

## **Spiritualization, de-spiritualization and re-spiritualization: Questions from an ‘evolution-of-consciousness’ perspective**

Martin Lockley, Professor, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, University of Colorado, Denver

### **Abstract**

As individual ontogeny broadly recapitulates evolutionary phylogeny, the ontogeny of consciousness from birth to death may hold clues to the evolution of consciousness. Did humanity, like the individual, ‘fall’ into self consciousness, thereby discovering a physical, material, secular world that compromises and ‘crowds out’ spiritual sensibility? This view, explored by Steiner, Barfield, Gebser, Jung, Long, Welburn, Wilber and others, has intriguing implications, widely manifest in our human obsession with origins and destiny (physical and spiritual). Does Barfield’s ‘hero’s journey’ paradigm (original participation –separation- final participation) represent a natural ‘life cycle’ of spiritualization, de-spiritualization and re-spiritualization associated with the dynamic evolution (ontogeny and phylogeny) of consciousness? Does history in fact reveal that most early cultures took humanity’s spiritual origins for granted due to a deep sense of participation in cosmic events? Is the weakening of this worldview merely a passing symptom of modernity’s self-conscious separation from cosmos, and the resultant dethroning of religious institutions/paradigms in favor of scientific-materialistic secularism? What next? Is Thompson’s identification of a “post-religious spirituality” a meaningful metaphor for re-spiritualization processes that are evolutionarily predictable—even inevitable. Can humans sustain a sense of separation from the cosmos and still regard it a viable, philosophic/scientific perspective on reality?

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **The seen and the unseen: is the science-spirituality dichotomy necessary?**

The main theme of the Oxford Round Table “Religion and Science” might be considered inherently ambiguous. Are we talking about two different facets or ‘creations’ of human culture that are compatible or incompatible? Recent ‘evolution-creation’ or ‘religion and science’ controversy, traced back at least to the famous evolutionary Oxford debate of 1860, inspired by Darwin’s 1859 book *The Origin of Species*, suggests a contentious issue capable of arousing extreme polemic opinion. For example, deep within Oxford’s hallowed halls the evolution creation debate between the biologists Richard Dawkins and Alister McGrath (the later also a theologian) has recently erupted with considerable impact on public thinking, and can be boiled down to the sound byte *The God Delusion v. The Dawkins’ Delusion* (Dawkins 2006; McGrath and McGrath 2007). A reasonable observer may well ask why such polarization between science and religion? This question is especially pertinent given that, just a few centuries ago, the founders of modern western science, such as Isaac Newton saw no such dichotomy. Therefore we should also ask what underlies such incompatibility between different world views when both spring from the same source—human culture and its underlying consciousness? Why should this issue concern us when it seems not to have preoccupied our predecessors to the same degree? We might also ask, in keeping with the Round Table theme whether this debate is “shaping the

modern world” or having a peculiar influence in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, more than it did 1860, or in Newton’s day? Most evidence seems to point to the evolution of the debate, and this in turn seems to justify an ongoing dialog. I would also venture that this dialog will not only change our ‘present’ view, but it will eventually change how we view the past. As noted by Owen Barfield (1965)

“We tend to forget...[that] ideas [about human consciousness] have changed because human consciousness itself—the elementary human experience about which the ideas are being formed—the whole relation between man and nature or between conscious man and unconscious man—has itself been in process of change.”

Despite the Religion–Science controversy and the attention it receives, there are other viewpoints, although, at present, voices advocating the integration or compatibility of the two domains are ostensibly fewer and often rather ineffectual or unheard. While personally inclining towards this latter view, it is probably not helpful to try and defend it by pointing out perceived errors in the arguments of the ‘other side.’ This just perpetuates a dualistic mindset. Rather, we should consider that the discussions are so multifaceted and complex that it is almost meaningless to see the debate as a simple ‘two sided’ affair. However, this does not mean that, on some deep level, the debates are not driven, at least in part, by antagonistic forces (conscious and unconscious) that create psychological polarization and ambivalence. The more fundamental question maybe: whence this psychological schism, and is it more than a passing dilemma for the modern mind?

As the following examples show, there is so much debate within and between various religious denominations and within various scientific fields that few examples are necessary to demonstrate that dualistic thinking is rife in most human-created institutions. For example, heated debates and actions surrounding the issue of women’s ordination in the Catholic Church are not driven primarily by disagreement between traditional forces within and outside the church. The controversy is largely internal, and so is a ‘religion v. religion’ or religious philosophy issue. Similar issues affect other denominations within the Christian church, just as they also affect entirely different religions to such an extent that holy wars break out. But, as some argue, secular wars based on political ideology (e.g. Collective Communism v. Western Liberalism) have been just as severe and devastating. However, because both religious and scientific ideologies can have such widespread ramifications it is, at times necessary for the secular state to step in to prevent contravention of secular law, or the exercise and influence of extreme practices on unwilling citizens.

If we turn to what scientists and ostensibly secular philosophers have to say about religion (or spirituality) we also find little agreement. While, some scientist profess to be ‘religious’ others are overtly agnostic or atheistic. In either case, cultural conditioning and institutional constraints may, to some degree, keep the different worldviews more or less

separate, allowing different groups to associate freely in their own chosen sub-cultural milieus. However, when views are aired more publicly, as in the case of the Dawkins-McGrath debate, it is difficult for observers to stay neutral. For example, when philosopher Michael Ruse, despite being a self confessed ‘evolutionist,’ felt compelled, like many other competent observers, to criticize Dawkins for poor theological scholarship and lack of philosophical rigor he was roundly attacked by so-called evolutionists for apparently letting the ‘side’ down (Ruse, 2009).

