.* <http://pubs.wri.org> (accessed 2007)

²⁰⁸ Source: *Green Peace. Amazon Under Threat:* <http://www.greenpeace.org>

Rivers, Lakes and Wetlands

Less than one percent of all water on Earth is fresh water. These rivers, lakes and wetlands play an important role in the water cycle: they contribute to the regulation of water flows and the maintenance of water quality – assisted by riparian ecosystems and riparian buffer zones. These aquatic ecosystems and riparian areas are threatened around the world by the overuse of water and by their conversion for agricultural purposes, which, in turn, threatens the water cycle.²⁰⁹

- The amount of water that has been stored in dams has quadrupled since 1960. Three to six times as much water is held in reservoirs as in natural rivers.
- An average citizen in the USA uses 600 litres of water per day, as compared to a Jordanian's daily consumption of 85 litres.
- It takes 150,000 litres of water to produce a single car.
- At the current rate, by the year 2025 it is estimated that approximately 2.8 billion people will be living in water stressed or water scarce countries. At least seven interstate armed conflicts of the past century were over shared freshwater resources.
- 20% of the world population does not have access to safe drinking water.
- 50% of the world population does not have sanitation.
- 50% of the world's wetlands were lost in the last century. Loss of wetlands and the degradation of riparian buffer zones and floodplains result in increased flooding, as well as an increase in disease due to the loss of ecosystem function and hence a corresponding decrease in water quality.
- Total water abstraction is projected to increase by 47% to 3,851km³/year by the year 2025.

Oceans and Marine Life

Oceans cover seventy-one percent of the Earth's surface and contain ninety-seven percent of the Earth's water. Coral reef environments are areas of high biodiversity and as such provide critical habitat for a vast assortment of fish species. Coral communities are sensitive to changes in temperature and thus have provided an indication of the forecasted changes in the global climate.²¹⁰

²⁰⁹ IUCN media release (Factsheet: *Water and Wetlands*): <http://www.iucn.org/en/news/media.htm> (accessed 2007)

²¹⁰ IUCN media release (Factsheet: *Ocean Blues*): <http://www.iucn.org/en/news/media.htm> (accessed 2007)

- In the 110 countries where coral reefs are found, 30% of these have been destroyed and another 30% will become seriously depleted in the next 20-40 years if no action is taken to protect them. Most cold-water coral reefs in the North East Atlantic show signs of, or have been destroyed by, bottom trawling fisheries.
- Over 46,000 pieces of plastic litter are floating on every square mile of ocean today. In the Central Pacific, there are up to 6 kilograms of marine litter to every kilogram of plankton.
- Every year, 100 million sharks and related species are caught in fisheries. Some species have been reduced by more than 80% over recent years, and many are on the brink of extinction.
- Global by-catch by fisheries amounts to 20 million tons a year – approximately 25% of the fish caught.
- Over 75% of the world's major fisheries are currently fully exploited, over-exploited, or depleted. Populations of large fish with high commercial value, such as tuna, cod, swordfish and marlin, have declined by as much as 90% in the last century.

Climate Change

On February 2, 2007, an Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), consisting of hundreds of leading scientists and a total of about 2000 experts from 113 countries, reported that based on new research over the last six years, the IPCC is unanimous in the conclusion that human-generated greenhouse gases account for most of the global rise in temperatures over the past half-century.²¹¹ The experts agree: we are fast approaching the point of no return. If the world's temperature rises by even 2 degrees Celsius, the consequences for life on earth will be devastating. The most vulnerable natural systems are glaciers, coral reefs, low-lying islands, polar and alpine ecosystems, cloud and mist-belt forests, mangroves, coastal wetlands and grasslands. While some species like grasshoppers and other 'pests' may increase in numbers and range, climate change will increase existing risks of extinction of many threatened species and lead to a major loss of diversity. The faster and greater the climate change, the more damage to ecosystems, as well as the human societies that depend on them.²¹²

- Carbon dioxide (CO₂), the most significant of the greenhouse gases, accounts for some 65% of the greenhouse effect.
- The US alone produces 25% of global greenhouse gas emissions.

²¹¹ <http://www.ipccfacts.org>

²¹² IUCN media release (Factsheet: *Climate Change*): <http://www.iucn.org/en/news/media.htm> (accessed 2007)

- Global average surface temperature has increased by 0.6° C since 1900.
- Global average temperature is projected to increase by 1.4° C to 5.8° C over the next 100 years.
- Global snow cover has decreased 10% since the year 1960.
- Global mean sea level rose by 0.1 to 0.2 mm per year during the 20th century. Over the next hundred years, sea level is projected to rise by 0.09 to 0.88 meters.
- The number of floods, storms, landslides and droughts has increased dramatically in the past 5 years.
- Over the coming decades, 40 of the world's poorest nations are likely to suffer food production losses of as much as 25% due to global warming.
- The polar regions are at great risk; global sea levels will rise; ocean currents will inevitably be affected; ecosystems and biodiversity both on land and at sea will be severely affected; diseases will be on the increase and widen their range of infection; water and food resources in the tropics may be affected, putting 50 million people at greater risk of hunger by the year 2100: poverty, social displacement, mass migration and political instability are likely to occur as a result.

Genetic Engineering

The last decade has seen a marked increase in research conducted in the field of genetic engineering (GE). The impetus behind this research appears to be born from genuine concern for global issues but it is also clear that the GE field is creating an all-too-convenient business opportunity for large-scale corporations seeking to further “exploit” natural resources for profit and “ownership.” Judging from past and present environmental records, it is apparent that ecological sustainability and ethics are the least of these profiteering companies’ concerns. Corporate “spin” has also tainted genetic research (viz. research funding) and can be said to be hampering efforts to reduce the adverse effects of human consumerism and hedonism on the natural world. Obesity, for example, is no longer the result of “fast-food” indulgence and a lack of physical exercise but is now the result of an “obesity gene;” environmental toxicity and human ill-health as a consequence thereof are no longer the result of unethical (i.e. polluting) industries but are now the result of a “heavy-metals toxicity gene.” Regardless of hereditary susceptibility to certain conditions, the quasi-Darwinian “survival of the fittest” agenda underlying this mode of classification clearly serves commercial and industrial interests.

It has also been said that plant biotechnology is key to food security on the drought-stricken and war-torn continent of Africa. This is certainly confusing, given that Africa's struggles appear to be rooted in a *deficient humanity* and not in any plant or vegetable deficiency. To begin with – and this has been touched upon countless times over the past twenty years – there is more than enough food in the world to feed everybody. The problem ultimately lies in politics, economic agendas and western attitudes toward resource-use. For example, if one country is being crippled by starvation and yet its neighbour is dumping large quantities of food resources without offering this “excess” to the starving other – as has happened before in Africa – this does not call for bio-technique but seriously brings into question the frameworks by which we not only conduct our research but also how we politically govern ourselves. Of course, the problem goes back centuries. When colonial settlers arrived in Africa, they curtailed local agriculture and suppressed indigenous knowledge. Maize systematically colonized the local crop markets and now there is the well-entrenched perception that maize is the only suitable food source for Africa.²¹³ Historically we have also witnessed developing nations exporting their grain in order to fatten vast herds of cattle destined for the table and palates of a first-world culture that feeds on excess and “extreme” philosophies. All things considered, this does not constitute a lack of natural resources but is simply a case of arrogant and irresponsible elitism.

Food insecurity can also be linked to high levels of poverty, lack of empowerment and inadequate educational resources – all of which suggest that Africa's struggles are primarily socio-economic and not bio-genetic. What's more, we are living in an age of unfair world trade systems in which first-world farming communities continue to benefit from obscene agricultural subsidies that make it impossible for developing nations to compete globally. GE companies, in co-operation with the world's major grain traders, then dump their cheaper grains into Africa, distorting local markets that are uncompetitive against such stacked odds. Combine all of this with *accelerated* climate change due to human behaviour and increased greenhouse gases – resulting in drought and floods – and we begin to reveal the real reasons behind Africa's struggles.

With regards to Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs): ninety-nine percent of the population (including many agricultural departments) do not have a clue about genetic structuring and genetic terminology; they can only rely on what a certain “somebody-else” tells them. The problem is, the agricultural projects in question draw considerable funding from the

²¹³ See also: *Lost Crops of Africa* (Vol. 1 & 2). National Research Council 1995 and 2006.

GMO companies in question and therefore the scientific analysis and salaries of the respective researchers are severely compromised due to their ties to this funding. Furthermore, if any crisis should result through genetic manipulation, the majority of the population would have neither access to, nor adequate funding for, genetic research laboratories. How does this populace then ensure the security of its food? How does this filter back into the issue of empowerment and biodiversity? If maize farmers are not ecologically or genetically educated, in what way are they qualified to represent genetic data to society or the media? How is the public supposed to be assured of food security based on the media-marketed appearance of maize (genetic irregularity cannot be observed by the naked eye)? What about the long-term effects of GMOs? What about independent analysis of GMOs in Africa? What about public participation and access to risk assessment information? These are all the issues about which the public should be really concerned.²¹⁴

It seems unreasonable, short-sighted and symptomatic of a lack of personal responsibility that we refuse to alter our own highly questionable attitudes towards resource-use and problem-solving. Instead we genetically alter the world around us in order to compensate for our human deficiency by wrongly implying that nature is somehow the deficient one.

What is further disconcerting is the statement (made by a botanical scientist in a local South African newspaper) that “Genetic engineering is the sexy, hot area of science at the moment.” Since when did the world of fashion – which focuses on “appearance,” fleeting trends and marketing – become part of the scientific framework. Science’s (supposed) neutral and objective position should only be that of proof or dismissal of hypothesis or assumption, but what is becoming clear is that “objectivity” in science is fast “proving” itself to be a fallacy, simply due to the fact that power and money often precede “truth.” On this point, there are some people who persistently refuse to accept that an increased build-up of greenhouse gases, such as carbon and methane, are resulting in global warming and that these emissions accelerate the *rate* of climate-change to greatly unnatural levels with devastating consequences. Of course, these particular lobbies – harbouring questionable corporate agendas – have presented their own so-called “scientific” papers to the world, attempting to show how global warming is a natural process (conveniently ignoring the issue of *rate* of change) and that all concern about climate change is either irrational or an exaggeration. Similar denial is to be found amongst supporters of technology such as GMOs. Fortunately this corporate bias is being exposed and, as pertains to climate change, we now have an overwhelming consensus that human-induced greenhouse

²¹⁴ For more information visit: *Ban Terminator*: <http://www.banterminator.org>; *Biowatch*: <http://www.biowatch.org.za>; *SAFeAGE* (S.A. Freeze Alliance on GE): <http://www.safeage.org>

gases do in fact radically affect global weather patterns, resulting in drought, desertification, crop-loss, flooding, top-soil loss, marine ecosystem collapse, etc.

Looking at the psychological and philosophical dimensions to the GMO debate: it seems that the promethean human, propped up by the “Corporate Distraction Industry,” is no longer satisfied with the sacred cosmos surrounding his own private castle. Driven by his own projected boredom and delusions of money, power and grandeur, he now seeks to claim “authorship” over nature – to be able to manipulate and patent his works and have the rest of world pay homage to his “craft.” It will not be long before our perennial fruits, vegetables and grains collapse into seedless monocultures, and as a result thereof we will have no option but to turn towards “The Corporation” for our daily bread and pay handsomely for our trivialities, of which we can be sure will be comparatively nutritionless. But perhaps we should not worry, since we can be sure that the product will *look* great: “hot” and “sexy”!

In conclusion

Sadly, for all our intellectual and technological advancement, modernity appears to have stripped the human mind of most of its inherent reasoning. As we rush obsessively towards that dark trash-can that awaits us at the end of our flashy neon superhighway, it seems as though the world around us is falling apart in the process. This has become tragically evident in the decline of our natural environment, the consequent erratic climate change, our dissociative society (in spite of globalization) and in the ill-health of human and animal biological systems (e.g. cancer, suppressed immune systems, super-viruses etc). The simple fact of the matter is that physicality is part of the human dimension and experience. We have a body – however defined or perceived – that relies on the integrity of ecosystems in order to physiologically sustain itself (i.e. food, water, oxygen, thermo-regulation etc). What this means is that a dynamic balance needs to be achieved, not only within the ecosystemic processes themselves but also within human consciousness which forms attitudes, desires and perceptions and then acts on them.

The Psychological Crisis

It is precisely as a result of a human crisis of consciousness – through a denial of the Divine Absolute and a corresponding ontological depreciation – that destructive attitudes, desires and perceptions are being formed and projected outwardly, thereby exacerbating the crisis of ecosystem, social-system and signalling a disruption in human consciousness, which interacts with these systems. A mirror cannot help but reflect: fragmentation of consciousness will eventually manifest in some form of depression, neurosis, psychosis or identity disorder, which in turn will lead to instances of abuse, fragmentation of self, of family, of community and of society.

One of the many faculties of psyche is the creative imagination.²¹⁵ The imaginative faculty deals with images and, by association, the formation of ideas (constrained by language and often mediated by what we commonly call the discursive or rational intellect). Images and ideas are generally associated with language; this is important from the perspective of *metaphor*. Metaphor develops from language to image to idea, and since we are currently living in an age of frenetically marketed ideas and images – all of which continue to shape our perception, opinion and eventually our actions – we should be mindful of our choice in both metaphor and image.

