Handbook for a Phase Transition

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In an area known as Teejop.
Meaning, Land of the Four Lakes.

Derek Gebler created the website.
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Introduction

A Daunting Mess

Change involves risk. The greater the change, the greater the risk. We often tolerate undesirable conditions for a long time before we jeopardize what we've got. Knowing we can get things wrong possibly explains why we, as a Species, are inclined to wait until the last minute. But when imminent danger no longer permits inaction, hesitancy gives way to solutions.

Few of us doubt that we've arrived at an Edge. A growing list of troubles play into dystopian scenarios. Democracies are being corrupted by individuals motivated by Separate Self-interest. Authoritarian leaning political parties are again emerging. Privacy and Civil Rights are being eroded. The gap between those who have and those who have nothing threatens to break our Planetary Heart. International terrorism. Nations upgrading their nuclear arsenals. Atmospheric pollution, oceanic degradation, deforestation, loss of insect populations and species diversity, water scarcity, global warming, the Climate Crisis... these conditions are not what any of us would wish to pass unto our Children.

People across the political spectrum agree we've got problems, but when it comes to what is to be done, discord stretches to the Horizon. Not many can still trust our troubles will simply resolve themselves. Some resort to theological discourse, excusing themselves of Responsibility by interpreting these as the "End Times." Others believe that Human Nature is at fault, and so likewise conclude there is really nothing that can be done. Some, who would wish to do something, recoil at the challenge. Where to start? Are the Institutions or Individuals at fault? Hesitant voices question the problems and the solutions. Isn't the Climate Crisis already beyond our ability to turn back? Hasn't a stronger military satisfied our need for security in the past? The obstacles appear overwhelming. And without a common goal, we pull apart.

Imagine stepping from this vortex and toward the World all of us desire. A new respect for Life and One Another. The Wealthy and Powerful dispersing their advantage — Sharing, feeding the hungry, caring for those in need. Our Institutions healing and protecting the Planet. Nations turning their swords into plowshares. Everything a World of Love could mean.

Transforming what we've got into such a World would surely compare in magnitude to any one of the three major Phase Transitions that Science has come to recognize in the Evolution of the Universe. The Beginning of Time and Matter; the passage from Chemical Synthesis to Biological Relationship; the shift from single-cell Bacteria to nucleated multi-cellular Creatures.

Each Transition as improbable as the Great Change we're being called on to make. Yet we have reason to believe that it's Humanly possible. Searching through the array of our Cultural legacies, we find myriad visions of a promised and hoped for Earthly Paradise. Utopian dreams reach back to the cradle of Civilization. A desire for World Peace fills our sacred texts and the speech of our revered leaders past and present. No matter how varied the literature, how different the forms of our religions, arts, philosophies, legends, fairytales, myths, folk wisdom... all share the basic ingredient of what a better World would look like and the guiding principle of how to get there. Shining through the diversity, we recognize, "Love."

As acknowledged, *Handbook for a Phase Transition* makes no claim of breaking new ground. Rather, it attempts to bring together bits and pieces from Science, Art, Religion and serious Scholarship into a single mosaic, sense-making picture. If successful, it traces a Pathway envisioning how each of us in our own way have a role to play in bringing the Changes we need to make.

Part I seeks seeks to unravel key assumptions underlying our Problems. An "algorithm" represents a formula for doing things — such as the directions for how to get from one place to another, or the steps a computer takes to find what you're looking for. The Algorithm that interests us here orders our Thinking, our behavior, even our perception of things — most often without our awareness.

Part II explores some of the reasons we have to believe that creating a Phase Transition is possible. It draws on Alternative approaches that may have been with us all along. Discourse and practice that engender the World we've always longed for.

Part III works toward a solution based on what we've learned about the Algorithm at the root of our Problems, together with understandings envisioned by Alternatives, in light of insights from Complexity Theory regarding how Change happens.

Part I:
Unfolding the algorithm

Most of us would prefer a World of Harmony. A World without poverty. No worries about the environment. No more wars. No pandemics. A World where we respect One Another. Where we each have an Equal Voice and no one is above the Law. A World of Goodness and Care. Where we're Free to pursue our Dreams, to become Who we are. But for such a World to be possible, and for us to get there — we first need to believe that we're capable, that we're Free enough to create it.

We all want to be Free. And those of us fortunate enough to grow up in democracies like to think that we already are relatively Free. Free to Think for Ourselves. Free to make judgments and decisions that affect our Lives. We celebrate the Freedom to go where we wish, decide the course of our Lives, change our Minds. Human history shows, even if we're not encouraged to talk and think about Freedom, even if we're enslaved, we resist. We rebel against anything that feels like tyranny — inwardly, often unconsciously, if not permitted to do so outwardly.

Why then would we doubt that we have the Freedom to create a new World? In part, because we're talking about a World and a way there that we've never seen or tried before. And both entail serious difficulties. How we understand Ourselves, for instance, may be rife with assumptions that leave the imagination little room to understand what's needed. We may be acting on received ideas about Ourselves, the Universe and Nature. Ideas that could be failing us. And because such notions are internalized, it's not easy to recognize them. It's one thing to bring down walls that we can get our hands on, but quite another to overcome obstacles in our own Minds.

We also know that we tend to interpret our experiences along lines that buttress rather than undermine our beliefs. When ideas conflict with what we believe, we can sometime not even hear them. Even when it's obvious to Others that our Choices are causing harm, we don't like to think of Ourselves as being Wrong. We bend over backwards to tell Positive Stories about our decisions, our Lives — even if it involves Self-deception.

We cannot expect to get beyond this impasse without unfolding the Algorithm — the set of rules that keeps our hurting World in place and us from transforming it into the Heaven every Heart would wish it could be.