The late Stephen J. Gould, a Harvard biologist, suggested that Religion and Science could be considered Non Overlapping Magisterial (NOMA) because the methodology and subject matter of each domain is so different (Gould, 1997). While this approach may reduce unnecessary argument, it does little to integrate the domains or reduce the perception that such broad realms of cultural endeavor must be approached dualistically. It also does little to prevent other scientists from wading in to express views over which ‘side’ is or will be ascendant. It is well known that Gould’s colleague E. O. Wilson held the position that in future the empiricists would win out over the transcendentalists in a battle for the hearts and minds of humanity (Wilson, 1999) and that ultimately science “has the capacity to explain traditional religion as ...a wholly material phenomenon” (cited in Ruse 2009). So we find just as much disagreement among two Harvard biologists as between the two Oxford duelists (dualists)! The idea that science (empiricism) will eventually explain religion or religious sentiment, is clearly a manifestation of what has been called ‘scientific magisterialism.’ It seems to appeal to several distinct groups. The first group epitomized by Dawkins holds that religion is merely irrational, antiquated and misguided superstition whose pitiable adherents are mostly viewed rather patronizingly from the high ground of empirical reason. Another group including a new breed of evolutionary psychologists is less patronizing, in that it views religious sensibility as a more or less inevitable, byproduct of our emotional ancestry. Thus our brains have become ‘hardwired’ by ice age experience (mostly negative), such as fear, sexual urges and survival angst to view the world irrationally (or emotionally). Given that we now know that we can correlate various emotional states with chemical and electrical activity in the brain, evolutionary psychology is increasingly inclined to assume it can or will find the physio-chemical basis for emotional states, and by implication religious sensibility. Ironically, this approach generally pays much less attention to the process of rationalization (or thinking) required to make pronouncements about emotional and religious sensibilities in the first place. Again this seems to be because we are predisposed in our present state of consciousness to take thinking for granted and assume it is well equipped to explain our other faculties. This self-referential assumption is suspect for many reasons, and it is rare to find a scholar who has really thought deeply about thinking (Steiner, 2008; Barfield, 1965).

The evolutionary psychology paradigm is fundamentally Darwinian. But, in attempting to apply physical Darwinian principles, to the psychological realm it may fail badly. Darwinism argues that fitter individuals and species win out in the struggle for survival. They do this by

reproducing their physical bodies, which, in turn, are created, according to the NeoDarwinian paradigm, by the execution of an inherited genetic program.

Dawkins (1976) promulgated the idea of *The Selfish Gene*, thereby endowing molecules with complex behavioral/intentional characteristics. He also extended the idea of individual and molecular struggle for survival into the domain of the psyche, with the notion of memes, which for all intents and purposes are nothing more than ideas. This has led evolutionary psychologists to formulate the sub-discipline of memetics, which has attracted the interest of cognitive scientists. However, the whole idea has been roundly criticized as highly self-referential (Midgley, 1999; McGrath, 2005), not least because some, such as Dawkins and Daniel Dennett (1991) have suggested that religion is just a 'virus of the mind' that is somehow infecting otherwise clear, rational consciousness. Aside from the fact that historically religion (spirituality) has exerted quite a long-lived 'successful' and positive (as well as negative) influence on the human mind, there is no way to judge whether the likes of Dawkins and Dennett might not also be infected with a meme that is unreasonably hostile to human religious sensibility!

Jos Verhulst put it well when critiquing Darwinism for its failure to show how materialist ideology could account for "consciousness." Under the guise of cognitive science Dennett has attempted to explain away consciousness as an illusion arising as an epiphenomenon of brain function. But such a position is untenable because consciousness is first required to suggest that it is an illusion!. Verhulst (2003) reminds us that physics and chemistry have never produced a law predicting the emergence of consciousness and such concepts as meaning or truth. "If our own thinking were completely determined by such [physical] processes we would be incapable of distinguishing whether something is 'really' true, or merely seems true because physical processes in our nervous system create that impression." If nothing else, these various observations tell us that Religion and Science are human conceptual, linguistic creations that cannot be analyzed, appreciated or understood without delving deeply into the realms of psychology and consciousness. The very existence of debates incorporating these same concepts is testimony to their importance in shaping our Modern worldview

As many scientists mature and come to grips with the pressing philosophical questions in their field, they often incline toward asking 'big' cosmological and spiritual questions that take them 'beyond' their areas of specialization. Physicists such as Einstein, Hawking and Davies wax lyrical about the extraordinary and mysterious workings of the cosmos and speak of wanting to "know God's thoughts" and appreciate 'his/her' genius in orchestrating a complex creation, shot through with the highest levels of mathematical subtlety and organization (e.g., Davies, 1992). These branches of science have, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century taught us something that religious and spiritual sensibility has long intuited: namely that the seen and unseen worlds are very different. Moreover, the exploration of these unseen realms seems to reveal ever more intriguing and tantalizing mystery about the true 'nature of reality.' Here we should also give credit to pioneer psychologists for coming to much the same conclusion about the domains of the

conscious and unconscious. It is this perceived polarity that I wish to focus on in this article because it seems to raise fundamental issues of how consciousness works, changes or ‘evolves.’

**Evolution and religion: two paths seeking insight into the mystery of ‘origins.’**

Turing to ‘evolution,’ we are ostensibly confronted with a modern scientific (biological and paleontological) discipline. However, when viewed from a broad perspective it is necessary to concede that because evolution takes a deep interest in ‘origins’ it deals with questions of that are also of significant, indeed profound, philosophical and spiritual interest. In the last century the concept of ‘evolution’ has become so fundamental that it has been applied not just to the biological origin of species but to the origin of the universe, the solar system, life and human culture and self consciousness. Such progressive, cosmic scale thinking is manifest in the suggestion of Teilhard de Chardin and like minded thinkers who see the Physical universe (physioshere), life (biosphere) and mind/consciousness (noosphere) as an ever-complexifying evolutionary continuum that ultimately anticipates a future, trans-human species. Teilhard used the label “Omega Man” for such a species (Teilhard de Chardin 1959), and incidentally would presumably have been intrigued to find physicists who claim to have mathematical support for his predictions (Tipler 1994).