What we need to bring into awareness is that in contemporary society – apart from questionable foodstuffs and hazardous chemical residues – we are continually being exposed to a myriad of commercial images, metaphors, audio broadcasts and their associated meanings, essentially ‘consumed’ through our eyes and ears and rooting themselves in our consciousness as fragmented perceptions.²¹⁶

You *are* what you eat.²¹⁷

As you think, so you become.²¹⁸

In a global context inundated with disconnected and adversarial concepts, designs, products and marketing-media metaphors, we are led to an unhealthy dispersal of consciousness and an ontological depreciation; a fragmentation that ultimately feeds back into the world around us. In

²¹⁵ There are also other faculties such as *Memory, Reason, Will, etc.*

²¹⁶ See also: Wilkerson, J. 2006. *Energy and Psyche: Resource Addiction in the Technological Age*: <http://www.ecopsychology.org/journal/ezine/archive3/addiction.pdf>

²¹⁷ Popular saying.

²¹⁸ Buddhist axiom.

an attempt to resolve our environmental problems, therefore, we cannot simply rehabilitate affected ecosystems – we need to rehabilitate *consciousness* itself. We need to reacquaint ourselves with wholesome (i.e. ecologically sound) natural environments in “remembrance” of some of the divine attributes and cosmological principles, such as harmony, balance, unity, generosity, sustenance, life and beauty. This is not an attempt to market sentimentalism, or an opportunity to slip into nostalgia. Nothing could be more contemporaneous and relevant: if our natural environment goes into a downward spiral and dies – we die. We need to highlight the reality and integrity of cosmological order as being that of theophany and bring our own ontological constitution into wholesome resonance. For this we need to revisit our value systems within the context of consciousness, epistemology (viz. ontology), paradigmatic philosophy / ideology, and education. Tom Cheetham adds the following:

To cope with the threats and challenges of the encounter with the worlds beyond the ego, what we would learn in the houses of reading would have to include an ancient virtue: ascesis... Not the asceticism... that creates a chasm between the object of love and the transcendence that is immanent in it... An asceticism of the body would, for us in the developed world, mean a refusal to participate in the excesses of the consumer culture. But this is really the easy part. Ivan Illich uses ascesis in another sense to mean “courageous, disciplined, self-critical renunciation, accomplished in community.” He proposes an “epistemological ascesis,” a purging of corrupting concepts that give reality to abstraction, and tear us away from our roots in embodied, local, communal realities.²¹⁹

It is argued that the organic / natural / ecosystemic / harmonic symbol (or metaphor) is highly efficient in conveying meaning, as well as grounding an understanding of *balance* (*al-Mîzan*), *sustenance / nourishment* (*ar-Razzaq / al-Mûqît*) and *gatheredness* (*al-Wahad / Tawhîd*) because consciousness is interconnected-interdependent with the natural order and consequently responds to ecological integrity (itself a reflection of *harmonic* principle: *al-Bâri*).

Another indication of our unific being can be seen in our love and admiration of nature – of the wilderness, forests, mountains, the countryside, vast oceans and the desert. We are attracted to these natural scenes and environments because they have their own organic and unifying systems and are reflections and physical manifestations of a natural ecological unity that is primal, organic and self-sustaining. The *harmony, balance and stability* of these natural creations are a reminder of the *unitive* programme within our heart [emphasis mine].²²⁰

²¹⁹ Cheetham 2005. Pg 116

²²⁰ Haeri 1991. Pg 168

The sun and moon both run with precision. The stars and the trees all bow down in adoring prostration. He erected heaven and established the balance.²²¹

The implications of a “green signature” appear vast, not only for a rapidly deteriorating planet but also for a global mindset that is in dire need of a balanced and sustainable ‘awakening’. Taking into account all mutual interconnectivity: any human indulgence in idea, image or metaphor will affect the outer world in one way or another and at present we seem to be caught in a rather tumultuous cycle. This is the crisis with which we are all too well acquainted and are struggling to come to terms with.

The Earth is bleeding from wounds inflicted upon it by a humanity no longer in harmony with Heaven and therefore in constant strife with the terrestrial environment.²²²

A state of harmony and balance and the effects of ecosystemic relations within natural order are, therefore, not only reflected within the observing ‘conscious’ mind but also communicated to and from the ‘unconscious’ or ‘supra-conscious’ mind, thus performing a wholesome transaction, transmission and transformation within any given individual. For example, a walk on the shores of the majestic ocean, or a weekend retreat in the forest – or even the contemplation of a single floral bloom or your dearest companion’s face – translates into an integrative and rehabilitative therapy for both the body and mind. In other words there is an attunement – a joyful and wholesome resonance taking place at *both* the physical (‘horizontal’) level,

When an affection for a particular plant or tree is aroused in us we are linked through an emotional bond, more subtle and immediate than the effect of scent, to the greater world of vegetation of which the plant or tree is a part. It is a deep, wise world, one to which we can only respond because we possess it in our own natures and in the instinctive symbolism of the soul, in the tree of life that forms the spinal column, in the roots of our feet and legs, in the branches of our arms, and in the flowering and fruiting of our thoughts and feelings in the crown of the head.²²³

...Leaf and head, head and leaf, both are foci of reception and transmission, interfaces of exchange between hidden and invisible chemical factories and the world outside that begins from the air around bark and leaf in the one case and round skin and hair in the other, the envelopes enfolding self from not self. But that division is an illusion: can the tree be separated from the air it absorbs and releases in different forms or from the gallons of water that it draws up and then

²²¹ Qur’an (55:1-5)

²²² Nasr 1996. Pg 3

²²³ Anderson 1990. Pg 18

transpires to the atmosphere? Can we be considered in separation from the food we swallow, the air we breathe or the impressions we receive through our senses any more than we can be from what we excrete, exhale or speak? Furthermore, can human beings be considered viable without leaf or grass or tree, the providers of our food, our air and our most delightful impressions? ²²⁴

and at a metaphysical ('vertical') level,

Our love and contemplation of nature are an aspect of our love for and reflection upon what is in the self. The blueprint of natural creation is engraved within our inner being, ever present. The Qur'an and the Prophetic traditions recommend the contemplation and study of nature in all its multitudinous harmony, in order to see the divine attributes of beauty and perfection, both on the horizon and within oneself.²²⁵

Since nature – itself aligned to the Real – has taken billions of years to physically develop, it reflects (assuming that it has not been defiled) a harmonic principle that has a variety of transformative effects on the nervous system and is experienced by human consciousness as beauty. On the other hand, spending the weekend camped-out on a landfill site, or in an inner-city back alley, or next to a busy motorway, or in front of the “Cartoon Network,” is almost guaranteed to have a destructive influence or imprinting on both the body and mind. An impoverished outer environment undoubtedly reflects within human consciousness as an impoverished sense of self (and vice versa!) From this we can deduce that the human body-mind is structured according to, and aspires toward, harmonic principle – something that becomes especially evident in our response to music at a seemingly universal level.²²⁶

For [Plato] as for Pythagoras, mathematics, music, and the order of nature are interconnected through an unbreachable bond.²²⁷

[The] drive towards unification and harmony can be seen in every fragment of creation. The mechanism of equilibrium, to redress an imbalance or a disturbance that has been caused by some interference, is built into the creational system. Every individual entity, human or other, seeks its optimum stability and equilibrium. The entire universe seems programmed to seek its proper balance. This balance is ultimately based on the balance and equilibrium between the multitudes of subsystems and objects within them.²²⁸

²²⁴ Ibid, Pg 160

²²⁵ Haeri 1991. Pg 168

²²⁶ Godwin 1987; Khan 1988; Berendt 1991

²²⁷ Nasr 1996. Pg 84

²²⁸ Haeri 1991. Pg 160

Surely then, to create an understanding of, and attune to, *harmonic* principle and its ontological anchorage in the pre-existent divine attributes is to inevitably move towards a more *balanced* existence, whether this is within an eco-environmental, socio-political or religious / metaphysical context. The question one might ask is: does the physical world reflect harmonic principle; are these principles rooted in the Real; and is this of importance to us? Well, according to the long-standing traditional doctrine of theophany, the cosmos is a symbolic “showing” of God; sacred geometry and ecology reveal (in form) that nature is an immanent glorification of harmonic principle / relation; and, if we are interconnected-interdependent via the reality that ‘everything *is* consciousness’ then this must surely be of importance to humanity from the perspective of outer and inner consciousness:

As Above, so Below.²²⁹

All that which exists upon the Earth, has its spiritual counterpart on high, and there exists nothing in this world which is not attached to something Above, and is not found in dependence upon it.

...All that which is contained in the lower world is also found in prototype. The Lower and the Upper reciprocally act upon each other.²³⁰

Stones, plants, animals, the earth, the sky, the stars, the elements, in fact everything in the universe reveals to us the knowledge, power and the will of its Originator.²³¹

Theophanic contemplation of natural order therefore brings the underlying interrelationships of human and nature into harmonic resonance, which in turn instils a fertile sense of *meaning* to the individual (particular / local) or global (collective) consciousness. The consciousness which receives and integrates this symbol or theophany experiences the harmonic structuring as a vision of *beauty* (*al-Musawwir* / *al-Jamal*); a beauty that not only expresses itself as immanent aesthesis (viz. awe) but also participates in the transcendent nature of the divine origin, as *ekstasis* (viz. deep yearning). Furthermore, beauty is ultimately a-logical since it is near in its essence to Absolute Essence, and therefore cannot be reduced to worldly logic.

The experience of beauty, far from being a question of merely aesthetic sensibility, is essentially an invitation to union: union with the Divine Principle, which both projects Beauty and attracts by means of Beauty. One speaks of being entranced, enthralled, enraptured by beauty: these terms

²²⁹ Hermes Trismegistis. *The Emerald Tablet*.

²³⁰ *Sefer ha-Zohar*

²³¹ Al-Ghazzali

clearly indicate the spiritual potential inherent in aesthetic experience, for the individual is not fully himself in the face of a beauty that overwhelms him; indeed, a certain mode of extinction can even be said to have taken place.²³²

The Platonic option that “Beauty is the splendour of the True” expresses without equivocation the profound, intimate, ontological relationship between the Real and the Beautiful, or between Being and Harmony; a relationship that implies... that Beauty is sometimes a more striking and transforming argument than a discursive proof; not logically more adequate, but humanly more miraculous.²³³

Unity is reflected in the harmony of the multiple, in order and in equilibrium – beauty has all these aspects within itself. To start from the beauty of the world and arrive at Unity – that is wisdom.²³⁴

God is beautiful and loves beauty.²³⁵

In addition to the imagination, one of the more influential faculties of consciousness – integral to the science and understanding of symbol – is the *archetypal*. Archetypes are essentially supra-sensory cosmological principles and organizational structures of consciousness; they have creative potential and exert further influence within the sub-conscious realm (dream state) and within the imaginal realm, where they become actualized through the functionality of image (at various degrees and related stages of consciousness).

The *NTRC* examination of the “green signature” is reinforced by the mythical Green Man manifestations embodying this specific signature:

One image for the human head – which links with the Arthurian associations of the Green Man – is that it is the Grail or Chalice that we carry on our shoulders so that it may be filled with the waters of consciousness of the Divine Self. Another image is that man is the witness, the observer, the watcher... and that our universe came in to existence in its particular form so that its glories could be seen and enjoyed and so that God could look upon his works through our unclouded eyes. The Green Man, watcher, and transmitter of life, is a perfect symbol of this process. If we take this image to look inwards, then we see the dark garden of the imagination woken up by the rays of the sun of consciousness. That dawn sets in train the process of psychic photosynthesis through which the symbols of the soul are renewed and flourish. If we take it to look outwards,

²³² Reza Shah Kazemi. In: *Divine Beatitude: Supreme Archetype of Aesthetic Experience*: <http://www.allamaiqbal.com/publications/journals/review/oct99/4.htm> (accessed 2006)

²³³ Frithjof Schuon. In: *Norms and Paradoxes in Spiritual Alchemy*: <http://www.religioperennis.org/documents/Schuon/Norms.pdf> (accessed 2006)

²³⁴ Burckhardt 2001

²³⁵ Prophetic Hadith

then we see ourselves as part of the huge surface of the earth, the many-million eye face that looks out into the solar system and the galaxies as the witness of creation.²³⁶

The Green Man is our half-brother, a testing guide for us, a symbol of consciousness in the universe, and a reminder of its role and significance, and to some a sign of divine immanence in the world, the divine consciousness as an observer in the world. His influence is ecological, psychological and spiritual, a valid symbol for our time.²³⁷

In examining this signature and composite symbol we are able to move towards a more complete understanding of interconnectedness, sustenance, harmony and balance; not only as exemplified in the fields of Ecology and Ecopsychology – along the ‘horizontal’ or secular axis of existence – but also between the physical and supra-physical dimensions within the ‘vertical’ or divine axis: *interconnectedness, harmony, balance, unification, nourishment and renewal* being significant attributes related to the green signature.

The path towards unity begins with bringing about harmony in body, mind, heart and soul. The relationship between the microcosm and macrocosm is the balance of earthly and heavenly justice.²³⁸

NTRC emphasizes the role of the “Green Man” as composite symbol for (the wholeness of) the authentic self: intimately connected to the nourishing fountain of pure consciousness – by which it, and all, is sustained – and in harmonic resonance with a dynamic, interconnected and interdependent cosmos. This archetype is also the root disposition of what has been identified as the “green signature” and it appears to be one of the leading archetypes in guiding us toward the development of an essential self; not only because this archetype symbolically images our *inherent connection* to the Real (before and beyond theological dispute) but also because it responds to the full dimension of our existence – from the interdependent ecological self through to the trans-egoic essential self²³⁹ – and *balances* the otherwise destructive urge of ascetics and aspiring transcendentalists who seem intent on blazing a heroic trail heavenwards but are totally oblivious to their destructive attitudes towards their own body-mind, or towards women, or towards a visibly abused natural environment.