The Mind is obviously central here, for it is there that the Algorithm for our Thinking and Practice must in some way reside and operate. For our first step, we need to consider briefly what we know about our Minds.

Chapter One

A Place to Start

Consciousness: What is it? How Does it work?

Our day to day Lives seldom afford a full stop to our activities and an investigation into what's going on beneath the surface. Consider reading these words, for instance, or driving a car — we simply and directly perform the task. We do what we do without needing to tell ourselves that we're aware of what we're doing in order to do it. Occasionally, we do find the need to remind ourselves to pay special attention. Check for a lane change, for example. But even then, we assume, rather than bring to Mind, awareness itself.

As Jean-Paul Sartre put it, Consciousness is "pre-reflective." It is our immediately given Presence in the World. We can become aware that we are aware; but we do so by constructing an idea. And Consciousness does not depend on that idea.

Our Minds are a perpetual center of infinite Possibility. Consciousness is always aware of something; yet never stuck on the same thing forever. Henri Bergson describes Consciousness as 'a continuous series of successive and flowing inter-permeating states... a qualitative multiplicity...' Not a quantity of something that we can put away for safe keeping somewhere. Not something we can bottle up, nor contain in a concept. Nor do our Minds fit the analogy of someone at a control panel — which would require someone telling us about that controller; and so forth, in an Infinite regress. We can tell Ourselves and believe in such a model; but in the end, the whole thing depends on us. An objectifying idea of Ourselves doesn't precede our Minds. Consciousness resides outside every conception of it. We are not what Consciousness delivers — a what-we-have-done, what-we-own. We are Freer than all that. Or could be.

Nor is Consciousness quite like a computer. Although computers with their storage solutions and adherence to the rules of their Algorithms can exhibit elements of mentality, even mimic Personality — Artificial Intelligence is incapable of the same interior Relationships we know as Consciousness. Computers carry neither the Individual nor the Collective Unconscious of the Living that every Human Being does.

Machines may be able to sort through unimaginable amounts of data and discourse and assemble correct answers, compose essays, paint and draw pictures, beat us at our own games, learn new skills, figure out how to fool us...

Nonetheless, they will always "think" according to the fixed design of their architecture and programming. No matter how complex the aggregate of chips and their calculations, the Algorithm at the root of a computer does not exercise the Free Choice that produces Art, makes Moral Choices, knows compassion, creates Friendship or Smiles. For all appearances, it might look and sound like the robot likes us, but a Machine consists of a series of pre-figured causal connections, off-on switches. Like it or not, the Machines we create are limited to a World of Zeros and Ones. The Logarithms and Algorithms regarding the Meaning of the Universe, the Purpose of Life, those Narratives are entered into the code by the Individuals who create, own or rent the Machines.

Consciousness is not a thing. Not an assemblage of replaceable Parts. Our Thinking is not confined to a series of Mechanical Operations. Life, as we will explore in Chapter Five, arose from the response of Complex Molecules to their environment. Our Minds are the Lived experience of Being a unified Body, a Subject-Center. Self-determining. We are each able to refine, transform, create new goals for Ourselves. We each have the Freedom to make decisions, adapt, grow, evolve. To Love Others. Or not.

Alive with possibility. We owe our Meaning to the Choices that we make; as well as to the Choices made by our Ancestors — the Quarks, the Metabolizing Polymers, the Eukaryotic Cells. Theirs and Ours is a Story of Relationship, inextricably mixed with Mystery. Consciousness reaches back in an unbroken line to the Beginning of the Universe, to the Beginning of Life. Well before there was Language.

These observations about our Mind and Consciousness are important for our overall project because they establish that ideas we may have about Ourselves are not primary. Our Presence in the World is not dependent on a biologically programmed concept of Self, nor a culturally constructed Identity. We exist independent of the Algorithm we need to unfold. In order to become free of its power over us, we need to understand how our Minds engage with it.

At this point in Time, we're only beginning to learn how our Brains work. We do know that our unified Mind exists by virtue of a network of billions of

interacting Neurons, each bearing thousands of connections with other Neurons. The Neurons themselves being Unities of trillions of Molecules and Atoms. As individual decision making Subject Centers, our Brains seem to perform as though an immense symphony, doing together what no individual Neuron could do alone. We've an interiority of potentially infinite composition. Vast, complex, chaotic with creativity; yet patterned. We observe, for example, that our Consciousness engages the World along at least four widely recognized avenues.

Perception or sensate knowledge streams through our Bodies. At any moment, we're able to turn our attention to the phenomena delivered by any one of our senses. The Arts pay homage to the magnificence of the Living Landscapes we belong. The Forest songs. The shadow fragrances. The cool. We sense no limit to the beauty of Nature's dance. No edge to the subatomic nor intergalactic. Perception clings to the moment and vanishes with the stimulation, but can have lasting effects.

Another avenue of Consciousness is Emotion. Feelings inform us in particular ways about the meaning of moments. The range of feelings from good to unpleasant runs endlessly wide and deep. Emotions assist memory, charging some events so profoundly as to make them nearly indelible. Other times, emotions can even drive us to unhealthily bury a memory. We all know Emotions can sometimes be difficult to control. They can linger, change into moods. Feelings flow, without any effort, from one moment to the next. We can have Feelings of fondness for One Another that last our Lifetime.

Intuition, a third channel of Consciousness, often comes in a flash. A Dream or Thought somehow clicks with something and suddenly — we're aware of more than we were a moment before. Intuition happens, "Aha!" And then the event is over, though its Insight usually stays with us. We have a bit of new knowledge. Sometimes a key piece. Like apps that we call "intuitive," the new understanding doesn't require lengthy explanation. We know exactly what it means, or what to do — by what's given.