While Darwinian evolution is often taken to imply as slow process of ‘gradual’ change, early biologists actually used terms like metamorphosis and transmutation. It is no coincidence that such concepts arose at a time when mathematicians like Charles Dodgson (Lewis Carroll) and Edwin Abbott (author of *Flatland*: Abbott, 1884), along with writers like Jules Verne, were exploring changes in dimensions. Terms like metamorphosis therefore imply radical change or transformation (now widely used in new age seminars). Geneticists also use the term ‘mutation’ to imply sudden change, often as used in popular culture, to describe the results of the invasive, external influence of intense radiation. The evolutionary theory known as ‘punctuated equilibrium’ (Eldredge and Gould, 1972) like the modern science of Chaos and Complexity allows the introduction of sudden change to otherwise gradually moving or near static systems. This in turn give us such concepts as ‘phase shifts,’ ‘quantum leaps,’ ‘emergent properties’ and scientific ‘paradigm shifts’ (Kuhn 1972). Such radical shifts also affect human consciousness, not only in the emergence of self consciousness and language in late infancy, but also in the case of epiphany and spiritual or religious experience. Here we might recall the difference in concept of *chronos* and *kairos*, respectively referring to steady passage or sudden eruption of events at critical junctures in time.

Jean Gebser (1905-1973) used the term ‘mutation’ to describe shifts in consciousness from one ‘structure’ to another during our collective evolution. He argued that humans have emerged from an early pre-sapiens “Archaic consciousness structure” through various mutations (or stages) to manifest “Magical, Mythical and Mental” consciousness, eventually leading to

the “Integral” consciousness structure (Gebser, 1986). Gebser, a cultural philosopher, deliberately used the term “structure” to avoid the strictly chronological connotation of evolutionary stages, which he believed was a manifestation of a linear time bias of the Mental consciousness structure. What is important, and compelling about Gebser’s thesis is that he argues that all our cultural creations, including religion and science are manifestations of an ever-changing consciousness. His insights seem to be independently supported by a number of scholars (Steiner, 2008; Barfield, 1965, 1967; Gebser, 1986; Feuerstein, 1987; Jung, 1969, 1976; Combs, 1996; Thompson 1996; Welburn, 1991,1997 and Wilber, 1977,1995, 1997) and endorsed in recent books on the evolution of consciousness (Lachman, 2003; McIntosh, 2007; Lockley and Morimoto, 2010). Many of these authors support Gebser’s notions that radical if ‘unseen’ consciousness shifts underlie more obvious upheavals in the visible or ‘seen’ secular world, whether they are revolutions, reform movements or major scientific paradigm shifts. Gebser also noted that extreme ‘anxiety’ also heralds a major consciousness shift or mutation (Steiner and Gebser, 1962). This theme is taken up by Thompson (1996, 2004).

It is important to note that our own individual and collective consciousness structure, the predominantly mental-rational structure of the modern world, is so familiar as to be largely ‘unseen.’ We mostly assume that we see the world in a certain way because that is simply ‘the way it is,’ and more or less always has been (see Barfield quote above). We tend to forget that we saw the world quite differently as infants and youngsters in our formative years, and also change our worldviews significantly as our life experience changes, for example, as we become parents, grandparents or suffer the misfortunes, indignities and lessons caused by disease and the inevitable process of aging and confrontation with death. If this necessitates different rules and outlooks for different stages in our individual development (ontogeny), as we have different rules and sensibilities for infants, youngsters and adults, what might it imply for the historical evolution of consciousness of our species? It is difficult to argue that our ancestors shared our present consciousness structures when their cultural artifacts, from poetry and art to politics and technology were so different from ours. Thus also implies that our global cultural diversity is a further manifestation of significant differences in consciousness structure. Such awareness obviates a one rule fits all approach, and seems to support a pluralistic post-modern view if only as a necessary developmental stage.

Perhaps delving into the past is an inevitable occupational hazard for paleontologists and archaeologists, but our modern world is shaped as much by our understanding of the past as it is by the emergence of new innovations. We have such a reverence for the past that we increasingly integrate ancient monuments and landscapes, including unspoiled natural areas, into the modern landscape. While we do this in the name of preserving the past, it is important to remember that it is our changing consciousness in the present that helps us reinterpret and develop a new appreciation for the past. The more this appreciation develops the more we have to rethink our present conceptions and ponder how ephemeral and transient they may be. Such ruminations

show us that our evaluation of the past is not simply a matter of accumulating and evaluating new physical evidence from archaeological sites. Ever since Freud, Jung and their contemporaries went to work, psychologists have been busy delving into the past, and it is now a matter of common knowledge that our individual and collective psychological make ups owe much to our personal, family and cultural histories.

It is perhaps no coincidence that the late 19<sup>th</sup> century discovery of Paleolithic cave art in the deep dark recesses of European caverns, coincided with the first systematic exploration of the human unconscious. While the first interpretations of this art involved hunting and survival scenarios, suggested by modernist academics looking back on primitive tribal cultures, the emergence of post-modern sentiment in academia now interprets this artwork, with distinctly spiritual, shamanistic and neurophysiological overtones. Clearly, our interpretation of the past is dynamic and in flux.

Since the main subject of cave art is large mammals, let us consider our historic relationship to these animals. Leaving aside the role played by horses, dogs and a few other species in hunting and warfare, consider the attitude of the Romans, who slaughtered animals by the thousands. In the coliseum they had control over beasts that otherwise roamed wild in the chaos of unknown lands. Even as late as the 19<sup>th</sup> century eminent naturalists slaughtered species for science that today are endangered even extinct. The great apes were viewed as primitive beasts and there was a strong prejudice against believing that humans could be related to them. Like Descartes who viewed animals as soulless automatons, the 19<sup>th</sup> century scientist had a very different view of animal sentience. Today it is again quite different and civilized conservationists give money to scientist and organizations dedicated to preserving the apes and their habitats.