²³⁶ Anderson 1990. Pg 163

²³⁷ Clive Hicks. *The Green Man*: <http://www.clivehicks.co.uk/seeforyourself/greenman.html> (accessed 2006)

²³⁸ Haeri 2006. Pg 92

²³⁹ By “trans-egoic,” I am specifically referring to the “higher self” and not to the trans-personal Spirit. The Perfected/Pure Self is referred to as *nafs al-kamilah/safiyah* in the Sufi tradition; it is this self that completely harmonizes with Spirit.

...[T]he pure intellect that has freed itself completely from everything physical and material cannot by nature see God except in His transcendence (*tanzih*). But transcendence is only one of the two basic aspects of the Absolute. Its other half is immanence (*tashbih*). All knowledge of God is necessarily one-sided if it does not unite transcendence and immanence, because God *is* transcendent and immanent at the same time.²⁴⁰

...Both are realities. Transcendence without immanence cuts us off from the Divine; Immanence without transcendence cuts the Divine off from us. Both the Transcendent and the Immanent must go together because of the duality “Principle and Manifestation.” While the Supreme Principle in itself is neither transcendent nor immanent, but “that which it is,” on the plane of manifestation one needs a transcendent Creator and the resulting creation needs immanence for its very existence.²⁴¹

It is one thing for *transcendentalism* to claim that God (or truth) can never be fully understood but it is quite another thing for a *relative* transcendentalist to claim the unattainable Absolute station for himself (i.e. an inflated absolutism); hence the need for a balanced perspective and framework. Knowledge and worship of, as well as gratitude for, the Supreme Absolute are essential and primary, but this does not necessitate the corruption or disruption of cosmos or nature. In this regard we live not only by faith but by “good works” as well.²⁴²

The Essential Self

The third and most significant level in discussion of the green signature and the rehabilitation of consciousness, relates to what has been termed “the essential self.” Since this self responds to the divine within us (i.e. our ontological contact point with Spirit) it also reflects our essential humanity:

The human being is the end product of a process in which this Creative Spirit has shaped and evolved a witness who could embrace the covenant it offered. If the human being is the most evolved Care-taker (*khalifa*) of the Creative Spirit – with the potential for conscious presence, will, love, and creativity – then our humanity is the degree to which this physical/spiritual vehicle, and particularly our nervous system, can reflect or manifest Spirit. That which is most sacred in

²⁴⁰ Izutsu 1983. Pg 16

²⁴¹ Coomaraswamy, R. *The Problems that result from locating spirituality in the psyche:* http://www.religioperennis.org/documents/rcoomaraswy/Spirit_Psyche.pdf (accessed 2006)

²⁴² St James (2:14&26)

us, that which is deeper than our individual personality, is our connection to this Spirit, Cosmic Life, Creative Power, or whatever name we may use.²⁴³

The essential self is to be considered, not as an accumulation of mystical facts or as an abstract / squinted postulation of mind, but as the development of a core *trans-egoic* self that is responsive to *Spirit* and thus attuned to pure *Being*.

This Being, this *isness*, is the fundamental energy and substance of the universe. When we are in a state of presence, fully awake and alive, we are open to this isness, to Being, and since the essence of this Being is the Love that created existence, our experience of Being is Love.²⁴⁴

This self, as noted earlier, should not be considered Absolute: the self (*nafs*) is a conditioned and impermanent entity whereas Spirit (*rûh*) is unconditioned and eternal. The crisis relating to the essential self is only a crisis in so much as this evolved self is not the object of human development and consequently if the divine within and without is suppressed or denied. The essential self is the so-called ‘higher’ or ‘authentic’ self awake / aligned / attuned to its ontological centre (*qalb*) and thus the influence of Spirit (*rûh*) and the light of pure consciousness. When Spirit is denied anchorage as the centre of Being (much like the denial of light or water within vegetation) then all levels of our existence (i.e. consciousness) begin to fall into varying degrees of dispersal or fragmentation. On the other hand, once we develop towards our essential self and consequently align with the Real, the symbolic “green signature” automatically begins to be traced at every level – since interconnectedness, harmony, balance and nourishment are inevitable reflections of a divinely transformed consciousness that is not only attuned to the origin of all existence, but is also in knowledge of the nature and dynamics of cosmological order.

The one who seeks a state of health and equilibrium places himself in the middle of the spectrum of opposites. One’s experiences of the outer, sensory, terrestrial will be balanced by the inner, meaning, and celestial. If any one of these aspects is not met with its opposite in any given act or situation, one experiences imbalance.²⁴⁵

On the one hand, one must see God in Himself, beyond the world, in the Emptiness of Transcendence; on the other hand and *ipso facto*, one must see God everywhere: first of all in the

²⁴³ Helminski, K. 2004. *What is a Human Being? The structure of the self within spiritual psychology*. Pp 6-7. <http://thebook.org/tep-articles/uploads/humanbeing.pdf> (accessed 2006)

²⁴⁴ Helminski, K. *Love’s Universe*: <http://www.sufism.org/books/sacred/loveuni.html> (accessed 2006)

²⁴⁵ Haeri 1991. Pg 72

miraculous existence of things and then in their positive and theomorphic qualities; once Transcendence is understood, Immanence reveals itself of itself.²⁴⁶

In addition to, and in correspondence with, the traditional cosmological principle, “as above, so below,” we also have the Ecopsychological principle, “as within, so without.” Having gained some idea of the Ground of Being, the nature and purpose of existence, the theophanic framework and the green signature: let us take a critical look at the *earth*, viewing the imbalances and corresponding outcomes.

If one were to stand on any hill near most so-called ‘developed’ cities and scope the surrounding areas, one would see the way commercial greed has gouged unsightly holes out of the earth’s surface in order to erect large and expansive monuments to air, soil, water and noise pollution. Within this context it is important to recognize the fact that, much like cancer, not all growth is positive.

...Technology is a drug. We can’t get enough of it. We feed it to our kids and watch them grow on a forced diet of desensitization. Switch on the T.V. and someone will tell you that 50,000 people died in India. Two seconds later you’re watching a comedy. Technology can do that. It gives us simulated realities that make us oblivious to the real world. Heroin does the same thing. So do most class A drugs. Basically, we are all addicts – addicted to the comfort and convenience that technology provides, addicted to the notion that progress is directly related to the size of your computer screen. Of course it is. We must be right. We come from the developed world. We’re already developed. Sure. Then again, wealthy kids in America shoot each other. Poor kids in Soweto can’t stop smiling.

So who’s developed? I met an aborigine in Arnhemland – his nephews showed me symbols where I saw trees and rainbows through smoked glass. They could see fish through clouded water. I couldn’t even see my own reflection. I must have forgotten how.

When I look in front of me, I see two paths – spiritual or material. Two worlds – developed or developing. You decide which is which. We’re still in the wake of millennium paranoia – earthquakes, floods, end of world scenarios, cult suicides, viral disease that eat into our computer realities. This is our ‘developed’ world.²⁴⁷

In view of ‘growth’ and degradation, let us look at our very own *bodies* and note the cancers that are accumulating – the wounds that we gouge out of one another through violence and greed. Observe ‘perfected’ agriculture with its nullifying effects on the fertility and health of soil; then

²⁴⁶ Frithjof Schuon. In: *Norms and Paradoxes in Spiritual Alchemy*:
<http://www.religioperennis.org/documents/Schuon/Norms.pdf> (accessed 2006)

²⁴⁷ Nitin Sawhney, 2001. From the introductory insert to his musical recording/production *Prophesy* (V2 Music Limited).

consider the cases of infertility and miscarriage occurring amongst men and women respectively. Read in the ‘journals of progress’, the bragging of how great civilizations were built against all odds and against all nature; then notice how this trend continues in the statistics of rape and violence towards women and children, or towards cultures that are foreign to our own.

Let us look at *water*. Where does our industry’s toxic waste disappear to? It is inevitable that large amounts of pollutants filter directly (pipeline) or indirectly (seepage and leach) into river, stream and groundwater networks – exacerbated in agricultural areas due to inexcusable fertilizer management and pesticide use. Let us not forget the weekends where we joyously wash our motor vehicles of all excess petro-chemicals and then wish them well into our suburban drainage systems along with hordes of discarded product packaging. How many tyres, oil canisters, candy wrappers, plastic bags, bottles and other pollutants are seen to be floating down urban and suburban rivers these days? Other than far away from human society, where have we witnessed streams with wildlife and healthy ecosystems? Now look at our very own *emotions* and witness the commercial plasticity of our gestures: just like candy wrappers, our emotional courses have become mixed-up with marketing in its “*I’ll win you over with gloss, if you buy me like you buy your cheap glossy magazines*” approach. Our emotions so often degenerate into desolate, degraded channels, shifting turbid rapids of hateful energy and toxic material. Incidentally, Europe, China, southern Africa and more recently the southern U.S.A., the Philippines and Somalia have had their share of record-breaking floods. Countries like Mozambique and cities like New Orleans have had thousands of people displaced after the landscape became smothered in rising waters; Somalia saw millions displaced. Besides the obvious socio-economic implications on already burdened cities and nations, this flooding also provides a breeding ground for malaria and other water-borne diseases. When the emotions burst their banks, they usually pour thick, and end in toxic pools.

What about the *air*? Once again, any factory or industry unleashing toxic gases into the atmosphere can be said to be abusing our natural resources. Observe motor and fuel emissions, and the lack of education / awareness with regards to the integral understanding of the term *interdependence*. Now let us look at the *skies* of our own *minds* and view the pollutants within: people entertain warped ideas, such as hacking up someone else with a carving knife; children get crazy ideas about bringing guns to school and killing people for the strangest of reasons (or none at all); others think that a night’s entertainment includes inserting a fire-cracker into a dog’s rectum and igniting it (atrocities such as these have actually happened!) Consider noise pollution, cultural imposition, forced globalization and information-overload; then witness the

paranoia, schizophrenia and anxiety that exist today. Look at the *energy* abuse on our planet, with its nuclear aberrations and fuel wars, and witness the corresponding abuse of political and spiritual power, or, ironically, the absence of ‘wisdom’ in both these arenas. The implications are vast, simply because *all things are connected*, and the world inevitably *reflective*.

Moreover, it is pointless trying to rid the outside world of ‘evils’, if we do not first attempt to bring some clarity and order into our own inner worlds – namely to identify and remedy our own inner pollutants, such as greed, selfishness, hatred and lack of compassion or mercy.

Do you command the people to righteousness while you forget yourselves? ²⁴⁸

...The self can take on the negative attributes of meanness, arrogance and other egotistic traits when it faces the black hole of self assertion. The self will only stop mimicking and being a parody of the soul when it realises its total dependency upon it and gives up its pretences of deserving to be acknowledged and honoured.²⁴⁹

It seems it is easy to complain about chemicals, dyes and other pollutants in rivers, whilst we ourselves are funnelling vast amounts of alcohol and chemical drugs into our own blood streams and neural networks, or overdosing on debased (ontologically deconstructive) pop-culture icons beamed “24-7” from the pulpit of our home-theatre entertainment systems.²⁵⁰ Similarly, it will not be possible to find any political, social, religious or ecological reconciliation if we cannot first learn to reconcile our personal, limited, conditioned *self*,²⁵¹ with the trans-personal, eternal, unbounded and unconditioned *Spirit*.²⁵² the prototypical pattern for any and all reconciliation.²⁵³

But seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and these things shall be added unto you.²⁵⁴

Only when you are one, can you begin to know the one.²⁵⁵

²⁴⁸ Qur’an (2:44)

²⁴⁹ Haeri 2006. Pg 139

²⁵⁰ Some of which include: fast/junk-food; fur-trading for fashion; montage animations; pornography (viz. degradation of the body); aggressive wrestling icons; commercial genetic manipulation; cosmetic surgery (viz. bigger, better, harder, faster, more, now!); etc.

²⁵¹ *nafs*

²⁵² *Rûh*

²⁵³ Haeri 2006

²⁵⁴ Matthew (6:33)

²⁵⁵ Haeri 2006. Pg 90

It should be clearly seen that the principle “as within, so without” is directly relevant to our lives and interactions on this planet. The abuse of our earth, water, air, and energy resources is a direct reflection of (and conversely, through the mechanism of feedback, the further cause of) our actions, feelings, perceptions and spirituality, or a lack thereof. More than ever this is a time for honesty, humility, research and responsibility towards our lives and towards the integrity of other lives and this planet. Since the nature and dynamics of existence are related to the interplay of complementarities – a healthy state would depend upon a dynamic and harmonious balance at all times.²⁵⁶ In this respect we are certainly not ‘free’ to do whatever we want: true or absolute freedom is an attribute of the unbounded and unconditioned (trans-personal) Spirit.

The goal is not liberty for the ego [i.e. self] to act as it pleases, but to free it *for* its conscious submission to the larger whole that is “the greater man within, the *Anthropos*” [i.e. pure consciousness].²⁵⁷

The limited and conditioned ‘self’ is in reality bound by *appropriateness*: to perform the appropriate action in the appropriate manner within the appropriate time and context. This requires ‘knowledge’; and this particular quality of knowledge requires an evolvment towards an essential trans-egoic self, which requires alignment with the unlimited and unconditioned Spirit (*rûh / atman*): the Ground of Being.

Truly, in the remembrance of God the heart finds rest.²⁵⁸

And herein lies true referencing: just because we are humans with a unique designation in the universe, this does not mean that we are exempt from the laws that govern the seen and the unseen worlds. We all still have much to gain in the fields of honesty, responsibility, knowledge, cautious awareness, compassion, mercy, wisdom, generosity, humility and love, whereby we may truly be called “Human.”