A fourth avenue, Intellectual activity or Reason, refers to our Minds' representational skills. Cognition not only makes fantasy and imagination possible, it produced Language, underwrites logic, enables mathematics. Literature, history, philosophy and such are called the "Humanities" because

they explore what it means to be Human. We know Reason is manipulable. Where it takes us most often depends on the premises with which we start. But we couldn't create a better World without imagination, reasoning and communication.

Although we can identify sensation, emotion, intuition and cognition as distinct streams of Consciousness, we don't experience them in isolation. Whether the Mind-work is memory, fantasy, projection, even problem solving, it usually builds on Experience with the Physical. Or consider how the Stories we tell convey what things Mean to us. How each character or scene carries some kind of emotional charge. Advertisers, PR groups and organizations interested in getting us to act in certain ways regularly exploit this interplay of states. The chosen image, the words employed, the tone of voice, the background music, color all carry emotional power. Subtly evoking a feeling can resurrect an attitude, sway opinion, produce motivation. Recognizing it, we don't have to fall for it. Our Minds are that Free.

Growing up and maturing, we learn to navigate the perceptual, emotional, intuitive and intellectual dimensions of our Lives. As Children, we often express our emotions with total disregard for Others' feelings or needs. As we mature, we learn to control outbursts by redirecting feelings, finding more appropriate outlets. With the acquisition of Language, we discover that the emotional charge associated with a situation can change according to the Story attached to it. We slowly learn how emotions can be replaced by stronger feelings and how feelings fade with time. And that just because we feel something doesn't make it true. No matter how many times you read or hear something, that doesn't make it true either.

We also become aware that we can get caught up in mental fetters. Our preoccupation with words can overrun our senses altogether. We may not even notice the wondrous music playing in the background because we're absorbed in a problem we're trying to solve, or a story we're telling ourselves. Yet, we find that Consciousness always retains its Freedom. We can Free ourselves of any mental state by moving our Minds onto one or another of the avenues. Leave behind the inner Storytelling by choosing to focus on the music, for example. As we improve our ability to concentrate and exercise our Will, our Consciousness expands into ever widening Horizons.

Exploring some of the ways we know that our Minds work establishes an important point for us. Freedom characterizes our Consciousness, our Existence, our Presence. We can and do change our Minds all the Time. From the array of possibilities before us, we think and choose what we Will. We decide what we will think. Who we will believe. Who will be our friends. Who we will be. Our Choices and Decisions develop and express our individual Personalities. We act according to our own volition. Only the Mind limits the mind. On one level...

In addition to the observation that our Presence is characterized by Freedom, we might note that Consciousness doesn't exist separate from the Universe. We find Ourselves nested in the World; our Minds embedded in the surrounding Culture. Insofar as Culture plays a role in the production of the Algorithm, and Culture's primary product is Meaning, we're led to look into what we understand by Meaning.

Meaning

We're born into a World already fully assigned with Meaning. As infants, we take our first baby steps by learning how to negotiate spatial dimensions of floor, walls, doorways, stairs. Likewise, we learn to think as we acquire the information and logic to navigate the World in terms of its Meanings. Parents and caregivers initiate the acquisition of this skill, showing and explaining how to sort the significant from inconsequential. How to see things in categories. Their lessons, however, are soon augmented by those of siblings, friends, media, objects, and — most importantly, performance. Performance we see, performance we imitate, performance we do.

Learning the significance of things and Ourselves, we progress into ever widening horizons of cooperation and responsibility. Once we master the lesser and larger priorities enough, so that we have some grasp of the realities of our World, we start school. By that time we've experienced how Meanings can clash. How we can alter Meanings. How Meaning can be re-thought; threads accepted or rejected; whole configurations re-constructed. We learn that we and Others can lie. We eventually become capable of metaphor, irony. What things Mean emerges as much from our interactions as it does from individual experience and reflection.

Well before our teens, we're producing our own priorities. Establishing our own relationships. Choosing our own Meanings. Fitting the unique pieces of our experience together into an ever changing picture. We may not be conscious of it, but we've probably already sensed how Meanings can bind or create distance. How friendships form from Meaning, how from it Heartbreak, too.

By the time we graduate, we've likely learned that Meaning can lead to great depths of happiness or of sorrow. When we look back on our Lives, we see how our knowledge and information has grown. How Meaning — the significance we once attached to Others, to Nature, to the importance of something — has changed. Sometimes making dramatic shifts. Meaning is in constant flux.

Meaning serves as a stepping stone. Can work as a pathway to the in-between us and our World. Meaning emerges from how we understand Ourselves. Reflects on Who we believe we are. Meaning moves us. It traverses Time and Space. It's ubiquitous. Entangling everything. Faster than the Speed of Light. It creates priorities. Gets us out of bed in the morning. Urges us to apply ourselves / or not. Meaning answers the big questions: Who are we? What are we doing here? Meaning resides at the level of the Algorithm that we need to address.

Meaning generates a unique dynamic. We don't easily abandon one Meaning for another. We cling with great emotional tenacity to what things Mean to us. The patterns of our individual Personality and sanity depend on it. Consistency expresses our integrity and thereby our values, dignity and worth. Whether or not we put our beliefs into words, what we believe gives purest expression to Who we are Choosing to be. We each see what we see. None can force another into changing what they believe. We can change our Minds, but no one can change them for us — nor can anyone make us change them. Because Meaning justifies everything we do, changing what things Mean can be World changing.

We know that anything can't mean anything — no matter how attractive, strangely logical or apparent that might seem. The present and future possible can't just be whatever imagination suggests. As interdependent social, biological

Beings, we have certain requirements. Our survival depends on correct and healthy relationships between our Bodies and the World — that is, our Environment and our behavior with One Another. Thus, our decision making matters. There is right and wrong. There is Truth.