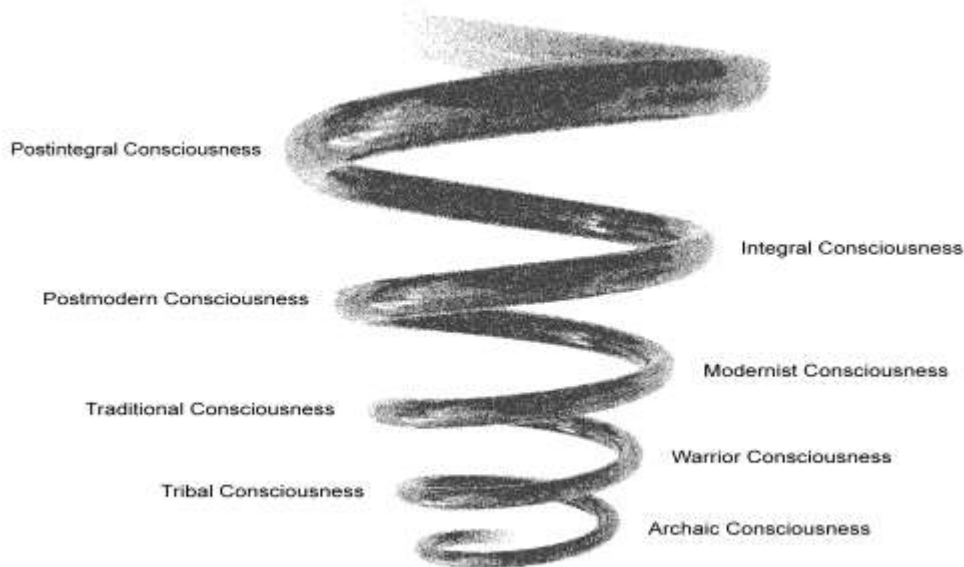
### **Major changes in Consciousness structure**

The late Richard Keck suggested that we could summarize human history in three stages or Epochs (Keck, 2000). The first, Epoch I, corresponding to the late Paleolithic (before ~10,000 B.C), was the epoch of the Goddess, when feminine sensibilities associated with the mystery of birth and new life were ascendant. This was the epoch of humanity's infancy, an age of innocence. This does not mean there was no violence or brutality, but humankind lived close to nature, and events likely played out instinctively (unintentionally) and without the influence of abstract conceptualization and analysis of motives or impulses. There was little sense of individually or separation from the invisible unconscious forces of cohesion that bound the individual to tribe, nature and cosmos.

The emergence of Epoch II sensibility corresponds to the Neolithic and subsequent ages of civilization when the patriarchy began to become ascendant. According to Keck we are still largely in the grip of this patriarchal culture, which still manifests many symptoms of adolescent

immaturity. In this epoch humankind began to create many of the institutions and artifacts of secular civilization, and place increasing store in their material value distinct worldly “objects.” This power to manipulate the physical world reinforced a sense of individuality and intentionality, which in turn breed specialization and division of labor leading to separation of classes, castes, gender and status.

Keck marshals evidence to suggest that Epoch III sensibilities are emerging to dethrone the patriarchal mindset of Epoch II. In the tradition of the dialectic spiral of thesis-antithesis-synthesis (cf., McIntosh, 2007: Figure 1 herein), we are seeing an integration of Epoch I and Epoch II sensibilities. These manifest in the secular world in gender equality ethics, and reflect a deeper psychological exploration of *anima-animus* sensibilities. There is also a renewed sense of the sacredness of the environment and the ecological relationship between ‘nature’ and humankind.



**Figure 1. The evolution of consciousness structures depicted as a spiral dynamic. After McIntosh (2007) with inspiration from Gebser (1986)**

Here, surely, we face a fundamental issue—*How humanity came into being* (Lockley and Morimoto, 2010). How is it that we have separate conceptions of humankind and nature? How is it that commentators like Keck, and Barfield can characterize human history as a process of original participation, separation and final participation (Epochs I-III respectively)? Possibly the only cogent answers pertain to the evolution of consciousness, and particularly what we humans call self-consciousness. Many would say that it is only self consciousness, language and



culture (including spiritual sensibilities) that distinguish us from other animals, including our closest anthropoid relatives.

Any physical or anatomical explanations set forth to help distinguish humans from other species are incomplete if they fail to take account the fundamental fact that some measure of self consciousness and language is required to formulate any discussion of our relationship to the world in the first place. In short, without subjective awareness of self, there could be no awareness of the other, or what we call the external world. It was only by ‘falling’ in to self consciousness and figuratively eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge, than humankind began to know him/herself and the world.

Hard as this may at first be to comprehend, there was a time when humans were entirely unaware of their physical bodies and their senses, and entirely unable to differentiate themselves as individuals separate from nature. Does this then mean their experience was non-physical, non- or super-sensory—perhaps what we might call ‘spiritual?’ All healthy humans share in similar experiences of becoming self conscious during development (ontogeny). However, we do not really remember this transition, because it takes place so early, in development. Moreover, by definition it is a contradiction to expect the later-developed faculties of self consciousness, to remember what it was like not to be self conscious in infancy! Based on the principle of the biogenetic law (ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny), it is reasonable to infer that in the history of our species humans do not and cannot remember experience that pre-dates the fall into self consciousness.

However, in the case of the individual there are many avenues to understanding the process of becoming self-conscious. Most of these come from the retelling of childhood activities by parents who witnessed the emergence of self consciousness and the formation of personality and character. This is very much a recapitulation of the oral tradition stage in human history. In the last century classic studies of child development have made the field a mature science (Piaget, 1976). Again based on the principle that ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny, we can make what Thompson calls an archeological excavation of consciousness to discover how our ancestors emerged into self consciousness as new awareness dawns and they saw themselves as physical, sensory beings in a physical, sensory world. The way this excavation of consciousness is now being undertaken is by careful scholarly investigation of ancient cultural evidence ranging from oral traditions to manuscripts, symbols and artifacts. Like the cave paintings, these cannot be interpreted only from the viewpoint of present consciousness and preconceptions. Rather, we must try and understand the consciousness that created such cultural evidence in the first place, and take the language and symbols as the authentic representations of the minds actually undergoing the experiences.

We must ask why all early literature is so poetic, symbolic, non-discursive and non-analytical. Why does it refer to gods, spirits, divine beings and so forth? Does this not imply a strong sense of relationship with, and participation in, cosmic dynamics? At the risk of equating our ancestor's sensibilities with those of children, we can once again consider the resonance between ontogeny and phylogeny. As noted below inherent juvenilization processes in evolution have interesting implications. Like the child who participates wholeheartedly in the felt experience of the world, our ancestors did not stand back as aloof analytical onlookers. As Owen Barfield points out the faculty of abstract thinking (and objective observation) had not separated from feeling, and in this sense humankind was not 'free' of its participation in the world, and so was unable to stand outside as an independent observer. This having been the case a modern, scientific world view was not possible.