²⁵⁶ i.e. inner / outer; form / meaning; heavenly / earthly etc. In: Haeri, 2006

²⁵⁷ Cheetham 2005. Pg 44

²⁵⁸ Qur’an (13:28)

In Search of the Green Man

The Green Man is the guardian and revealer of mysteries. In his mask form he is linked to the universal significances of the mask, which are those of a part in a drama to be taken up and dropped again... As the disgorging or devourer of vegetation he speaks of the mysteries of creation in time, of the hidden sources of inspiration, and of the dark nothingness out of which we come and to which we return. As the fruit of vegetation, he signifies the mystery of law and intelligence in natural forms and expresses our own instinctive desire to anthropomorphize everything that is beautiful, touching or powerful in the world about us. In all his forms he is the Poet who in revealing mysteries opens up even more wonderful and enticing mysteries beyond the words he speaks.²⁵⁹

Some years ago while browsing the internet I discovered a posting-board exhibiting the classic “Green Man Quest,” where someone comments: “...*the more I read about him, the more diffuse he seems to become. Anything even remotely Sylvan seems to be lumped into the Greenman category... I would like a little more exclusive understanding of this archetype.*” Anyone who has ever studied the Green Man will empathize with the predicament; but discovering, for example, different shaped September Bushes in a garden, it should come as assurance that although a variety of environmental conditions have dispersed and shaped the aforementioned shrubs, they have in fact seeded from the same parent plant and still carry the essential species form: *Polygala myrtifolia*. Knowing this allows for faith in, and general acceptance of, the basic species form. In a similar way, although different epochs, cultures and conditions have manifested mythical figures such as Dumuzi-Tammuz, Osiris, the European Green Man, Green Tara etc, one may now move towards an understanding of the *principal* archetype or archetypal *principle*, while at the same time acknowledging the variety in expression.

And this delightful Herb
 whose tender Green
Fledges the River’s Lip
 on which we lean –
Ah, lean upon it lightly!
 for who knows
From what once Lovely Lip
 it springs unseen²⁶⁰

²⁵⁹ Anderson 1990. Pg 33

²⁶⁰ Omar Khayyam. In: Fitzgerald 2000.

The above excerpt not only expresses the colour ‘green’, which is thematically linked to *NTRC*, but it also forms part of a poetic offering on how not to get entangled in the intellectual / spiritual search so as to ultimately lose sight of the very ‘reality’ one is seeking and being sustained by. Similarly, the methodology adopted in the exploration of the Green Man / Woman archetype, ideally, should not be separated from the very purpose (or symbolic actualization) of the archetype itself. In this sense no written effort can adequately ‘unpack’ an archetype since it is rooted in a trans-rational, supra-physical and supra-sensory order of consciousness as a “pre-existent disposition” and therefore the archetype, its actualization and function, cannot be confined to conceptual straitjackets.

...[T]he Active Imagination... operates in an intermediate world, an interworld between the senses and the world of ideas. ...This Active Imagination is the imaginative, perceptive faculty of the soul, which cannot be explained because it is itself the revealer of meaning and significance.²⁶¹

In looking for patterns I had to remind myself that a great archetype can be revealed in many forms and these will vary according to times and needs. We think of the Green Man as a visual image, as an object sculpted in stone or in wood, but the emotions he expresses transcend the form and their vitality is equally powerful when transmitted through the dance or the dramatic rituals of folk custom and in the rhythms and melodies of poetry and song. We do not only look at his leaves and blades of grass: we hear them singing and speaking to us; we touch and smell and taste his vegetation and his fruits.²⁶²

In true trickster fashion, the *Quest for the Green Man* and the *Mystery of the Green Man* become faithfully interwoven and inseparable whereby the ‘green’ is best ‘caught’ rather than actually ‘taught’. Perhaps at the outset it might seem bold to introduce the statement that the Quest for the Green Man appears to be a quest for an authentic self (i.e. a renewed, balanced and harmonious alignment with Reality) yet it is fitting that the concept guides this investigation; as such, it is equivalent to the hermetic *Quest for the Philosopher’s Stone*.²⁶³ Paradoxically – as if looking in a mirror – the face staring out from *behind* the foliate Green Man sculptures, such as the European Green Man, might just offer reflection on the very ‘leaf-fresh’ nature dwelling *within* oneself – the very ‘Breath’ our suffocating society is seemingly in denial of, yet simultaneously reaching out for: a resurrection of Heart (*qalb*), clarified and nurtured by the *presence* of Spirit. Some have chosen to identify this enlivening presence as “the Face” or “the

²⁶¹ Helminski, K. *Soul Loss and Soul Making*: <http://www.sufism.org/books/sacred/soulloss.html> (accessed 2006)

²⁶² Anderson 2001. Pg 18

²⁶³ *Philosopher’s Stone*: Simultaneously the transformative Agent and ‘Goal’ of the Alchemist’s / Hermeticist’s search.

Friend;” the term “green signature / fingerprint” is used as an *indicator* of this presence / face / friend in much the same way that green vegetation indicates the presence of water or moisture within a desert oasis. Hildegard von Bingen, the late Catholic mystic, similarly referred to divine presence by the term *viriditas*, meaning the “Greening Truth” (i.e. the verdant truth that enlivens).

The Green Man offers us a new understanding of the relationship between the macrocosm – the universal world – and the microcosm in ourselves. On the macrocosmic scale he symbolizes the point at which the creative power in eternity is made manifest in space and time. Hildegard of Bingen gave a special name to the manifestation of cosmic energies: *viriditas*, greenness. On the scale of the human individual, *viriditas* is the operation of the Divine Word penetrating the soul and the whole body. Her idea has a modern parallel in the conception, much discussed by physicists, of the Anthropic Principle, the theory that intelligence is built into the form of the universe and that the reality of the universe is tied to us and depends on us as observers. It is a theory that may help us to conceive the new scale on which to think of the Green Man.²⁶⁴

The Mother Goddess and her Son / Lover

The earliest expressions of the Green Man / Woman are ultimately embedded in pre-history.²⁶⁵ We can detect distinct traces of the mythical Green Man / Woman during the middle to late Bronze-Age, manifested in the Mesopotamian goddess (Inanna-Ishtar) and the Egyptian goddess (Isis), both of whom carried the title “Green One” largely because of their role in restoring life and fertility to the people and the land, often in conjunction with their son / lover / consort, Dumuzi-Tammuz and Osiris respectively.²⁶⁶ In later Graeco-Roman times – and in much the same profile as Dumuzi and Osiris – the Green Man found representation as Attis: the dying and resurrecting son-lover of Cybele, both of whom are believed to have originated in Anatolia / Asia Minor.²⁶⁷ It is noted of Attis that he is, “shown as a shepherd, like Dumuzi; he usually holds a shepherd’s crook and may carry a sheep on his shoulders in the image of ‘the good shepherd’. Sometimes he leans against a pine tree or lies beneath one... Sun-rays or ears of corn or fruit emerge from his cap, proclaiming him both a solar god and a god of regeneration... In his rituals he was called ‘the corn-stalk’ or ‘the ear of wheat’, and his symbols were the pinecone and the pomegranate.”²⁶⁸

²⁶⁴ Anderson 1990. Pg 163

²⁶⁵ Anderson 1990. Pg 14

²⁶⁶ Baring & Cashford 1993

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.* Pp 391-415

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.* Pg 408

From a psycho-spiritual perspective, one could suggest that these mythical consorts are actualized representations of the ontological relationship between Spirit (*rûh*: as goddess) and the self (*nafs*: as potential gardener / shepherd-king / fisher-king). The relationship between the goddess and her consort (Spirit and the higher self [*nafs al-kamila*]) is like the sun / water to the earth; the harmonious result being an abundance of verdant ‘offspring’ (the divine “garden” of truth, wisdom, love, compassion, beauty, etc).

Dumuzi-Tammuz, Osiris and Attis likewise receive the title “Green One” and become preludes to a host of Green Ones that follow.

Dionysus & Skanda-Murukan

The chief reference for this section is a paper written by Patrick Harrigan titled, “*Dionysus and Kataragama: Parallel Mystery Cults*.”²⁶⁹ In this work, Harrigan looks at the correspondences and parallels between the Greek god Dionysus and the Sri Lankan Kataragama god, Skanda-Murukan (Skanda-Kumara).²⁷⁰ Both these ‘gods’ appear to represent the paradoxical nature of existence and the necessity of integrating this paradox in order to maintain a healthy connection to life and a balanced sense of self. It echoes the sense of greenness, not only because of the fact that both these gods are connected to vines and nature, but also because it relates to the idea of *balance, nourishment* and *renewal* through a *union* of complementary opposites. It has become apparent that humanity is painfully poised between divine immanence and divine transcendence.

Dionysus, and it appears Skanda too, celebrate the paradox inherent in duality but from an elevated sense of unity. In order to develop towards an essential self, one needs to first acknowledge and accept (within a certain degree of wisdom) one’s own unconscious ‘darkness’ (e.g. complexes, instinctual desires, obsessions, buried memories etc); and this is what the play of Dionysus and Skanda comes to represent. Jalaluddin Rumi, the great classical Sufi poet (1207-1273 CE), comments:

How does a part of the world leave the world?
How can wetness leave water?
Don’t try to put out a fire
by throwing on more fire!
Don’t wash a wound with blood!

²⁶⁹ Harrigan, P. *Dionysus and Kataragama: Parallel Mystery Cults*: <http://kataragama.org/research/dionysus.htm> (accessed 2005)

²⁷⁰ *Kataragama*: A sacred location in Sri Lanka, symbolically worshipped as the home of Hindu god Skanda-Kumara (Skanda-Murukan). Through observation of this cult’s ritual and devotional ceremonies, there is the belief that Skanda embodies the same archetype as represented by Dionysus in Greek mythology.

No matter how fast you run,
your shadow more than keeps up.
Sometimes, it's in front!
Only full, overhead sun
diminishes your shadow.

But that shadow has been serving you!
What hurts you, blesses you.
Darkness is your candle.
Your boundaries are your quest...

You must have shadow and light source both.
Listen, and lay your head under the tree of awe ²⁷¹

Dionysus and Skanda, as cultural expressions of a trans-cultural archetype, exhibit flagrant counterweight to the institutionalized tendency to suppress gnosis (*ma'rifah / jnana*)²⁷² and erect fragile concepts (i.e. to 'fantasize' purely at the level of psyche) of distant gods through mental postulation and fear. This tendency, reduction or distraction, results in one neglecting to unveil one's ever-present spiritualized Heart and thus awaken into pure consciousness through the wonder-full medium of divine *presence*; or, to put it in a metaphysical framework: the failure to engage the higher intellect in which one is able to contemplate or comprehend Being – the divine presence (the *Friend / Face* of God; the *Shekhinah / Sakinah*).

A sense of abandonment and the existential guilt-soup that ensues from our distant and disapproving thought-gods is often what forms the basis of either a spiritual market trading in pastel consolation, or else a fragmented culture characterized largely by drug-dependency, hyper-entertainment and an entourage of personality disorders. It is worth noting at this point that the Islamic faith flies under a green flag. This is particularly interesting, for the word "salaam," meaning "peace," is found at the root of the word "Islam," which can be translated as, "attaining to peace of Heart through remembrance of, and alignment with, the Real."

Khidr

Al-Khadir (Kh-D-R) – an Arabic term meaning "green" and "verdant" – is the etymological root for a Middle-Eastern character known as al-Khidr: *the Green One*. Various encountered as

²⁷¹ Rumi. In: Barks 1995. Pg 20

²⁷² Direct knowledge / knowing of the divine.

Khidr, Khizr, Khezzr or Hizir – all point to a legendary figure who is said to have discovered the “Water-of-Life” (i.e. Spirit / Pure Consciousness) and is considered an eternal prophet. Coleman Barks informs us:

Khidr is connected philologically with Elijah and with Utnapishtim of the Gilgamesh epic. He may be partial source, along with Druidic lore, for the enigmatic Green Knight in the Middle English poem ‘Sir Gawain and the Green Knight’.²⁷³

It is important to examine the Qur’anic encounter between Moses and Khidr, as it provides critical dimension to our understanding of the Green Man archetype. Below is the excerpt:

...One day Moses said to his servant:

“I will not cease from my wanderings until I have reached the place where the two seas meet, even though I may journey for eighty years”

But when they had reached the place where the two seas meet, they forgot about their cooked breakfast fish; and the fish somehow came alive and found its way out and through a stream into the sea. Now when they had journeyed past this place, Moses said to his servant:

“Bring us our breakfast, for we are weary from this journey”

But the other replied “Oh! See what has befallen me! When we were resting there by the rock, I forgot the fish. Only Shaytan can have put it out of my mind and in wondrous fashion it found its way to the sea”

Then Moses said “But that is the place we seek!”

And so they went back the way they had come. And they found one of Our servants, whom we had endowed with Our grace and Our wisdom.

Moses said to him “Can I follow you, that you may teach me, as guidance, some of the wisdom you have learnt?”

But he answered “You will not bear with me, for how should you bear patiently with things you cannot comprehend?”

Moses said “If Allah wills, you shall find me patient; I shall not in anyway disobey you”

He said “If you are bent on following me, you must ask no question about anything till I myself speak to you concerning it”

The two set forth, but as soon as they embarked, Moses’ companion bored a hole in the bottom of the ship.

“A strange thing you have done! exclaimed Moses “Is it to drown her passengers that you have bored a hole in her?”