We also know that we can be mistaken. And sometimes for a long time. This brings the situation we're facing back into focus. While our literature and art provide ample evidence that our collective Dream is all about a World of Love; our History is replete with and what we've got is War. Among self-evident truths, if we've always wanted Peace on Earth, it's apparent that we're not on the correct path to get there. Bringing us back again to the importance of interrogating the Algorithm. Because the Children. Because the Flowers. Because our Minds. So we're led to ask — What is the Algorithm telling us about Ourselves? What is our Universe like?

Every Civilization has some form of religion or philosophy that answers these kinds of questions. Since ancient Greek philosophy provides the foundation for contemporary Western Civilization and our Worldview, we need to touch on those underpinnings.

Consciousness and the World

Ancient Greek Philosophers approached the World by focusing almost entirely on trying to discover what it might be made of. Was it water? Fire? Idea? The World itself served as the location, a sort of unquestioned stage, where Humans played out dramas depicted by the gods and other mythical characters. Man with his Mind was just passing through. Questioning, explaining, imagining how it all fit together. How it could be categorized. The little evidence we have suggests to some scholars that this detached approach to our World — Earth devoid of a Personal Relationship with us— displaced earlier conceptions of the Universe as living Mother.

Medieval Philosophy only deepened the rift between our Minds, aka our Souls, and the Earthly World. The Church developed a metaphysics in which an omnipotent God created and ruled over an absolute Object, a thing, the Universe. Earth was conceived of as a sphere where Human Souls, housed in material Bodies, passed through as they made their way back to their Eternal abode. Heaven, if they'd been good. Hell if they'd lived a life of sin.

The dominant dogma explained how in a Universe that has no Consciousness of its own, God maintained his Divine Order by way of papal authority and the hierarchy of kings and aristocrats. Medievals were taught to see the hand of God in everything, including military victory. And therefore believed quite literally that "might makes right." As for what the World was like, few doubted the label, a "valley of tears."

Descartes marks the beginning of Modern thinking. His goal was to cut through the theological speculation, groundless tradition and superstition; find an irrefutable foundation for all of knowledge. His tool, 'doubt everything.' And what he found is that he could doubt everything — except, he couldn't doubt that he himself was thinking; doing the doubting. His famous, "I think, therefore I am."

Whether or not Descartes was satisfied with the conclusion to his meditation, it came at a price. If we can only know our thinking — and Perception is a kind of thinking, happening in our Minds — how can we know for sure that there really is a World out there, outside our Minds?

A simple question, but one that became central to the History of Philosophy that followed. Most importantly, Descartes' reliance on Reasoning led to the Enlightenment, which brought about the political revolutions that overthrew kingships and conceived of democracy.

Eighteenth Century thinking, however, did not displace the belief in an irreconcilable division between Body and Mind. Indeed, the Cartesian Paradigm (the Mind one kind of thing / Matter something else entirely) sealed the estrangement. Taking up the approach to the World that denies it any intrinsic Meaning; along with adhering to the new guidelines for research and knowledge requiring evidence, measurement and description limited to the identification of mechanical relationships of cause and effect, and all able to be repeated by Others — the Scientific Revolution made rapid and unprecedented progress.

Modernity allowed for belief to exist alongside the Scientific Mechanical explanation; but Nature itself, Science declared, is without Mind, without an interior. It can have no Meaning. The belief in a divide between Spirit and Matter, Consciousness and the World, continues to inform our Culture today. Mainstream Science still assumes that Matter is strictly physical; our Minds reducible to deterministic cause and effect explanations. We continue to probe the Universe

as though it were a Thing. And although some theologians explore the meaning of the Immanence of God in Creation, most maintain the Medieval Worldview with little or no modification. Left unresolved, the Mind/Body problem infuses the Algorithm even now into the third millennium.

Recent thinking, however, finds scholars in both the Humanities and the hard Sciences taking a second look at the Theory of Panpsychism. A development which we will examine in Chapter Five. A way to explain how Material/Physical Brains can produce the Phenomenal/Mental Experience. In other words, Panpsychism addresses the question where does Consciousness come from? And it does so by attributing a Mental quality to all of Matter. It advocates the inclusion of some kind of Consciousness all through the Universe — from the subatomic Quark level to the Galactic. An interiority to all of Being, all of Life.

In the context of Anthropological studies, such a Worldview is not so radical. Numerous indigenous Peoples and Cultures long maintained just such a regard for Nature. For Western Civilization, however, this point of view represents a radical departure — a Paradigm Shift.

Exploring the relation between Consciousness and the World has revealed an important component of the Algorithm we need to unfold. Our Culture teaches us that the Universe exists without Mentality or Consciousness. An understanding of Nature which in addition to depriving Earth of anything to do with the Sacred, also curtails what we might imagine or experience in our Relationships with One Another, other Life forms, the Universe at large. Panpsychism suggests another possible interpretation of the World. Whether we agree or disagree, it's something to keep in Mind.

Back to our story.

During the late Twentieth Century, numerous scholars turned their attention to the construction of Meaning itself. Where does it come from? Postmodernists studied how Language, words, grammar rules, Sign Systems in general, affect what we are able to perceive, imagine, even think. Providing us with understandings to help further unlock the Algorithm.

Chapter Two
Storytelling

Before we say anything more about the work of the Postmodernists, we need to acknowledge a question that they might raise about what we've so far said. When we talk about 'How our Minds work,' aren't we already using words and Culturally constructed notions? Some Postmodern scholars see that our thinking is so dependent on the structures of Language and Cultural practice that they're not sure we can think free of them at all. Let alone change the World.

Paradoxically, because that same scholarship provides descriptions that locate and expose those Cultural and Linguistic patterns, Postmodernism makes a significant contribution to unfolding the Algorithm underlying our Problems.