As recorded in Greek literature, the earliest manifestations of western science perceived many levels of integration and harmony between the unseen spiritual world and the emergent, physical world. The Pythagoreans integrated music and mathematics, and Plato integrated philosophy and spiritual experience, and viewed knowledge as having and intrinsically religious or spiritual character. There was, in short no distinction between Science and Religion. While beginning to appreciate the experience of the physical world, humans still thought and felt quite differently from their present day descendents. Spiritual forces were felt to animate heart and breath (inspiration), and the brain was considered just a device for cooling the blood. Emotional arousal was powerfully 'felt' and testified to the stirring of the blood by unseen forces.

### **Spiritual Science perspectives**

Rudolf Steiner, famed founder of the Waldorf Schools, Biodynamic farming and the Anthroposophical or 'spiritual science' movement, wrote and lectured extensively on how almost every cultural manifestation from philosophy to technology and societal institutions was ultimately a manifestation of the evolution of consciousness. Steiner is alternately, revered, misunderstood or ignored by various groups, but among his adherents we may count a number of highly accomplished scholars, including Owen Barfield, Ernst Lehrs (2006) and Andrew Welburn (1991,1997). Barfield, recognized by a significant following as one of the great literary minds of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Blaxland de Lange, 2006) realized that in studying language he was studying the evolution of consciousness. He also reported that what he regarded as his most daring and innovative insights were taken by Steiner as the basic premises for departure into the field! Certainly his treatises on thinking (Steiner, 2008) first published in 1886, like his profound insights into philosophy (Steiner 2009) show the activity of an extraordinary mind.

Following our metaphor of an archaeological excavation of consciousness, and the premise that ancient literature, myth and metaphor provides a direct insight into the ancient mind, we can turn to Andrew Welburn another of Steiner's most insightful interpreters.

Welburn (1991, 1997) teases apart the evolution-of-consciousness meaning that Steiner extracted from his study of western philosophy, the mystery traditions, the beginnings of Christianity and the influence of eastern religion on the former developments. He places the “birth of thinking” with Pherecydes of Syros and sees in Christianity the emergence of the individual endowed, for the first time with awareness of his/her spiritual significance and the potential for freedom. Previously as articulated by Plato, humankind had come to believe that in entering the body the soul had become corrupted making it impossible to find its way back to the spiritual world. Priests became important mediums in maintaining the emotional connection with the spiritual world and they did so through mystery rituals, initiations, mythology and symbolism, and *not* through abstract intellectual means. The dilemma of living in and out of the spiritual world (underworld and upper regions) is widely explored in the ancient literature. (Perhaps we are not so different in shuffling back and forth between the conscious and unconscious realms- if only in the sleep wake cycle, and ultimately in the life cycle)!

Many mythological traditions ultimately focus on means for divine power to marry (incarnate) in mortal flesh so as to beget an offspring who will set the Gods free allowing their consciousness to achieve immortality. (Again many of our religious traditions believe likewise) In such traditions it is clear that, experientially, our ancestors were ‘coming to the physical world from a spiritual place,’ and that their odysseys involved struggles with divisive psychological forces. “Empedocles...assumed from the outset that man occupies a mediating position between the earthly and the divine.” (Welburn, 1997, p. 55) Thus, an important goal on Earth is to maintain connections with, and strive for reintegration with the immortal spiritual world: i.e. to resist de-spiritualization. This involves preparations or shifts of conscience/consciousness of a religious, spiritual and moral nature, perhaps intuited in the aftermath of religious experience in what Bucke (1901) referred to as an enhanced moral sense. The de-spiritualized alternative is to believe that one, is entirely or potentially complete in oneself. This hubristic tendency is referred to as the ‘luciferic’ principle by Steiner because it fails to take then *moral* step of overcoming inherent self-centeredness. The dangers of this are self evident and may lead to subtle or blatant abuse of our fellow humans, nature and biosphere.

Welburn cites Lessing (1881) as saying that the idea of repeated lives on earth, is not unworthy of belief simply because it existed in ancient times before the human mind was led astray by the sophistry of the scholastics. The belief still exists and indeed is widespread in many quarters. As Welburn points out natural science prides itself on dispelling ‘silly’ notions of immortality, which imply a spiritual world beyond the physical realm, but yet it readily speaks of the evolution of innumerable and deeply ‘related’ generations of fish, amphibians, reptiles and mammals happily and endlessly incarnating in subtly modified form! So “is it not reasonable to assume the same conditions of evolution of spirit as we know prevail in nature?” (Welburn, 1997, p. 53) here let us pick up on our reference to juvenilization in evolution, deeply explored by Verhulst (2003) and Rohen (2007). This evolutionary process, also known as

paedomorphosis actually demonstrates that there are inherent evolutionary mechanisms that, in the long run resist and offset aging and death! Clearly we are aware that each generation “generates” new physical life- but why such an endless procession of generation (and generations) if not towards some goal or new species potential? Could it not be that our intimations of spiritual rebirth and immortality are a reflection of a deeper instinctual awareness of the immortal, or near-immortal nature of the evolutionary process. Once aware of such processes and potentials, we may again engage actively in the moral dimensions of existence, and speak of conscious evolution.