“Did I not tell you” he replied “that you would not bear with me?”

“Pardon my forgetfulness” said Moses “Do not be angry with me on this account”

²⁷³ In: Barks 1995. Pg 288

They journeyed on until they came across a certain youth. Moses' new companion drew a sword and slew him, and Moses said "You have killed an innocent man who has done no harm. Surely you have committed a wicked crime?"

"Did I not tell you" he replied "that you would not bear with me?"

Moses said "If ever I question you again, abandon me; for then I should deserve it"

They travelled on until they came to a certain city. They asked the people for some food, but the people declined to receive them as their guests. There they found a wall that was on the point of falling down. Moses' companion raised it up without fuss and qualm, and Moses said "You know, had you wished, you could have demanded payment from these ungrateful townsfolk for your labours"

"Now the time has arrived when we must part!" said the other "But first I will explain to you those acts of mine which you could not bear with in patience. Know that the ship belonged to some poor fishermen. I damaged it because in the rear was a tyrant king who was taking every ship by force [and for certain corruptible means]. As for the youth, his parents both are true believers and we feared lest he should plague them with his wickedness and unbelief. It was our wish that their Lord should grant them another in his place, a son more righteous and more filial. As for the wall, it belonged to two orphan boys in the city whose father was an righteous man. Beneath it, a treasure lays buried which is to be their inheritance. Your Lord decreed in His mercy that they should dig out their treasure when they grew to manhood [where it would not be wasted, or swindled from them]. What I did was not done by caprice. That is the meaning of the things you could not bear with in patience."

[The person referred to as "*One of our servants, whom We had endowed with Our grace and Our wisdom*" is the figure of Khidr, "the Verdant One" who plays a pivotal role in Islamic mysticism]²⁷⁴

Analogous to the chlorophyll within our plants and trees, Khidr (the "Green One") symbolically images the threshold or interspace (*barzakh*) between our 'solar' (heavenly) and 'earthly' (physical) existence [i.e. "*where the two seas meet*"²⁷⁵] thus providing our 'earthly' consciousness with the connective sustenance and vitality of the divine light of Spirit (i.e. Khidr transcends and refreshes our habitually dry, literalist or dogmatic religious understanding by representing the connective sustenance of direct intellection).

Khidr is the spiritual teacher within us, the spark in the heart, our inborn secret... We meet him at the place where the cooked fish becomes alive; where the spiritual tradition becomes a living reality.²⁷⁶

²⁷⁴ Qur'an (18:60-82) Adapted from: <http://khidr.org/al-kahf.htm> (accessed 2006)

²⁷⁵ Qur'an (18:60/61). This can be equated to the psycho-spiritual 'Heart' in humans (i.e. *qalb*)

²⁷⁶ Vaughan-Lee 2000. Pg 163

As though exhibiting a Dionysian element, Khidr *begins* as a symbol of the “irrepressible Spirit”²⁷⁷ (re: the sudden resurrection of the fish). Coleman Barks comments on the bridging function of Khidr:

He exists on the edge between the seen and the unseen. When Moses vows to find the place “where the two seas meet,” meaning where the spiritual and the worldly mix, he meets Khidr...Khidr represents the inner dimension which transcends form. He is the personification of the revealing function of the metaphysical intellect, the ‘prophetic soul’. He especially appears to solitaries, those who are cut off from normal channels of spiritual instruction.²⁷⁸

Khidr, in his role as ‘guide’ into the deeper spiritual mysteries, has also been associated with Hermes (Idris):

Idris, Enoch, al-Khidr and Hermes all seem to be one person. This guide al-Khidr initiates Moses into deeply esoteric lore. The ijnaʿ Ilhami, in Hadith traditions, consider al-Khadir as a holy being, mysterious and immortal whom all spiritual initiatory orders revere as the Master of the Path (*Tariqa*). Al-Khidr is often mentioned as the Green Angel Guide in Islamic writings. In fact, in Egyptian frescoes he is some times painted green with the head of an ibis.²⁷⁹

Tom Cheetham comments,

In accordance with Islamic iconography, the color of the final stage [in the transformation of the self] is emerald green. For [Henry] Corbin this stage marks the meeting with the heaven Guide, the perfectly individuated and individual Angel of Humanity and Angel of Knowledge that is the biblical Angel of the Face. This is the Figure of whom Mohammad could say: “I have seen my Lord in the most beautiful of forms.” It announces the truth that beauty is the supreme theophany. The Qur’anic source for this Person is Sura XVIII... The seeker is born into his true self through the encounter with Khidr...²⁸⁰

...Khidr is a mysterious figure, who acts as Moses’ Guide and initiator into the secret meanings of the Law and the world. He is *the* archetypal hermeneut whose speech is the lost poetry of Creation. In the Islamic tradition he is identified with the Old Testament figure of Elija. Khidr is the personal guide, and Corbin says, equivalent to the Paraclete and the Hidden Imam, to the Christ of the Cross of Light; he is the *Verus Propheta*, the inner guide of each person, the

²⁷⁷ Anderson 1990. Pg 14

²⁷⁸ In: Barks 1995. Pg 287

²⁷⁹ <http://khidr.org/gunawardhana.htm> (accessed 2006)

²⁸⁰ Cheetham 2005. Pg 70

celestial Anthropos and Angel of Humanity whose appearance to every person is *each time unique*.²⁸¹

Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee adds essential insight to what is perhaps the true significance of Khidr:

One of the most important archetypal figures in Sufism is Khidr, ‘the green one.’ Khidr represents direct revelation, the direct inner connection with God that is central to the mystical experience.²⁸²

...Khidr is not an abstract mystical figure, but an archetype of something essential within us. ‘The Green One’ images a natural aspect of our divinity, something so ordinary that we overlook it. To follow the way of Khidr is to awaken to our own natural state of being with God and with life. In this natural state of being we know how to respond to the real need of the moment.²⁸³

Reza Shah-Kazemi contextualizes:

According to Ibn Arabi... the encounter between Moses and al-Khidr is understood microcosmically: al-Khidr represents a mode of universal consciousness within the very soul of Moses, one which surpasses his consciousness *qua* prophet, whence the disapproval by the prophet of the antinomian acts of the saint: ‘He [al-Khidr] showed him [Moses] nothing but his [Moses’] own form: it was his own state that Moses saw, and himself that he censured’.²⁸⁴

Jung shared a similar interpretation, albeit within a psychological framework:

Khidr may well be a symbol of the Self.²⁸⁵ His qualities symbolize him as such; he is said to have been born in a cave i.e. in darkness. He is the “Long-lived One” who continually renews himself, like Elijah. He is analogous to the second Adam... he is a counsellor, a Paraclete, “Brother Khidr.” Anyway, Moses looks up to him for instruction. Then follow these incomprehensible deeds *which show how ego-consciousness reacts to the superior guidance of the Self* [emphasis mine] through the twists and turns of fate. To the initiate who is capable of transformation it is a comforting tale; to the obedient believer, an exhortation not to murmur against Allah’s incomprehensible omnipotence. Khidr symbolizes not only the higher wisdom but also a way of acting. Anyone hearing such a mystery tale will recognize himself in the questing Moses and forgetful Joshua.²⁸⁶

²⁸¹ Ibid. Pg 122

²⁸² Vaughan-Lee 2000. Pg 161

²⁸³ Ibid. Pg 170

²⁸⁴ Shah-Kazemi, R. 2006. The Metaphysics of Interfaith Dialogue: Sufi Perspectives on the Universality of the Quranic Message. In: *Vincit Omnia Veritas* II, 2. Pg 133.

<http://religioperennis.org/documents/Editorial/Issue4/issueII2.pdf>

²⁸⁵ When Jung refers to the *Self* with a capital ‘S’, he is referring to the higher self.

²⁸⁶ *Jung and the 18th Sura*. In: Islam and the West: A Cultural and Psychological Analysis (Part 2): <http://www.allamaiqbal.com/publications/journals/review/oct99/5.htm> (accessed 2006)

The suggestion here is that there are plausible resonances between a host of mythical manifestations (e.g. Dumuzi-Tammuz, Osiris, Dionysus, Skanda-Kumara etc) and what appears to be a guiding *root* archetype, significantly refined in the Qur’anic appearance of Khidr. I say “refined” because whereas the Green Man is previously considered to be a symbolic representation of the authentic / essential self – in natural submission to Spirit and reflective of the divine attributes – Khidr, on the other hand, appears to be symbolic of the very *source* of divine nourishment: the ever-living and consequently irrepressible divine consciousness. Khidr, therefore, represents the “Living Water” or “Breath of Life” (*rûh*), as well as the direct sustenance that it provides the human Heart (*qalb*). It has been said of Khidr that he is the one “in whose footsteps plants and trees grow” and we can deduce from this – as well as from the Qur’anic reading – that while he is responsible for the “greening” of the Heart and self, he is not just the *effect* (a way of acting / being)²⁸⁷ but primarily the *cause* (the divine / prophetic consciousness itself);²⁸⁸ or is perhaps symbolic of both (as the title “the Green One” suggests)?²⁸⁹ That Khidr may be seen as being an initiator of, or precursor to, the rehabilitation of consciousness – both individually and collectively – is supported in part by those prophetic traditions which relate that prior to the eschatological advent of the “Rightly Guided One” (*al-Mahdi*) in the so-called “End Days,” ‘Khidr / Elijah’ will make an appearance.²⁹⁰

Having noted all of this, however, it is very easy to fall into the trap of excessive mysticism, whereby the essential divine reality of the symbol is not realized. One should not lose sight of the fact that ‘Khidr’ is a mythical representation / personification of the otherwise direct *ontological* relationship between the self and the guiding Spirit at the “place where the two seas meet” (i.e. the spiritualized ‘Heart’). By ontological extension (i.e. macrocosmically), guidance from Khidr may also be seen as the direct contemplation of nature and cosmos (as theophany) by virtue of the non-discursive, supra-rational intellect.

Khidr is not a humanist. He is a messenger from far beyond. The world that he opens up to us is infinite. He announces that the cosmos itself is a ‘house of reading’ – it is the Primordial Temple

²⁸⁷ In his ‘green’ and ‘vegetative’ forms.

²⁸⁸ In his role as “Stranger,” or the “Hidden One,” or as the “Hidden Initiator” [Finds resonance with *Melkizedek*; also the *qotb* of Sufism; “*The Hidden Imam*” (Shia mysticism); the “*The Standing One*” / “*Primal Adam*” / “*Hidden Power*” doctrines of the Elkasites and Nazorai-Mandaeans; also *Purusha* in the Vedic traditions.

²⁸⁹ By way of analogy: not just the greenness of the chlorophyll within the leaves, but also the sunlight / water responsible for their nourishment and liveliness; not just the (secondary) green ray of light that is refracted as the “middle-pillar” within the light spectrum, but also the (primary) undifferentiated light of pure consciousness. Once again we return to the concept of *interconnectedness*, *harmony*, *balance*, *nourishment* and *renewal*, as discussed in relation to the “green signature.”

²⁹⁰ This is further alluded to in the mystical tales of Ismaili Shi’ism, which refer to the appearance of Khidr prior to the unveiling of the *Hidden Imam*. For an insightful reading of the *Mahdi* tradition, please refer to: Morris J.W. *Ibn Arabi’s Messianic Secret: From “the Mahdi” to the Imamate of Every Soul*.

<http://www.religioperennis.org/documents/morris/MessianicSecret.pdf>

of the Word. The guardians of high culture, of literature and the humanities, have for a long time not read this book at all. They have been too curved in upon themselves. And when it is read, as it is by natural scientists, it is too often only in the most abstract languages of domination and control.²⁹¹

The Green Man in Europe

The “Green One” appears to shift smoothly into European territory and marries well with the ancient pagan reverence for ‘all things green’. The Order of the Garter, a medieval chivalric order of European and Christian descent, is said to have adapted much of their mystic ritual from their sojourns in Persian and Arabic lands.²⁹² Perhaps they found the fertile tendencies of such a figure as Khidr, suitably fitted to their philosophy of, and reverence for, the feminine aspect of the divine (Virgin Mary)? St George (Green George) the patron saint of the Order can be linked to Khidr (the Green One) who is, incidentally, known as the ‘hidden’ initiator of the Sufis.²⁹³ The classical Sufis were Islamic mystics who, owing to their acquaintance with metaphysical doctrines, were known to have interacted with saints and mystics from various other religious cultures.²⁹⁴ The relationship of the Garter Order’s knowledge to the Sufi culture of chivalry (*futuwwa*), begs further analysis but it is beyond the scope of this publication and can be better followed through the work of Idries Shah.²⁹⁵

Though revitalizing the “green mystery” within the European mystic underground, the mystical orders did not introduce a new concept but rather reshaped an already ancient presence notably manifested in Euro / Celtic lore and legend. The medieval European “Green Man” represents, in one aspect, a renewal or reconnection with divine *presence* (often personified through the divine feminine), resulting in a ‘resurrection’ of Heart – as symbolized by the blossoming green foliage of the Green Man. It is also now possible to see why Christ is sometimes associated with the Gardener and Green Man; also, why the acacia branch becomes a symbol of resurrection, renewal and immortality within Masonic fraternities. Jung himself had a vision one night when he awoke to see a “greenish gold” figure of Christ standing at the foot of his bed:

²⁹¹ Cheetham 2005. Pp 113-114

²⁹² Shah 1977

²⁹³ *Sufism: 'Mystical' Islam (Tasawwuf)*. The Islam (original) of Mohammed is considered central to Sufism (itself considered to be the living heart of Islam).