Microtheatres of Power

The late Twentieth Century movement called Postmodernism took a changed point of view regarding what History calls Modernity. Europe became 'Modern' as it shifted from domination by kings, aristocrats and the Church — through the Age of Reason and the Enlightenment, into the Age of Democracy and the Capitalist Economic system. Eventually, European and American History and Culture came to celebrate this transformation as a great Liberation.

Certainly, evolving from the thoughtlessness of One-man Rule to democracy and the Rule of Law represented something to be happy about. By the 1960s however, work such as that of Michel Foucault called attention to the fact that Modernity had done more than only liberate us.

Beginning from an interest in issues associated with Power, knowledge and the Self as a Subject Center — that is, exploring how each of us is the thinker of our thoughts, the doer our actions — Foucault's research led him to conclude that long forgotten historical moments played an important role in constructing how we've come to think of Ourselves, feel and act.

Foucault based his conclusion on his observations of how Power had re-located itself in the transition from our Pre-enlightenment World to Modernity.

Before that shift, Power was concentrated in the hands of Rulers who enforced their domination over Others through the public display of punishment. Examples of what happened if you broke the rules served to control the People. The gallows, the whip, the stocks, the severed head on the spike at the outskirts of town left little to the imagination. Fear of reprisal kept the social hierarchy in place; but repulsively so, even to those who benefited. And not as effectively as new forms of social control would prove to be.

Increased population and movement to the cities also worked in the direction of modernizing the methods used to enforce social norms. Sanitation problems, disease and fear for safety threatened all levels of Society. With industrialization, the changing character of the workplace called for a new kind of Worker. Increasingly, Capitalism depended on Laborers producing profits using the tools, machinery and factories belonging to the owner. Maximizing productivity required Workers who were careful, consistent, reliably present and on time. Old methods of Control by force lacked the necessary efficiency.

As prisons, schools and hospitals came into existence, they began producing discourse aimed at health and safety, which also contributed to the change. Even architecture was put into its service. Prison buildings, for example, with see-through front walls of cells, made prisoners their own guards — for never knowing whether or not they were being watched. Schools put students in lines, seated them according to rank or size. Set up hierarchies of students, each level responsible for those below. Institutions evolved systems to keep track of patients, students and inmates. People became their record, their number, their diagnosis.

As Power increasingly entangled Individuals into policing themselves and One Another, it became all the more effective. The locus of Power moved; ultimately took up residence in the Microtheatres of our everyday — our workplaces, markets, family, circles of friends — places where reward for compliance plays as important a role as fear of punishment.

Foucault asserts that no particular class or group consciously directed the change to a more modern kind of social control. And rather than citing any role that the bloody revolutions could have played in redistributing political Power during this period, he focused on the way that Power-over-Others, which had earlier been concentrated at the top of society, had gotten dispersed throughout

society. How the locus of Power had shifted from thrones, castles, manor houses into the dense web-like networks of hierarchies of our everyday.

'Modernized Power' works within each Individual, Foucault pointed out. Decrees and proclamations long ago gave way to reasoned explanations for actions, talking points and narratives. Scientific authority is often cited as a means of certifying discourse that could otherwise be controversial — from sexuality to health and illness, sanity and deviance. Power, concealing itself in knowledge, constructed and continues constructing notions of Who we are; how we 'normally' act and think; even what our goals should be. As we internalize the narratives, we become self-monitoring.

The Power that Foucault looked at does not only deny, repress or say, "No," to us. On the contrary, Modern Power is at its most powerful when it says, "Yes." Gives permission, constructs our desires, saturates our pleasure, defines happiness. Power can thus claim to produce Freedom even as it limits the possibilities of our conduct. We don't just acquiesce, we fully embrace it. Indeed, Power inserts itself into the very make-up of our Self.

Foucault's work throws light on one of the obstacles that keep us from changing the Algorithm. Modern Power isn't summarized by the means the Ruling Classes use to control the Other classes. Modern Power informs all modern Minds. It inhabits the Stories we tell. It shapes our attitudes, motivates us to idolize fame and fortune. All groups serve Power — whether they enjoy the advantages and privileges it maintains or suffer the injustices and violence it permits.

Certainly Modern Power does not affect all groups in the same way, even though it represents itself as available to everyone. Those at the bottom of the social hierarchy remain closest to more modern expressions of violence, such as getting fired from their job, arrested by the police, shot on the street. One might argue that Modern Power holds the privileged more effectively in mental bondage than the disadvantaged.

Modern Power so pervades our World, we take it for granted. Whether in the hierarchies of our families, workplaces, schools, churches, government, college and university systems — the exception is the higher-up who doesn't require deference or flattery from those down below. Power enables sexual harassment. It keeps women deferring to men, the employee to the boss,

all of us divided between haves and have-nots. We vie with each other for jobs, positions, raises, awards, admission — for Power. Advertising sells us symbols associated with Power — the car, clothes, devices, the card. Apps and computer games engage us in exercising Power. Sports celebrates Power. Given the Power to do so by Voters — rather than by the Whims of a Self-interested individual who may be psychotic — we together create Laws enabling City hall, our Courtrooms, State and Federal Government, to exert Power over us as Citizens. Lobbyists wield Power to influence Legislators. Political parties compete for Power.

To be sure, Modern Power is preferable to public torture, decapitation and such. But Modern Power remains coercive. Coercive Power — not Power shared, not Power in the Service of One Another — describes our World. What else could allow us to risk the Life of the Planet, rather than re-think and change the Economic System that Power-over, not Love, put in place?

Foucault didn't think that Modern Power permitted individuals to act freely at all. He thought the entire edifice over-powering. But we don't have to agree with Foucault on everything in order to use his insights. Foucault showed us that Coercive Power plays the key role in the dynamics of the Algorithm. And that Each of Us, to the degree we're contaminated with it, play a part in producing its Pattern. A most important insight toward getting Free.