In deference to the explanatory and discursive nature of our present mental –rational consciousness structure (sensu Gebser, 1986), we should note that Steiner, Welburn and others (e.g. Long, 1984) agree that the mythic consciousness structures involved a dream-like type of “picture-experience” that was entirely, experientially real. Moreover, time consciousness was quite different, and certainly little or no conception of linear time was possible before the birth of rational, conceptual thought. The crisis associated with this birth of conceptual thought should also not be underestimated. Indeed it is evidently characteristic of axial ages of transformation (Armstrong, 2006) and the angst and anxiety of our own time has already been discussed in the context contemporary consciousness structures (Steiner and Gebser, 1962). Another recurrent theme associated with this consciousness structure is the power of memory, no doubt enhanced by oral tradition. In this context one wonders whether we might not rely more strongly on our ancestors belief in spiritual origins given their purportedly clairvoyant access to a past unclouded by the concept of a linear time scale. These people says Welburn (1997, p. 145) “knew from their own inner experiences, that they had descended from divine-spiritual worlds, into physical material life. Preexistence was a fact universally certain and accepted.” (They were, in the most simplistic sense, closer to the same mysterious origins, which generate such endless anthropological debate in intellectual circles). Perhaps before mistakenly analyzing such positions, as fanciful ‘unproven’ explanation on their part, which our ancestors’ quite different consciousness structure forbids us to do, we should recognize that their knowledge was “uttered instinctively.” It came from the same source of primal wisdom and psychic energy that organizes the homeostasis of the biosphere—what Long (1984) calls the ‘psychic web of the biosphere’: i.e. it comes from the same unconscious and subconscious wellspring from which our self consciousness emerged, already steeped in a dull, unconscious but nevertheless spiritual sensibility.

### **Future re-spiritualization, Omega Point destiny and the future of evolution.**

The sense of time’s arrow and evolutionary change are fundamental manifestations of the mental consciousness structure. It is only from this temporal perspective that we can ask about the future direction of evolution (Teilhard de Chardin 1964), and view the human journey as directed towards goals and future potentials. Few paleontologists have been bold enough to predict the future as did Teilhard de Chardin (1959,1964) when he envisaged a new species—‘Omega

Man’—“a future being who would surpass *Homo sapiens* both intellectually and spiritually” (Teilhard de Chardin 1964, p. 63). However, those with unusual spiritual gifts (e.g., Steiner and Long) appear convinced of a future when an ‘integral,’ evolved, or intensified, higher, spiritual consciousness will dethrone our objective, materialistic and analytic mental self consciousness (cf. Gebser, 1986). Richard Bucke (1901) like William James (1902) saw spiritual epiphany as a gateway to a higher “cosmic consciousness” in which intellectual and moral faculties were much enhanced. Here we may also add the concepts of global Mind Change (Harman, 1988) and the Global Brain (Russell, 1983)

Such paradigm shifts may suggest that we can seriously consider a re-spiritualized future. Critics may object that we are relying too heavily on mental paradigm of linear progression. The dialectic, spiral model (McIntosh, 2007) allows us to also incorporate both a cyclic and linear component. Many authors have discussed the dual component of cyclic (circularity) characteristic of the mythical consciousness traditions and the more progressive concepts of the mental structure (Gebser, 1986). So, like Barfield (1965) we can envisage an original participation, separation and final participation, or like Keck speak of Epochs I-III. Long (1984) suggests that we have emerged from the unconscious psychic web of the biosphere, into self consciousness, and that the future holds the potential to fully reintegrate ‘consciously’ with this psychic web. This then is a cycle of original spiritualization, de-spiritualization and re-spiritualization. Can we deny the reality or usefulness of such a dynamic spiritual ‘model’ when such concepts (especially angst about de-spiritualization in the world) preoccupy our religious, cultural, ethical, moral and philosophical dialog at the deepest level? To deny the spiritual component in humankind and the world is to ignore the import of our obvious preoccupations with such matters. As the individual life cycle often passes through similar phases of original spiritual innocence, separation and reconnection, (*re-ligere*) or re-spiritualization why not, as suggested above (Welburn, 1997), view psychic ontogeny as a recapitulation of the phylogeny of human history?

The ability to ‘consciously’ reintegrate with the psychic web, of the biosphere, not prevalent today, essentially speaks to the awakening of various clairvoyant ‘spiritual’ faculties, which in turn lead to the activation of hitherto latent consciousness structures. In numerous publications and lectures Steiner spoke in great detail of awakening such faculties, which he saw as latent in all of us. He also spoke extensively and ‘unselfconsciously’ about how his own spiritual insights shed new light on human evolution. His insights found a wide audience of intelligent scholars and aspirants, who found his insights compelling and authentic. Whether Steiner’s readers resonate with his spiritual insights or not no doubt depends on many factors.

However, one test of the authenticity of Steiner’s world view is that it is consistent with a small, but nevertheless significant number of other views on the evolution of consciousness. In short there is interesting internal consistency between a number of the studies and commentaries

cited herein. As suggested in a study by Vitaliano (2000), there is intriguing if not compelling evidence, that the evolution of consciousness, involves a reintegration of our objective, mental consciousness with our subconscious and unconscious faculties. Thus, as some have expressed it, 'higher' consciousness involves going 'deeper' into these subconscious and unconscious realms, so as to bring them into consciousness.

Vitaliano recognizes eight levels of consciousness (Table 1). The first four (perceptual, emotional symbolic and rational) are familiar stages of development (cf., Piaget, 1976). At each stage the types of brain waves (*delta*, *theta*, *alpha*, then *beta* and *gamma*) are correlated very precisely with the developmental stages that humans typically go through during maturation. Individuals who develop beyond these stages to V through VIII (Creative, Supra-individual, trans-individual and Universal) manifest brainwave patterns that, at each stage, progressively incorporate a lower or earlier signature, thus, to use the terminology of McIntosh (2007) 'transcending and including' the previous consciousness structure. The most significant aspect of this 'model' is that it demonstrates an outward evolution, followed by an inward involution reminiscent of the life cycle, and the dialectic spiral dynamic. For those interested in the details Vitaliano also speculates (perhaps rather too freely) on how these changes may have manifest during the evolution of our hominid ancestors from *Australopithecus* through *Homo erectus* and *Homo sapiens* (Table 1).