²⁹⁴ Scott, 1983. See also: Hart, E. *Rasa'il-e Ikhwan us Safa: Pages of Medieval Mideastern History*. <http://www.amaana.org/ikhwan/ikhwan4.html> (accessed 2006)

²⁹⁵ Shah 1977

When I realised that the vision pointed to this central alchemical symbol, and that I had had an essentially alchemical vision of Christ, I felt comforted. The green gold is the living quality, which the alchemists saw not only in man but also in inorganic nature. It is an expression of the life-spirit, the *anima mundi* or *filius macrocosmi*, the Anthropos who animates the whole cosmos.²⁹⁶

In addition, the disgorging of vegetation from the eyes, ears, nose and mouth in some of the Green Man sculptures, appears to represent the irrepressible divine essence laying at the very foundation of our existence – the inviolable truth that lays within, and that which devours our fragile concepts of self, as we struggle and resist our own inner transformation on the path towards the Real.

It is the dissolving power of the Hidden God that guarantees the freedom from dogma and from idolatry.²⁹⁷

Centuries before, the cultural fruits of gnosis were found irrepressibly carving their way through European spirituality, quite noticeably in the Cathari flourish (c. 1050-1244 CE), which occurred in southern France.²⁹⁸ The concept of a returning or awakened “Fisher King” [symbolic of the divinely transformed self²⁹⁹ in harmony with Spirit³⁰⁰] and the questing Knight Percival [possibly “the Inspired Self”³⁰¹] is well documented in the legends of the Holy Grail, as

²⁹⁶ Jung 1963. Pg 201

²⁹⁷ Cheetham 2005. Pg 78

²⁹⁸ *Gnosis / Gnosticism*: According to the writings of the late second / third century orthodox Christian fathers / scholars – notably Irenaeus, Hegesippus, Tertullian, Hippolytus and Origen – Gnosticism was considered to be a product of ‘heretical’ Christian sects in the second century (CE). Upon closer historical inspection, however, it is not as simple as this [see: Robert Eisenman (*James the Brother of Jesus; The New Testament Code*); Elaine Pagels (*The Gnostic Gospels*); Stephan Hoeller (*Gnosticism: New Light on the Ancient Tradition of Inner Knowing*); Robert M. Price (*The Incredible Shrinking Son of Man; The Pre-Nicene New Testament*); Earl Doherty (*Challenging the Verdict*)]. ‘Christianity’ was originally a widely heterogeneous movement with the best and the worst of gnostic / philosophical doctrines among them. Of course, it is only natural for the (worst) to have been widely publicized throughout history through the polemic of the Establishment. The term “Gnosticism” is derived from the word “gnosis”: the Greek roots of which mean “knowledge,” “Knowing,” or the paradoxical state relating to a heightened awareness of Unknowing. It derives further meaning from the Greek root – *nostos* – which indicates a ‘return home’ [in an etymological or spiritual sense, this can be interpreted in the light of ‘Remembrance’; that is: a Remembrance (Realization) of one’s original state of Being, one’s ‘divine Covenant’ and is therefore in a sense, one’s “return home”]. *Gnosis* refers to a process of unfolding – a realization of, and alignment with, the Ground of Being [i.e. *spiritūs / rūh / atman*: considered to be a “shared intimacy” with God]. Although Gnosticism has been strongly represented throughout history (CE) by the strictly dualist “Simonian” and Manichean doctrines, it would seem incorrect to reduce gnosis to strict dualism, since Hermeticism, Sufism, Qabalah and the non-dual Hindu / Buddhist Schools, for example, may be said to aspire towards *gnosis / ma’rifah / jnana* (by reviewed definition) and yet do not (as a rule) establish a lingering dualism as their goal. Throughout the centuries, perennial adherents from the abovementioned traditions have confirmed that despite their doctrinal differences and practices (in “knowledge”), they have been traveling by the same Way (i.e. the Primordial Tradition). It is within the context of this “Gnosticism” (viz. gnosis) that this publication makes use of the term.

²⁹⁹ *Insan al-Kamil*

³⁰⁰ *Rūh*

³⁰¹ *Nafs al-Mulhama*

well as in the mythical accounts of other cultures both modern and ancient.³⁰² Parallel to this gnostic revival and proto-renaissance we find the production of thousands of Green Man sculptures, very often within the gothic cathedrals and churches themselves.³⁰³

Whether consciously intended or unconsciously projected, the existence of the Green Man sculptures and their mythical proximity to the older and more rare Sheela-na-gig goddess sculptures³⁰⁴ appears to reinforce the concept and necessity of a healed and fertile ‘consort’ who once again returns to restore the exploited and barren wasteland into a now fertile ‘paradise’: the self (*nafs*) in harmony with Spirit (*rûh*) and the resulting restoration of consciousness. It has been noted by one researcher that the name *Sheela* bears resemblance to the Egyptian word *Sherah*, meaning “water of a source,” and *-gig* bears resemblance to another Egyptian word *kekh* meaning “sanctuary.”³⁰⁵

Truly, the God-conscious ones are in gardens and rivers, in a place of truth in the presence of an able Sovereign³⁰⁶

‘A river flowed out of Eden’ (Gen.2:10); here again is the symbolism of “the fountain” and “the Sea.” The river that flows out of Eden is the active Essence – the same with the Spirit (*Ruah*) that moved on the Waters and, again, with the *Fiat Lux* that brings light from darkness. In the same way that zero contains the possibility for number and one contains all numbers virtually, so too the symbolism of the word Eden contains the idea of the “river” that flows out of it. The letter *ayn* symbolically expresses the idea of a “fountain” gushing forth; it is also an “eye,” that is, the divine Eye through which the creative Light of the *Fiat Lux* flows out.

...Eden is unmanifest Existence in its state of biunity: Essence undifferentiated from Substance.

...The “river” is the vertical ray of Essence in act upon the horizontal garden (Substance).³⁰⁷

In mediaeval Christian art we find Christ standing within or stepping out from the *vesica piscis* (V) [also called “the place between”]: a symbolic form closely resembling other forms in nature.

³⁰² I am suggesting that *Parzifal* and the *Fisher King* were cultural / historical expressions of (what is essentially) *trans-cultural / meta-historical* archetypes. I have further used the *maqam* (“stations” of self) of *tasawwûf* for comparative grounding.

³⁰³ Anderson 1990

³⁰⁴ *Sheela-na-gig*: A cross-cultural (probably Neolithic) sculpture showing a naked ‘woman’ gloriously exposing her vulva to the observer. This can be linked, conceptually, to the Egyptian *rû* hieroglyph, which bears the same shape as that of a leaf, flame, almond and the *vesica piscis* etc – all of which has been used to symbolize the divine feminine.

³⁰⁵ Ovason 1999. Pg 400

³⁰⁶ Qur’an (54:54-55)

³⁰⁷ Scott, T. 2007. Edom and Eden: remarks on cosmogonic symbolism. In: *Vincit Omnia Veritas* III, 1: <http://religioperennis.org/documents/Editorial/Issue5/IssueIII1.pdf> Pp 114-115

The *vesica piscis* is formed by the geometrical interlocking of two circles to produce a “place” or “space” between, which resembles the shape of a fish – a symbol long since associated with Christ and John the Baptist. The mathematical ratio of this *vesica piscis* was referred to by the Pythagoreans as the “measure of the fish.” It is not insignificant to note that Khidr is associated with fish in the Qur’an; in some legendary accounts (see *Figure 8*) he is depicted as arriving upon the back of a fish at the place “where the two seas meet” (i.e. the “*place between*”).³⁰⁸



Figure 8

This also calls to mind the Chaldaean *Oannes* – the fish-saviour who is said to have brought wisdom and the art of civilization to Mesopotamia.

Unfortunately, the common and misleading association of religion with dogmatic literalism obscures the fact that religious understanding in its deepest sense is also symbolic understanding... The ways of seeing reality represented by religious forms, terms and concepts are intimately related to the symbolic understanding developed through the sacred stories of mythology, even though it is often difficult to recover the authentic and original sense of key terms and concepts in translated scriptures.³⁰⁹

³⁰⁸ <http://khidr.org/khwaja-khadir.htm> (accessed 2006)

³⁰⁹ Jeremy Henzell-Thomas. 2004. *Mythical Meaning, Religion and Soulful Education: Reviving the Original Sense of 'Intellect'*. Pp 15-16. <http://thebook.org/tep-articles/uploads/edinburgh.pdf>

Other than the creative birth motif, Sheela (in much the same cast as Isis and Mary) appears to be conferring a symbolic initiation of sorts. Hildegard of Bingen developed an elaborate system of natural healing and music based on her prolific visions. These visions, associated largely with the *viriditas* (Greening Truth) and the Virgin Mother (as symbolized by the *vesica piscis* in Hildegard's artworks), can be considered as authentic manifestations of a 'green signature' that was simultaneously manifesting all over Europe.

According to the meeting of Christian and Kabbalistic symbolism, the Garden of Eden is analogous to the Holy Virgin.³¹⁰

That the Green Man (and to a lesser extent Sheela) appear in and around many churches is all the more incredible and points to their very apparent influence on European consciousness. In this regard, William Anderson formed the hypothesis that the Green Man is the archetypal manifestation of divine imagination in nature:

The Green Man is the threshold of the imagination between our outer natures and our deepest selves and, as he is so closely connected with the Great Goddess, we must also ask, 'What is the Great Goddess in ourselves?' In ancient teachings she is Sophia or Wisdom, the wisdom we sorely need and which the Green Man is waiting to transmit to us.³¹¹

...Anciently he was the prophet: now he comes back as the archetype of the Poet, to redeem our thought and our language, to give simplicity and clarity to the confusion and the complexity of modern technological society, and to point towards renewing the harmony and the unity to the world of Nature with inescapable love.³¹²

The Quest for the Green Woman

In *tasawwūf* – the spiritual heart of Islam – the colour green is symbolically representative of the *realization* and *unveiling* of the *rūh* (spirit) as *khalifa* (divine representative) of God.³¹³ Similarly, Tibetan culture sees the colour green as a container for all other colours. It should come as no surprise that one of their most beloved and accessible of deities symbolically embodies this particular colour. *Green Tara*, as she is informally known, is believed to contain the other Tara presences [much like green vegetation, which in potential contains flowers of

³¹⁰ Scott, T. 2002. The Pierced Heart of the Virgin. In: *Sophia*, Vol. 8 No. 1. Oakton: The Foundation for Traditional Studies. Pp 123-129

³¹¹ Anderson 1990. Pg 164

³¹² Ibid. Pg 163

³¹³ Vaughan-Lee 2000. Pg 162

various colours and descriptions]. Besides being green, she is typically pictured as a youthful girl and is very beautiful and attractive. Although thought to be somewhat ‘mischievous’, this does not detract from her important role in the Tibetan tradition. It does, however, represent her lively and accessible nature and corresponds, within an Abrahamic context, to the intimate nature of God’s presence (i.e. *Shekhinah*). The name *tara* embodies much of her spiritual functioning:

In all Sanskrit based modern Indian languages, taaraa is still the word for ‘star’. A derivative of the same word means ‘the pupil of the eye’... The more popular approach in Buddhism is to interpret Taaraa’s name as coming from the causative form of the verb t’r ‘to cross’, ‘to traverse’ or ‘to escape’. So we reach the idea of ‘she who ferries across’, ‘she who saves’ or ‘a saviouress’... Taaraa not only gave guidance across mundane seas and led travellers or pilgrims safely through the pathless ways, such was her power that she could ferry the spiritual seeker across the ocean of existence (bhavasaagara) and show the way out of the dangerous jungles of conditioned existence towards Enlightenment itself... Like any Bodhisattva she has transcended the polarity of masculinity and femininity. Her beautiful form is just the gateway to a deep inner experience which has neither colour, nor form, nor sex... It is also probably no coincidence that the colour green, the colour of the most popular form of Taaraa, is itself suggestive of androgyny. Green is a mixture of blue and yellow, a synthesis of colours which may be said to correspond to heaven and earth, masculine and feminine.³¹⁴

The “pupil-of-the-eye” translation is fascinating, for it suggests not only focussed awareness but also hints at the underlying intimacy of a “concentrated essence,”³¹⁵ which is nearer to us than nearness itself.³¹⁶ It is worth noting that the Hebrew term for divine presence (*shekhinah*) means “indwelling” [as does the Mandaean Gnostic title, *menda*]. “Pupil of the eye” is also the translation for the Greek word *kore*, which simultaneously translates as “virgin.”³¹⁷ A close examination of religious and mythological literature will reveal many of the earth’s ‘saviours’ and ‘gods’ to have been “cave-born,” as well as having been “born of a virgin.” Many will also recall the encounters of Moses and Khidr in the *kahf*, the cave of revelation.

It is evident that there is esoteric dimension to these concepts, such as the “pupil-of-the-eye” confers. Suffice to say, these images appear to be mythical renderings, or symbolic

³¹⁴ Dharmachari Purna. *Tara: Her Origins and Development*.

http://www.westernbuddhistreview.com/vol2/tara_origins_a_development.html (accessed 2005)

³¹⁵ Ibid

³¹⁶ “And certainly We created man – and We know what his mind suggests to him – and We are nearer to him than his jugular vein.” Qur’an (50:16)

³¹⁷ Ovason 1999. Pg 453

expressions, of a supra-physical ‘organ’ of ontological perception identified as the Heart, by which is perceived the nourishing Spirit that permeates the whole of existence:

The Spectator’s pavilion is the Kingdom of Heaven that is within you, viz. in the ‘heart’ (in all Oriental and ancient traditions not only the seat of the will but of the pure Intellect, the place where the marriage of Heaven and Earth is consummated); it is there only that the Spectator can himself be seen by the contemplative, whose glance is inverted, and who thus retraces the path of the Ray that links the eye without to the Eye within, the breath of life with the Gale of the Spirit.³¹⁸

The eye in which I see God, is the same eye in which God sees me; my eye and God’s eye, that is one eye and one vision and one knowing and one love.³¹⁹

Beneath the great umbrella of my King, millions of suns and moons and stars are shining!