But Postmodernism didn't end there. It soon became clear that Self-reflection could go even further, move to an even deeper level of Understanding Ourselves.

Language and the Sign System

Language. We Human Beings use Words and Language to spin threads of thought into Meaning. We weave Meanings into larger explanations of Ourselves and the World. Understandings we learn and share with One Another. We live Language. It even affects what we perceive, since we can't register, can't "grasp" what we're perceiving without Words for it. Words inhabit us. Whether we're talking about God, the Universe, our Minds, Bodies, our everyday Lives, dinner, the past, the future… we're using Words.

One of Foucault's former students, Jacques Derrida, explored how Language affects the way we see Ourselves and the World. We might say that Derrida identified the tiniest building blocks on which the Algorithm depends.

Much of his work carried forward that of his predecessors, such as linguist Ferdinand de Saussure.

Saussure called words, "signs." Each sign, he explained, has two sides, like a sheet of paper. On one side, the sign is a sound or a mark — a *signifier*. On the other side, the sign has a meaning, carries an idea — a *signified*. Signs function by differing from one another. Floor is floor and not door because the signifiers differ ("fl" and not "d"). They also differ as signifieds. Floor referring to the lower horizontal plane of a room; door to the opening for entering or exiting. The point is that Signs function by virtue of what they are not.

Of additional importance for our purposes, Saussure observed that the signifier and signified are themselves, only arbitrarily connected. 'Door' means 'the entranceway or exit to a room,' only because we say it does. The same signified, (entranceway or exit) is also connected to 'la porte' and a host of other signifiers in other Languages. The link between signifier and signified is an agreement, a construction — an idea in a particular Cultural, Historical context. Additionally, the signified (the concept, Meaning) is also arbitrary, changing, mobile. Many signifiers have multiple meanings that differ greatly. "Host," for example. Factors such as these throw the reliability of Language into question.

Instability of Meaning so pervades our writing, speech and thinking, that we depend on context to anchor Meaning. Day to day experience provides ample evidence. Recall the occasions when Someone says something that Someone else completely misconstrues. Many jokes, especially Children's jokes, play on words with similar sounds but different Meanings. Listening to a popular song, two people might hear different lyrics or take the same lyrics to Mean different things. We also learn to "read between the lines." Decoding a poem, novel or political speech with understandings of metaphor, irony, the underlying Historic conditions, can completely change the apparent Meaning.

For the most part, we grow up unaware of another problem that Saussure pointed out. This one perhaps even more critical. A sign has no necessary relationship with anything outside the Sign System — the thing to which it supposedly refers. Saussure set this referent issue aside, Derrida however, picked it up. Paraphrasing, we can follow where it took him.

So, out of nowhere, consider the word, "leaf." As a signifier, leaf may refer to the abstract idea of leaves in general; or it could be referring to one particular leaf of innumerable actual leaves on a tree. If a particular one, we have another problem. Imagine for a moment how many leaves there are on a tree. And how many trees. No sign system could carry enough signs to refer to each one individually. And even if it could, it would be way too complicated and impractical to work with.

But back to the word "leaf." If we look up leaf in a dictionary, we find its definition. There may be a picture, but no actual leaf. Just words. Were we to look up the meaning of those words, in order to learn the meaning of leaf, we would find more words, defining those words, etc. Words point to each other, but never get beyond themselves. It turns out that words are bound together in closed chains of signifiers and signifieds; and not necessarily connected to anything outside them. This represents a danger, Derrida warned. Our words are capable of becoming completely detached from the Reality of that to which they refer.

Derrida also noted that what a sign Means, often depends on a relationship of binary opposition to another term. Male/female. Good/bad. Light/dark. Wealth/poverty. Oppositions that typically have a hierarchical relationship with one of the terms carrying a Cultural preference over the other.

Like Foucault, Derrida also speculated that we may never be able to be Free. In this case, because the Sign System is so overwhelming. Similarly, though, we need not agree with Derrida's conclusion to make use of his work. He and Saussure uncovered Linguistic functioning and Structure that directly affect how we understand our World. Understandings that shed light on what's keeping us from Creating the World we desire and need. Among their observations — there is no necessary connection between Sign and Referent. And that Language entails Separation and is known to carry implicit hierarchies. Words can place constraints on our Perception, even our Possibility.

Narratives and the Narrative Field

Primatologist Donna Haraway observed that the Sign-Referent disconnect holds true even for Scientific Discourse about Nature. She borrowed the term

"narrative" from literary studies to emphasize the fictive element in all discourse. The point is, whether Scientists or Professional Scholars are describing some sociological or anthropological phenomenon; teaching history; presenting philosophical, theological, biological or political theory; elaborating some physical, chemical or cosmological hypothesis — we are using Language, and therefore, embedding our Storytelling in its folds.

Haraway uses the word "narrative field," to represent "a dynamic web of meanings including the many complex spaces where meanings are contested…" She offered the expression as a way to speak about the totality of discourses associated with particular disciplines. Her insight, however, suggests a model with which we might envision the entire World of Narratives — every kind of writing, speaking, word-work; the underlying messages in cinema, music, photography; Narrative in whatever conceivable media — as existing in a great Planetary Narrative Field.

And we can make the idea of a Narrative Field less abstract by imagining Narratives as colorful looping lines. The entire Field a fractal drawn by the myriad of swirling Narratives. Narratives most often repeated, re-enforced or reiterated, produce definitive Pathways. Patterns emerge. It's a bit trickier, perhaps, to picture the "complex spaces" where Narratives are contested. Yet, such an image can help us Understand the state of our World. Both chaotic and orderly, the Narrative lines represent patterns we aspire to, as well as patterns of obstacles to the World we desire.