**Table 1. Correlations between levels of consciousness, human developmental stages, brain organ and brain wave development and inferred evolutionary development (modified by Lockley and Morimoto, 2010, table 4.2, after Vitaliano, 2000).**

<b>CONSCIOUSNESS LEVEL</b>	<b>STATE AGE</b>	<b>BRAIN ORGAN &amp; BRAIN WAVE</b>	<b>EVOLUTIONARY STAGE</b>
<b>I Perceptual</b> Body Consciousness	Primary Dualism 0-6 months	Reticular brain stem <i>delta</i> 0.5-3.5 Hz	<i>Australopithecus</i>
<b>II Emotional</b> Existential	Secondary Dualism 6 months— 2 years	Limbic Cerebellum <i>theta</i> 3.5- 8.0	<i>H. habilis- H.erectus</i>
<b>III Symbolic</b> Ego Consciousness Pre-operational	Tertiary Dualism 2-7 years	Tertiary Cortex <i>alpha</i> 8.0-13.0 Hz	<i>H. neanderthalensis</i>
<b>IV Rational</b> Persona consciousness operational	Quaternary Dualism 7-15 years	Inter hemisphere <i>beta</i> 13-30 Hz <i>gamma</i> 30-50 Hz	Modern <i>H sapiens</i>
<b>V Creative</b> Self Consciousness Vision logic	Quaternary integration	Inter + intra hemisphere <i>gamma</i> , <i>beta</i> and <i>alpha</i>	Buddha <i>manovijnan</i> Hindu <i>stulasarir</i>
<b>VI Supra Individual</b> Symbolic Visions	Tertiary integration	<i>gamma, beta, alpha</i> and <i>theta</i>	Buddha = <i>mana</i> Hindu = <i>suksmasaria</i> or subtle body
<b>VII Trans individual</b> Audible illumination	Secondary integration	<i>Gamma, beta, alpha</i> , <i>theta</i> and <i>delta</i>	Hindu = <i>karanarsarir</i> or causal body
<b>VIII Universal</b> Unity consciousness	Primary integration	Frequency = zero	<i>Nirvana, samadhi</i> , <i>satori</i> , enlightenment void = form = void

Does such brain-wave measurement mean that we now have physical ‘proof’ that the evolution of consciousness actually reached a limit of externalization (separation) with the mental rational structure, and that future progress is not so much a continued ‘more-of-the-same’ evolution, but an involution into the invisible, sub- and un-conscious realms? That this may be a compelling evolutionary paradigm is well supported by paleontological facts which show unequivocally that on the biological level, major organs repeatedly go through evolutionary

processes of internalization (Lockley 2010; Lockley and Morimoto, 2010). To this question, many of the aforementioned commentators (Barfield, Keck, Long, McIntosh, Steiner, Thompson, Wilber and others) would likely answer in the affirmative. The evolution of consciousness does indeed involve the dynamic of transcending and including (McIntosh, 2007). Steiner, and his various interpreters (Welburn, 1991, 1997; Lehrs, 2006) go so far as to claim that the process of excavating ever-deeper layers of consciousness progressively uncovers the subconscious and unconscious levels of feeling and will, by awakening the specific and definable spiritual faculties of “imagination, inspiration and intuition.”

Proof of such evolution-of-consciousness potential is in the pudding of experience. The aforementioned commentators, or in some cases ‘gurus,’ see the potential in all individuals and regard shifts in consciousness in any one of us as part of the collective shift in humanity’s ever-changing psychic evolution—the global mind or brain (*sensu* Harmon, 1988; Russell, 1983 respectively). Given that Shakespeare and Einstein set the bars in literature and physics, it is not unreasonable to agree that spiritual leaders also set standards which the rest of us recognize and perhaps try to emulate. Such is the potential influence of pioneer individuals on humanity. As Margaret Mead put it: “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.” (Applewhite, 1992). This sentiment seems to apply rather well to our moral and spiritual pioneers.

## **Conclusions**

So, what do evolution of consciousness paradigms tell us about the evolution of spirituality. Did we once live in a state of unselfconscious spiritual innocence? Do our metaphors “in the beginning,” “when the world was young,” not to mention thoughts of a former “golden age” or a “garden of Eden” mean something about how we view (like to view) the past as perhaps having been unsullied by the undesirable side effects, diseases and compromises of civilizations. Psychologically we also set considerable store by youth, and even recognize that evolution brings about regeneration. Moreover, there is cause to wonder whether our deep instinctive awareness of rebirth, reincarnation and immortality is not fully justified by evolutionary evidence. As Welburn (1997) points out our ancestors had no doubts that we live in a spiritual cosmos and that our souls and consciousness enjoy immortality.

The ‘fall’ into self consciousness, marking the transition from prehistory to history, was a momentous spiritual experience (replayed in individual ontogeny in every incarnation). Self knowledge brought our physical sensory world into the forefront of awareness and experience, allowing the physical world of objects to crowd out our primordial and largely instinctive and unconscious psychic relationship with the cosmos. Although this shift from Archaic through Magical and Mythical to Mental consciousness structure has changed the way we see the world and explain it to ourselves (perhaps even with unnecessary cynicism), through the faculties of abstract thought and analysis, we cannot become so separated from our spiritual roots as to deny



that we are an integral part of the organic world (biosphere) within the greater flux of energy and matter we call Cosmos.

It is this individual and collective awareness of our relationship to the cosmos that allows us to experience both degrees of separation and connectedness, and define Religion and Science either as separate or 'integratable' cultural artifacts. It is perhaps obvious that angst and anxiety about our relationship to the tangible and intangible manifestations of cosmos, implies a deep seated awareness of our connection on all levels (physical, emotional, mental and spiritual). We could not fear the loss of such a relationship and worry about our spiritual bearings and those of others if we did not have spiritual sensibilities. In as much as such sensibilities are part of the human condition, it is perhaps inevitable that we will pay attention to those forces that de-spiritualize the world, and as a result seek more ardently to re-spiritualize it. Thompson's metaphor of a "post religious spirituality," seems to imply an aspiration for precisely the reconnection (*re-ligere*) that is addressed in Barfield's concept of final participation, or Kecks' concept of a mature Epoch III.