He is the Mind within my mind: He is the Eye within mine eye.

Ah, could my mind and eyes be one!³²⁰

The Lord will make, O Nama, the pupil of thine eye His abode;

And thine eye shall expand and contain the whole universe.³²¹

Vision comprehends Him not; and He comprehends (all) vision; and He is (the) Subtle, (the) Aware.³²²

The light of the body is the eye [i.e. consciousness]: if therefore thine eye be single [i.e. unified in Pure Consciousness], thy whole body shall be full with Light.³²³

³¹⁸ Coomaraswamy, A. 2006. The Vedanta and Western Tradition. In: *Vincit Omnia Veritas* II, 2. Pg 49. <http://religioperennis.org/documents/Editorial/Issue4/issuell2.pdf>

³¹⁹ Meister Eckhart (c. 1260-1327CE)

³²⁰ Sant Kabir (c. 1440-1518CE). In: Tagore 1998. Pg 138

³²¹ Sri Namdev (c. 1270-1350CE)

³²² Qur’an (6:104)

³²³ Matthew (6:22)

The Green Lion, the Philosopher's Vitriol and the Emerald Grail

I assure you that anyone who attempts a literal understanding of the hermetic philosophers will lose himself in the twists and turns of a labyrinth from which he'll never find the way out.³²⁴

In the many centuries preceding our own, it became increasingly necessary within the context of 'mysticism' to conceal divine openings and methods of metaphysical instruction in various 'blinds' or forms of allegory (i.e. 'cloaks'), thus protecting those who practiced the metaphysical arts during those oppressive times from being harmed. This procedure also intended to protect the sacred sciences from being profaned. Within medieval Hermeticism, for example, the use of 'blinds' [in addition to the use of authentic hermetic symbolism³²⁵] ensured that the true meaning of a specific text, symbol or operation was usually only able to be imparted to those who possessed the right 'key' to such information; to others it appeared as mere fable or harmless babble. The anchorless drift of surface allegory was also partly designed to lead the so-called charlatans into an endless labyrinth from which they were not able to extract any workable instruction. Those who were inherently capable of comprehending the deeper truths would invariably be able to do so despite the use of 'cloaks', while those who were merely partaking out of boredom or sheer curiosity would be protected from the overwhelming effect these applications might possibly have on them; certainly, there have been a few aspiring alchemists, hermeticists and mystics / gnostics throughout history who have either physically poisoned themselves or else driven themselves insane – notwithstanding those who have utilized occult methods in an attempt to manifest 'power' and acquire worldly wealth.³²⁶ It was because

³²⁴ In: Roob 1997. Pg 36

³²⁵ For more on the science and effectiveness of symbol, see: Guenon, R. *Fundamental Symbols: The Universal Language of Sacred Science*; Burckhardt, T. *Alchemy: Science of the Cosmos, Science of the Soul*; Lings, M. *Symbol and Archetype: A Study in the Meaning of Existence*; Coomaraswamy, A. *Guardians of the Sun Door*; and Scott, T. *The Traditional Doctrine of Symbol*:

<http://www.religioperennis.org/documents/Scott/Symbol.pdf> (accessed 2006)

³²⁶ An example of this can be seen in the life and exploits of Adolf Hitler and his Third Reich (SS). These political figures conveniently *misinterpreted* Grail and Gnostic symbolism / mythology in their attempt to "purify" the world and gain racial and political supremacy. Just another example of what happens when the temporal self collapses the supra-physical, the mythical and the Divine Absolute into 'worldly' ideology and worldly endeavors. A dualist rendition of this can be seen in Tolkein's *Lord of the Rings*: the "one ring to find them and in the darkness bind them" is the inflated promethean assumption of Spirit / Godhead into an oppressive and destructive worldly / materialist ideology. One can make similar observations in relation to the supposed "royal" bloodlines that are currently gaining popularity as a consequence of convoluted Grail mythologies. As has been noted before, the permanent divine attributes, such as "Greatness", "Oneness", "Kingship", "Power" and "Purity," are ultimately trans-personal and trans-cultural since they belong to the realm of Spirit / Pure Consciousness: they should not be absolutely assumed by entities that are temporal and subject to dissolution and death. The "essential" or "complete" self (*nafs al-kamila*) is capable of *reflecting* the divine attributes, *but* it does so by virtue of the fact that it has cognition of, or is aligned with, the *trans-personal* Spirit. Spirit is not only the source of one particular human (or group's) existence, but is simultaneously (this moment) the absolute source and sustainer of all humanity, as well as all of creation. If these divine attributes are incorrectly assumed (out of context) by the lower egocentric self, they become negatively inverted and oppressively projected into the world through the agency of vice.

of these various factors that the doctrines, experiences, states and ritual practices of the saints, metaphysicians and occultists were concealed from public knowledge.

Hermeticists are spiritual alchemists from the western esoteric traditions whose guiding philosophy and methodology can be traced back to early hermetic literature such as the *Emerald Tablet*: an ancient alchemical instruction for those attempting to ‘extract’ the essence of life.³²⁷ The master guide for the hermeticist appears to be *Hermes Trismegistis*, considered by some to be a Greek development of the Egyptian *Thoth (Tehuti)* and by others to be a soteriological transposition of the Zoroastrian *Ahura Mazda (Ormuzd)*. It was Hermes – in similar fashion to Moses – who brought the *Emerald Tablet* to the aspiring alchemists.³²⁸ Integral to the Great Work of Hermeticism is the sourcing of the “philosopher’s vitriol”: the *blood of the Green Lion*. According to those successful in the art, nothing was as easy as finding it, “*because it is at home in all the elements, even in the dust of the street.*”³²⁹ This appears to be an apt hermetic expression of the religious verses, such as the Christian: “*From me did the all come forth, and unto me did the all extend. Split a piece of wood, and I am there. Lift up the stone, and you will find me there*”³³⁰ and the Qur’anic phrase: “*Wheresoever you look, there is the face of God.*”³³¹

³²⁷ Marshall 2002

³²⁸ Roob 1997. Pg 8

³²⁹ Ibid. Pg 28.

[The “blood of the Green Lion” is related to the “Philosopher’s Stone” – simultaneously the transformative Agent and the Goal of the Alchemist’s quest]

³³⁰ Gospel of Thomas (77)

³³¹ Qur’an (2:115)



Figure 7

I am he who was the green and golden lion without cares – within me lie all the mysteries of the philosophers... The green lion that swallows Sol is... our Mercury. It alone works deep into each body and lifts him up. So if it is mixed with the body, it enlivens and relieves it and transforms it from one consistency into another.³³²

From the many books and articles written on the subject and the various formulations that have arisen from alchemy, it is clear that ‘alchemy’ means many different things to many different people. This publication only scrapes the surface in order to filter any possible associations with the green signature. In light of the opening hermetical warning, it is probably best not to get too involved in something that ultimately involves a lifelong commitment within an actual school practising this art. Out of respect, it is also probably wise not to make too many assumptions other than the basic recognition that while there may be one Truth, there are sometimes different methods of approaching that Truth.

The hermetic *Green Lion*, by many accounts, appears to correspond with the *green signature*, especially when related to the figure of *al-Khidr*. It involves moving beyond the narrow confines of the dispersed or fragmented ego-self (*nafs al-ammara*) towards the development and establishment of the integrated ‘Complete’ self (*nafs al-kamila*) –

³³² Roob 1997. Pg 367

accomplished through an ontological awareness of the supra-physical Heart (*qalb*) and a realization of the essential pure consciousness (*rûh al-quddûs*).

The alchemical process attempts to volatilise solids, solidify the volatile and participate actively with divine consciousness. The ‘philosopher’s stone’, which is supposed to turn base metals into gold or silver, represents the catalyst presence of the cosmic soul and supreme consciousness... The metal lead represents the heavy and unstable conditions of the self; gold is congealed light. The transformation of the human lead into its golden soul is the return to the universal supreme beingness.³³³

The unveiling or realization of Spirit (symbolically referenced in the mystical Qabalah as “attaining to the Knowledge and Conversation of one’s Holy Guardian Angel;” and within Islamic esotericism as the “encounter with the Angel of the Face”) results in anything from an initially devastating shock (or possibly bliss) through to the intensely sober clarity of *Being* (the Philosopher’s Stone which “Is” and “Is-Not”). The dynamics and consequences of these encounters appear comparable to that of the hermetic ‘Green Lion’.

[T]he image of the Green Man also pervades the Western alchemical tradition as far as the figure of Mercurius, the *Lumen Naturae*, whose power for self-generation, self-transformation and self-destruction was described by the alchemists, who understood this energy to be the divine life in all of nature, ever changing, yet ever the same.³³⁴

Lastly, but by no means least, within the Indian Vedic tradition we find reference to a divine elixir called *soma*. Legend has it that this elixir exists as a ‘magical herb’ growing on the summit of a sacred mountain. The juices, once ‘chewed’ and ‘swallowed’, are said to produce a state of divine ecstasy and immortality. It is the opinion of this author that the abovementioned elixir should be placed within a correct mytho-historical context, where it is to be viewed as being either allegorical or symbolic and not to be literally translated. Literal translations of these and other mythical accounts have encouraged various individuals and groups to consider the Elixir / Philosopher’s-Stone as being an actual psychoactive mineral or plant substance (to be ingested). Though shamanic cultures certainly did (and still do) map models of consciousness through the use of entheogens, and though these psychoactive substances undoubtedly shift one’s consciousness, we must not forgo the probable interpretation of this Vedic myth, and similar myth, as being either symbolic or allegorical. More often than not, the actual use of

³³³ Haeri 2006. Pp 308-309

³³⁴ Baring and Cashford 1993. Pg 412

psychoactive substances leads to an insatiable desire for never-ending or ever-elusive ecstatic states. In the final analysis, the profoundly humble essential self (attuned to pure Being) appears to be the most distant thing from the drug-induced psycho-activated consciousness.³³⁵ Evidently, this is not a unified emancipation (a realization of Spirit / Pure Consciousness: referred to as being “gathered”); instead it represents further imprisonment in what can only be described as a phenomenal distraction: a more significant *dispersal* of consciousness.

The Vedic hymn bears some resemblance to the Babylonian *Gilgamesh Epic*, in which Gilgamesh, the Sumerian king, is directed by an immortal being, Utnapishtim, to the depths of the ocean (symbolically the spiritual summit) in order to obtain a magical plant which will bestow on him the gift of immortality.³³⁶ Gilgamesh discovers the plant but upon bringing it back to the surface he leaves it unguarded for a moment, whereby a snake steals it. The theft by the snake, in one sense, is an allegorical representation of the ever-renewing moment, in which our belief that eternity (the Divine Absolute) can be confined to ‘finite’ material concepts, such as an ever youthful and eternally existing body / brain / idea, is shown to be a misapprehension and a metaphysical absurdity. From another perspective, the thieving snake is in reference to the mercurial nature of consciousness itself, which is constantly shifting and hard to pin down; this tendency ‘robs’ the attentive awareness required to realize the sublime stillness of pure consciousness: the eternal and unbounded wellspring of existence. The whole episode turns out to be a wonderful allegory for the symbolic pilgrimage to the centre of Being (poetically expressed as “seeing without eyes,” “walking without feet” or “drinking without a mouth”) whereby the Ground of Being is considered to be immeasurable, other than by the very yardstick of the unified (pure) consciousness, of which it is synonymous and consubstantial (i.e. beyond subject-object polarity).

This has huge implications for the “Green Man Quest,” for it suggests that the outward paradox must remain – a riddle not to be solved according to the nature of a finite rational intellect, which is subject to duality and relativity and oftentimes subversive towards the reality of the divine. Thus we find in the Alexander Romances that it was Alexander’s unassuming cook, Khidr (‘direct perception’?) who discovered the Water-of-Life (Realized Being / Pure Consciousness?); while Alexander (the ‘intellectual’?), being distracted by colourful stones (thoughts / states / phenomena?), never managed to discover the much sought-after water.

³³⁵ See also: Helminski, K. *The Sobriety that Surpasses Intoxication*: <http://www.sufism.org/society/articles/sobriety.html> (accessed 2006)

³³⁶ In: Jordan 2001. Pg 164

Symbolic resemblances are found in the Irish tale, “*The Salmon of Hope*” involving a young boy, Finn Mac Cumhail, who manages to catch the ever-elusive Wisdom-Salmon, whereas his elder, Finn Eger, had tried for seven years but in vain. Finn Eger commandeers the catch and puts it on the roast, assigning the boy to keep watch over it and ordering him never to taste it. The rather hungry boy ultimately reaches for the fish and, after burning his hand, puts his thumb into his mouth to sooth it. In so doing, he suddenly comes into possession of the true Wisdom and becomes the successor of Finn Eger.³³⁷ The fish symbol once again links us back to the idea of a redeemer and tales of wisdom and resurrection. We are reminded of Grail pursuer, Percival (also known as the “Green One”), who encounters the Fisher King by a river near *Montsalvat* (the Mountain of Salvation). In the various renditions of *The Holy Grail*, all themes of healing and redemption revolve around the character of the Fisher King. The sleeping / injured-king-who-needs-to-be-awakened / healed / resurrected motif is discovered in mythical accounts of many cultures. Once the king is ‘healed’ and assumes his rightful position (*insan al-kamil*), the land is once again restored to health and fertility (i.e. the spectrum of consciousness is rehabilitated).