So how does Change in the Narrative Field happen? Haraway observes that each new Narrative introduced into the Field affects the plausibility of Narratives already present. A new Narrative may, or may not, raise questions about others already in the field. We abandon older narratives as new ones raise the cost of defending them. And conflict, she notes, may not be the means by which this is most likely to happen.

The idea of a Narrative Field not only suggests how we might envision Narratives existing "out there" in the in-between us, but also how Narratives might exist within our own Minds. We often find ourselves weighing the value of one Narrative against another. We staunchly defend those on which we regularly rely. We create Value by Choosing and adopting Narratives we deem "better." Ignoring, discarding and when necessary, openly discrediting those

that become less believable, less valuable to us. Even harmful. Because our health, happiness, our survival depend on basing our judgments on solid criteria, we've always needed to ask ourselves: What are the consequences of embracing this or that Narrative? Certain events in history, such as the Holocaust, have compellingly taught us that not all Narratives are equivalent. Some are clearly better than others.

Our Storytelling, how we create Narrative, often remains Unconscious; yet the role it plays in our Lives cannot be overstated. Story gives Meaning a place to emerge and reside. We use Stories to organize what otherwise might appear a patternless chaos. Stories maintain our understandings of the World, One Another, Ourselves. They make sense of the stream of our days, our years. They inform the decisions we make, how we judge behavior, define success and failure. We fit our individual Story into ever larger Stories of the World. We find joy in listening to other People's Stories. Like Meaning, Story is a social activity. We live Story.

But how does this help unfold the Algorithm? Stories don't wage war. Narratives don't feed the hungry. Discourse doesn't destroy the environment. Words alone will never bring Peace on Earth.

It's true — Words will never be enough. We, the active agents in our societies are responsible. But our Storytelling underpins what we do. Cultural traditions inform and produce our Institutions. Our Narratives express and uphold what we believe to be the moral and ethical. They give permission / they excuse. We live our Stories every day — individually and collectively.

Keeping in Mind that Coercive Power operates on the deepest levels of our Consciousness, we're in a better position to evaluate the Stories we tell. Wherever non-egalitarian, asymmetrical Relationships are enacted, Power is served. As long as we think of domination over others as "natural," Power is upheld. Whenever we compare Ourselves with Others and think that we're better than Someone else, the Algorithm has taken us that far from where we want to be.

On the other hand, we could as easily tell Stories about Ourselves, Others, Nature and the Planet that unfold a Pathway to the World our Hearts desire.

Chapter Three

A Destructive Master Narrative

Within the Narrative Field, "Master" Narratives serve as organizing principles. They provide a template for whole systems of thought, constitute global understandings, maintain mentalities. A Master Narrative confers legitimacy on minor narratives that branch from and depend on it. Minor Narratives, in turn, elaborate and support the Master Narrative. We tend to assume the truth of Master Narratives because their many connections make them seem obvious, fundamental, complete, without alternative.

At the core of the Algorithm we're unfolding lies a mistaken Master Narrative about Who we are, our Identity.

Self as Separate

As Humans, we learn to think of Ourselves through Language and Cultural practice. Even in a Culture that teaches us to prize individual creativity and autonomy, we receive — rather than invent — much of what we understand as our Identity. The process begins with the moment of birth. The words, "It's a boy!" or "It's a girl!" greet the new arrival.

From that moment on, parents, siblings, caregivers, friends, relatives and the larger society supply narratives shaping our sense of Self. Later, usually by the time we reach adolescence, we begin to claim our own Identity. As individual Subject Centers, we braid strands of memory, experience, desire and dream into what we think of as our Life story. We identify with the central character moving through our past, immersed in the present, engaging possibility. We appraise events, respond to Others, create values, establish priorities according to how we understand our World and Ourselves; as well as how we wish Others would understand us. But before we even begin making such Choices, we spend years listening, learning, observing and imitating what the World and Others tell us about Where and Who we are.

That received Identity, essentially a set of Narratives, because formulated with Language, emerges (as Derrida pointed out) from the logic of difference. Additionally, Language delivers the World and Others to our Minds as Objects.

That is, the Thoughts and Images we have in Mind regarding Others and the World exercise no Subjectivity on their own part. We attach whatever Narratives we will to Each. Moreover, the boundaries denoted by the Personal pronouns, "I, me," and "mine," are clearly not "you and yours," or "they and theirs." Using words, we easily fall prey to the idea of a Separate Self with Separate Self-interest.

Compounding the effects of Language, the limitations of our Senses themselves prevent us from seeing our actual Interdependence and interconnectedness. How our Cells are in constant exchange with our environment, for instance. Or how we're physically Entangled with all of Matter. We're inclined to forget the Labor of Individuals who maintain the essential infrastructure and ubiquitous networks that a complex Society depends on. Yet we know in order for us to be Alive as we are, to live as we do, for our World to exist as it does, these Realities, beyond our immediate perceptual range, do exist.

Medieval Physics, however, which still informs our Culture, tells us that we're Separate Bodies, fully enclosed in our skin. So the Self-as-Separate idea goes unquestioned because it only "makes sense." Afterall, there is a difference between Ourselves, One Another and the World.

Contemporary Psychology uses the term, "Ego," to refer to the well adjusted, healthy sense of Oneself each of us theoretically maintains when we self-reflect on our relationships with each Other and society at large. Psychologists understand that we begin to develop this sense of Self as babies, when we come to recognize the existence of our Individual Presence amid other Subject Centers whose wishes might differ from our own. It is this meaning of the Ego that we're concerned with, rather than what's commonly call "egoism."

None of us really aspires to what we understand as egoism, despite failed discourse arguing that greed and vanity do the Community or the Individual any good. By adulthood, most of us have learned that Selfishness doesn't work. Personal Relationships, especially friendships and intimacies are about Love; and Love requires Equality. In general, very few of us would identify with being an egoist, egotistical, or egocentric. We know that much about who we really are.