## References

- Applewhite, A., Evans, T. and Frothingham, A. *And I Quote*. (New York: St. Martin's Press 1992) 499p.
- Abbott, E. *Flatland: A Romance Of Many Dimensions*, London: Seeley & Co. 1884)
- Armstrong, K. *The Great Transformation*, (London: Atlantic Books 2006).
- Barfield, O. *Saving the Appearances: Studies in Idolatry*, (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press. 1965).
- Barfield, O.. *Speaker's Meaning*, (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press. 1967).
- Blaxland-de Lange, S. *Owen Barfield: Romanticism Come of Age — A Biography*, (London: Temple Lodge Publications, 2006).
- Bucke, R.M. *Cosmic Consciousness*, (New York: Dutton, 1901).
- Combs, A. *The Radiance of Being. Complexity, Chaos and the Evolution of Consciousness*, (Edinburgh: Floris Books, 1996).
- Darwin, C. *The Origin of Species* (London: John Murray, 1859)
- Davies, P.. *The Mind of God*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992)
- Dawkins, R. *The Selfish Gene*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976).
- Dawkins, R. *The God Delusion*, (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2006)
- Dennett, D. *Consciousness Explained*, (London; The Penguin Press, 1991)
- Eldredge, N. and Gould, S. J. "Punctuated equilibria: an alternative to phyletic gradualism" In T.J.M. Schopf, ed., *Models in Paleobiology*. (San Francisco: Freeman Cooper, 1972.).

- Feuerstein, G. *Structures of Consciousness: the Genius of Jean Gebser — an Introduction and Critique*, (Lower Lake: Integral Publishing, CA 1987).
- Gebser, J. *The Ever-Present Origin*, trans. Noel Barstad with Algis Mickunas, (Athens, Ohio University Press, 1986)
- Gould, S. J. Nonoverlapping Magisteria" *Natural History* 106 (1997): 16-22.
- Harman, W. *Global Mind Change*, (Novato CA: Knowledge Systems Inc. 1988).
- James, W. *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, Longmans Green and Co, 1902).
- Jung, C.G.. *The Structure of the Psyche*, in *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung*, Vol. 6, Princeton University Press.
- Jung, C.G. 1976. *Psychological Types*. In *The Collected Works of C.G. Jung*, Vol.6, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969)
- Jung, C. *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981)
- Keck, L.R. *The Sacred Quest: The Evolution and Future of the Human Soul*, (West Chester: Chrysalis Books, 2000).
- Kuhn, T. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962).
- Lachman, G. *The secret history of consciousness*. (Great Barrington: Lindsifarne Books, 2003.
- Lehrs, E. *Man or Matter*. (New York: Bibliobazaar, 2006).406p.
- Lessing, G. E. *The Education of the Human Race*, translated by Fred W. Robertson, M.A.. (London: C.K. Paul & Co., 1881).
- Lockley, M. G. The evolutionary dynamics of Consciousness: an integration of eastern and western holistic paradigms. *Journal of Consciousness Studies*. 17 (2010.): in press.
- Lockley, M. G. and Morimoto, R. *How Humanity came into Being.: the evolution of consciousness*. (Edinburgh: Floris Books 2010).
- Long, B. *The Origins of Man and the Universe: The Myth that Came to Life*, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul. 1984).
- McGrath, A. *Dawkins' God: Genes, Memes and the Meaning of Life*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005).
- McGrath, A. and McGrath, J.C. *The Dawkins Delusion*, (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2007)
- McIntosh, S. *Integral consciousness and the Future of Evolution*, (St. Paul: Paragon House. 2007).
- Midgley, M. Being Scientific about ourselves. *Jl. of Consciousness Studies*. 6(1999): 85-98
- Milner, R. *The Encyclopedia of Evolution*, (New York:Facts on File, 1990).
- Piaget, J. *The Grasp Of Consciousness: Action and Concept In the Young Child*, (New Haven: Harvard University Press, 1976).

- Rohen, J. W. *Functional Morphology. The Dynamic Wholeness of the Human Organism* (Hillsdale, NY: Adonis Press, 2007).
- Ruse, M. *Evolution and Religion: A Dialog*, (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2008)
- Ruse, M. *Defining Darwin* (Amherst NY: Prometheus Books, 2009).
- Russell, P. *The Global Brain*, Global Brain Inc, Palo Alto. Reissued as *The Global Brain: The Awakening Earth in a New Century*, Edinburgh, Floris Books, 1995).
- Steiner, H. and Gebser, J. *Anxiety: A Condition of Modern Man*, trans. Peter Heller, (New York: Dell Publishing, 1962).
- Steiner, R. *A Psychology of Body, Soul and Spirit*. Trans. Marjorie Spock. (New York: Steiner Books, 1999).
- Steiner, R. *Goethe's Theory of knowledge*. (New York: Steiner Books, 2008).
- Steiner, R.. *The Riddle of Philosophy*. (New York: Steiner Books, 1999). (first published in 1914).
- Sugerman, S. (ed). *Evolution of Consciousness*, (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1976).
- Teilhard de Chardin, P. 1959. *The Phenomenon of Man*, (London: Harper Row, 1959)
- Teilhard de Chardin, P. *The Future of Man*, (New York: Harper, 1964).
- Thompson, W.I. *Coming into Being*, (New York: St Martin's Press, 1996).
- Thompson, W.I. *Self and Society: Studies in the Evolution of Consciousness*, (Exeter, UK: Imprint Academic, 2004).
- Tipler, F.J. *The Physics Of Immortality: Modern Cosmology, God and the Resurrection of the Dead*, (New York: Doubleday, 1994).
- Verhulst, J. *Developmental Dynamics in Humans and other Primates: Discovering Evolutionary Principles Through Comparative Morphology*, (New York: Adonis Press, 2003)
- Vitaliano, G. A new integrative model for states of consciousness." *NLP World* 7 (2000):. 41–82.
- Welburn, A. *The beginnings of Christianity*. (Edinburgh: Floris Books, 1991).
- Welburn, A. *The mysteries: Rudolf Steiner's writings on Spiritual Initiation*. (Edinburgh: Floris Books, 1997).
- Wilber, K. *The Spectrum of Consciousness*, A Quest book, (Wheaton, Il: Theosophical Publishing House, 1977)
- Wilber, K. *Sex, Ecology and Spirituality: The Spirit of Evolution*, (Boston: Shambhala, 1995).
- Wilber, K. An integral theory of consciousness, *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 4(1997):71–92.
- Wilson, E.O. *Consilience*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1999)..
- Published by the Forum on Public Policy  
Copyright © The Forum on Public Policy. All Rights Reserved. 2010.