From the added perspective of the mystical Qabalah: the ancient and famed *zaddik* (Righteous Pillar) is intimately associated with the symbolic *Dew of Righteousness* (*manna*), which bestows eternity upon the one who ‘drinks’ of it. The recipient of this ‘dew’ might rightly be called a “Teacher of Righteousness” (*moreh ha-zedek*). We find symbolic parallels in the *elixir* plant of the Sumerian “Gilgamesh Epic,” the *soma* plant of the Indian “Rig Veda,” the *Divine Wine* of the Sufis / Nusairis, the *Celestial Dew* of the Medieval Hermeticists and the *Emerald Grail* of Wolfram’s “Parzifal.”

The “stone fallen from the sky” constitutes the symbolism of the *lapsit exillis*. This symbolism is connected with that of the Grail, which as tradition says, was fashioned by Angels from an emerald that dropped from Lucifer’s forehead at the time of his fall from heaven. This image of Lucifer’s stone bears comparison with the planet Venus as it is the Morning Star or Lucifer’s Star (Vulg. Lucifer = “brightness”). This is the Star of Light, *Tcholban*, as the ancient Turks called it, the “Shining” or “Dazzling One.” The Church Fathers identified the fall of the Morning Star as told of in *Isaiah* 14:12 with that of Lucifer’s fall from heaven.³³⁸

...In his *Mysterium Magnum* Jacob Boehme adopted the positive symbolism of Venus associating it with the Divine Light of God. The alternative appearances of Venus as the Morning Star and the Evening Star have made it a basic symbol of death and rebirth.

³³⁷ Ogden, E. *The Fisher King*: http://www.uidaho.edu/student_orgs/arthurian_legend/grail/fisher/ (accessed 2005)

³³⁸ Scott, T. 2006. Weaving the Symbolism of Light. In: *Vincit Omnia Veritas* II, 1. Pg 67

...The emerald that fell from Lucifer's forehead signifies a creative and creating link from Heaven to Earth, and signified the loss of immortality that resides in Eternal Unity. The Grail, into which this emerald was carved, contains the blood of Christ, the "draught of immortality" that "re-opens," so to speak, this link in an ascending manner from Earth back to Heaven.³³⁹

Simply unravelled, these mysterious references allude – not to an elusive psychogenic plant / mineral substance, or religious artefact – but to a subtle psycho-spiritual *Organ of Perception*³⁴⁰ inherent within human consciousness which – upon awakening – confers the light of pure consciousness [esoterically known as the *khirqah* (mantle / cloak) of initiation]. Just as the *Eternal Ones* (Melkizedek / Khidr) prepare the *Dew / Cloak / Inner Robe of Glory* for the initiate, we also find in the esoteric ritual of the East, the *Sat Guru* (True Light-giver) bestowing the *Nectar of Nam* (God's Name) upon the Sikh / Hindu disciple.

Dew, Manna, Water-of-Life, Nam, Shabd, Word, Shekhinah, Dove, Ros, Soma, Golden-Pill, Xvarnah, Holy Grail, Philosopher's-Stone, "Oil," "Wine," "Herb," etc: these are all potent symbolic / allegorical synonyms for the *One Divine Agent* of spiritual transformation: the *rûah ha-qodesh* or *rûh al-quddûs (spiritûs sanctûs)*, which – in the remarkable symbolism of the Qabalists – is the soteriological root of the *5-lettered Name*: YHShVH (i.e. Yeheshuah / Ye'shua). The great value in organic symbols is that they lend *fertility* to the awakened consciousness they are attempting to point toward: *Shekhinah / Sakinah* (as *shin*) is the "indwelling" divine *presence*, a consciousness that is "lucid" (i.e. *an-nûr*) and in a state of "tranquillity" or "rest" (*as-salaam*) and "certitude" (*yaqîn*) [of which it is ultimately consubstantial]; it is not some grand theological affair or dry philosophical abstraction that leads to confusion or endless mystical speculation.

Symbolic representation, allegorical tales, metaphor, poetry and music can be – if approached with spiritual maturity and anchored in a transmittive tradition – efficient ways of conveying meaning and effecting transformation. That these symbols, mythical archetypes and metaphorical synonyms point toward the need for humanity to develop towards a trans-egoic (essential) self that is in resonance with Spirit, is clarified by the poetic genius of Jalaluddin Rumi. In reference to a "magical tree" that will bestow "eternal life" upon its discoverer: a wise man from the East advises a completely exhausted and weary seeker who has been travelling for many years in search of this "magical tree":

³³⁹ Ibid. Pg 68

³⁴⁰ "The eye in which I see God, is the same eye in which God sees me..." (Meister Eckhart)

...My son, this is
not an actual tree,

though it's been called that. Sometimes it's called a *sun*,
sometimes an *ocean*, or

a *cloud*. These words point to the wisdom that comes through
a true human being, which

may have many effects, the least of which is eternal life!
In the same way one

person can be a father to you and a son to someone else,
uncle to another and nephew

to yet another, so that what you are looking for has many names,
and [yet] one existence...³⁴¹

³⁴¹ Rumi: "The Indian Tree." In: Barks 2002. Pp 47-48

Concluding Summary

Nature and cosmos – being the primordial language of the divine, a manifest reflection of the transcendent (*tanzih*) within the immanent (*tashbih*) mirror of created form – provides a grounded language / vocabulary and connective meaning for a global consciousness that is radically dispersed, susceptible to fragmentation and is rapidly deteriorating into destructive and unnecessary nihilism. No matter what field of study we happen to pursue, it is becoming clear that humanity has lost all sense of balance within its own constitution and is entirely at odds with the universe at large. More significantly, humanity has lost conscious connection to the Divine Absolute and is drowning in a sea of relativity, confused by duality. Ironically – to the tune of cash registers and credit card machines – we continue in (painful) celebration of the perceived ‘unity’ of globalization.

...The God’s-eye view of the satellite in space, the all-encompassing reach of global capitalism and the pervasive tentacles of consumer culture, TV and the internet: all of this points to the dominance of “one, absolute, total, all-encompassing God – the God of technology.”³⁴²

Within the context of theophany, symbol, archetype and consciousness, *NTRC* explores what it considers to be an important *signature* and *archetype* for *contemporary times*; one which anchors the much-needed concept of *balance, harmony, centring, gatheredness, interconnectedness, unification, nourishment* and *renewal*, and one which remains true to divine harmonic principle, as is reflected in light, sound, cosmos, ecosystemic relation and ultimately consciousness. We have seen that from the darkness of the earth comes the green sapling; from the green plant comes the white and red roses / grapes; from the *blood of a green lion* comes the hermetic *albedo* and *rubedo* phases; behind the Green Tara is the White and Red Taras.³⁴³ Michael Maier, in his hermetically-cloaked language, informs us: “To get to the elixirs of the white and red roses, what is required above all is the right source material. This rose wears a green dress.”³⁴⁴ It also appears that from the depths of human consciousness, the Green Man / Woman (as symbol and archetype) functions in much the same manner. It is an archetype which guides us either painfully or joyfully but in an inherently natural manner towards an authentic *development of self* that is responsive to the influence of the *eternal spirit*. This point is crucial: it is not about an unenlightened worship of ‘trees’, ‘rocks’, ‘rivers’, etc (or any *absolute*

³⁴² Cheetham 2005. Pg 104

³⁴³ See also: Blackhirst, R. ‘The Man-Plant: Central Themes in the Alchemy of Farming’. In: *Sacred Web: A Journal of Tradition and Modernity*, Vol. 13. Sacred Web Publishing, Canada.

³⁴⁴ In: Roob 1997. Pg 351

identification of self at the level of physicality or materiality), as this completely downplays and ignores the reality, dynamic and magnitude of consciousness, the supra-physical domains, the theophanic extension of the divine attributes and the trans-personal Ground of Being.

Say: If the sea were ink for the words of my lord, the sea would surely be exhausted before the words of my lord were exhausted, though we brought the like of it to add thereto.³⁴⁵

Let man then contemplate the *whole* of nature *in her full and grand majesty*... [emphasis mine]³⁴⁶

As between the earthly symbol and the celestial archetype, however, there is both continuity and discontinuity, deriving respectively from immanence and transcendence: there is continuity in respect of essential content and discontinuity in respect of existential degree... In other words, from the point of view of immanence, the earthly experience of beauty participates in its celestial archetype through essential identity, while from the point of view of transcendence; the lower existential degree of this world renders all earthly experience incommensurable with the infinite plenitude of celestial realities. Hence on the one hand, the celestial Garden is described in images that are immediately intelligible in terms of our earthly experience, and on the other hand we are told in a hadith that God has prepared for the righteous a Paradise that no eye has seen, no human heart can conceive.³⁴⁷

But whatever be our points of departure – Idea or Symbol or their combination – there is also, and essentially, concentration on the Void, concentration made of certitude and serenity.³⁴⁸

The harmonious balance indicated by the “green signature” is also in reference to the relations within our spectrum of consciousness; between the physical and the supra-physical (outer consciousness and inner consciousness) [i.e. the full Human dimension]. In metaphysical terms, the “Middle Way” as a path does not imply a denial or repression of one or the other complementary opposite, but simply implies cognition of *correct relationship* in order for *appropriate action* and a *unified transformation* to take place.

Travelling along the middle path means being balanced between the earthly space-time realm and heavenly boundlessness. These two universes meet in the heart of an evolved and healthy being, facing the horizon of god consciousness.³⁴⁹

³⁴⁵ Qur'an (18:109)

³⁴⁶ Blaise Pascal. In: Nasr 1996. Pp 103-104

³⁴⁷ Reza Shah Kazemi. In: *Divine Beatitude: Supreme Archetype of Aesthetic Experience*: <http://www.allamaiqbal.com/publications/journals/review/oct99/4.htm> (accessed 2006)

³⁴⁸ Schuon, F. In: *Norms and Paradoxes in Spiritual Alchemy*: <http://www.religioperennis.org/documents/Schuon/Norms.pdf> (accessed 2006)

It is just as easy to overshoot the mark inwardly, as it is to fragment oneself physically (outwardly). It appears that nature understands and reflects abundantly through a green signature; the question remains, do we?

Human consciousness – invariably interconnected and interdependent with nature – has an important role to play, not only for the sake of this currently fragile planet, but also for the sake and sanctity of consciousness itself. Let us hope for all that our awakening is of the ‘green’ variety. This is *not* to imply a sentimental or soft-focus romance: the *symbolic* “green lion” and “green dragon” certainly do suggest a forfeit of preconceived notions (as was the case in the Qur’anic tale of “Moses and Khidr”). We must also not forget that discursive publications about symbols and archetypes, such as the one you are currently reading, only take us a short distance along the path.

By avoiding intimate experiencing, we often end up seeking god solely in the confines of the mental gymnastics of analyzing and debating dogma and creed. Theology and reasoning have their place, but religion lacks substance if it is all menu and no meal.³⁵⁰

Importantly, the object of this investigation is to move toward a containment of the essentially inexpressible *presence* that permeates its own symbolic / archetypal vocabulary; and this is only truly discovered on the threshold of what is known as the Heart: living from the spiritualized trans-egoic self, attuned to the divine attributes of Spirit and the light of pure consciousness. Even the colour green falls short of ultimately unveiling our root ‘Greenness’ – which is to say: *Being* (and the extent to which the authentic self responds to pure consciousness) is an *awakened* and *enlivened* order of consciousness, not some heavy-weighted theological affair, grand intellectual abstraction or convoluted mytho-erotic epistemology. We are not being asked to blanket ourselves in the comfort of psychic attractions and hence fall asleep; we are being urged to “polish the lens of the Heart” in order to wake up and “Know thyself.”³⁵¹

He who knows himself, knows his Lord.³⁵²

When you come to know yourselves, then you will be known, and you will realize that you are the children of the Living One.³⁵³

³⁴⁹ Haeri 2006. Pg 272

³⁵⁰ Swanson, J. L. 2005. Experiencing the Sacred in Nature. Pg 18. Excerpt from workshop conducted at Conference on *Nature and the Sacred: A Fierce Green Fire*, held in Corvallis, Oregon on October 30, 2004. http://www.ecopsychology.org/journal/ezone/archive2/sacred_nature.pdf

³⁵¹ “*Gnothi Seauton*”: Inscription written above the portico of Apollo’s Temple at Delphi.

³⁵² Prophetic Hadith

Within the context of this publication, being ‘green’ is also about being open and aware (i.e. aspiring to the virtue of humility through an ascesis of ‘ego-tism’) with regards to our relationship with our essential Truth; it is a symbolic expression of *interconnectedness*, *harmony*, *balance*, *sustenance / nourishment*, *beauty* and the “middle way;” a signature from the enfolded One ‘staff’ with which Hermes and Moses harmonizes those two incessantly ‘biting snakes’ of dual-consciousness.

In this perhaps incomplete offering, I would like to close off with Rumi’s light-hearted yet revealing call to what I have expounded as the ‘greenness’ of the Heart:

Come to the orchard in Spring
There is light and wine
and sweethearts in the
 pomegranate flowers.
If you do not come, these do not matter.
If you do come, these do not matter.³⁵⁴

³⁵³ Gospel of Thomas (3:4)

³⁵⁴ Rumi. In: Barks 1995. Pg 20

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<http://ifees.org.uk> (*Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environment Sciences*)

<http://www.religioperennis.org> (Online Journal for the study of *Tradition* and *Sophia Perennis*)

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