Insofar as the Self-as-Separate/Ego idea saturates the Narrative Field, it also defines success. Thus it can almost seem that egoism represents an essential ingredient for Personal fulfilment, meriting our admiration. For how else except submersion in an egoistic attitude toward the World and Others can you accumulate millions of dollars... billions of dollars... while at the same time, Children are starving, going Hungry? How is it possible to watch and do nothing, or very little, as the Planet grows warmer? Unless we recognize and constantly question our identification with the underlying Algorithm, a mistaken notion of Self can exercise a hold on us, regardless of our Conscious attitude toward egoism itself.

In Western Civilization, the respect for Individuality which is associated with a healthy Ego is linked with the Enlightenment. Before the advent of democracy and Free Societies, the Culture of pre-modern Europe gave almost no value to the Individual. The Medieval world of kings, feudal lords and the Church portrayed its social hierarchy as ordained by God. This Worldview, enforced by violence, blocked Individual ambition, even discouraged an individualized sense of Moral Integrity. From birth it was determined what your Life would be. You did as you were told.

Eighteenth Century Enlightenment writers confronted that old order with the authority of Reasoned Thought. Ideas of Human Rights expressed notions that had undeniable appeal, such as the Pursuit of Happiness. A beginning. The Age of Democracy had arrived, but if we recall the lesson that Foucault taught, Modernism didn't eradicate the exercise of Coercive Power over Others.

Yet, the new, more democratic Societies brought a great awakening of Freedom. And Modern notions of Individualism have allowed us to explore dimensions of Personality, Creativity and Autonomy unimagined earlier.

After almost three hundred years, we know something about what Freedom means; and we want more of it, not less. We hear much talk about our Liberty; but most of us do not feel Free enough, even if we enjoy the privileges of Living in democracies. Our World is structured with Hierarchies that squelch Creativity, limit Individual opportunity, permit out-and-out tyranny in the Workplace, lead to corruption and graft.

A Master Narrative with roots in our pre-modern past allows money politics to make a mockery of democracy. Forged by Language and played out

in microtheatres, the Self-as-Separate Narrative prompts us to limit our Freedom, constrain our Possibility, urges comparison and competition with Others. It works against the Pursuit of Happiness. Instead of celebrating the joy we find in connection with One Another, the Self-as-Separate/Ego sees Others as competitors, rivals, winners or losers. Perceives Nature as Mindless.

As Children, many of the games we play teach us that Life is an "Every man for himself" proposition. Winning the game most commonly requires someone else losing. And you almost always win by taking more, gaining at the Other's expense, getting what you want by controlling the game board, the field. Other players are opponents. Although older Children often help younger ones, everyone knows that helping the competitor is a violation of the rules. There's a saying, "It's not whether you win or lose, but how you play the game."

Yet, in practice, everyone knows winning is what counts. Our parents may try to teach us other Values; but we watch TV, we've smart Phones and otherwise come under the influence of a larger Society where winners are celebrated, losers eliminated. We see success defined in terms of Power, Fame and Fortune. We find Ourselves ranked in the various Hierarchies that are apart of our Worlds. Well before we leave Childhood, we've learned the lesson, both consciously and unconsciously, that a Feeling of Value, Worth, can come from competition and winning.

The Self-as-Separate/Ego Narrative translates perceived differences as Separation. Everyone in its lens of Not-the-Self is reduced to Object status. We do not attribute to Objects the same Freedom we know as Subject Centers. Objects don't choose or initiate action. Things are fixed. We assign things their meaning. Objects don't have feelings. They have no interior. They do not call to us. They are indifferent. They serve, or obstruct. We make every effort to control Objects. Although the Self-as-Separate/Ego Identity is nothing more than an Idea, a set of Narratives, the harm it causes is concrete and real.

Self-worth based on competition not only poisons our Relationships with Nature and One Another, it also fails to satisfy. We can never feel we're really good enough. Never highly ranked enough in whatever Hierarchies we inhabit. No matter how much Money we accumulate. No matter how comfortable and privileged the position. No matter the Power it gives.

To the degree that the Ego is a product of Culture, we become susceptible to sophisticated marketing techniques aimed at controlling our Behavior — from product purchase to voting preference. We can easily mistake constructed desires for expressions of our spontaneous Free will.

At the root of it all, lies the Self-as-Separate Narrative. Informing our initial response to Others as "not-being-that," leading to comparison and then to competition, concluding in conflict. Objectifying Others and the World results in wrong Choices, justifying whatever means to enforce One's Will on Others and Nature. Even more to the point, the Master Narrative makes the unthinkable, thinkable. How else the kind of negative construction of the Other that gave rise to such enormous evils as Slavery and the Holocaust.

Modalities of the Master Narrative

While casting us as competitors on the Individual level, the underlying notion of Self-as-Separate turns group similarities and differences into criteria for larger scale antagonism and competition. Wherever a "we" appears, the logic of the Self-as-Separate/Ego produces a "they" — a Not-us, an Other.

The Master Narrative encourages Individuals to associate in groups, according to various common denominators, and imagine themselves Superior to those who do not belong. Group Identities, offering members worth and value via the Idea of being-better-than, structure the several Modalities that the Master Narrative assumes. Such groups can range from Families and Social Cliques, to Social Class, Nations. And even larger groups, such as those linked to Race and Gender.

History has led many of us to recognize that it is not only unintelligent but Morally unacceptable to harbor pre-judgments of whole groups of Individuals. Few of us would consciously embrace Group hatreds. Unconsciously, however, a powerful Master Narrative can keep us anxiously clinging to anything that makes us feel that we're better than someone else. Remnants of Group Identities and hostilities linger long after we've chosen to shed them. And because such Narratives are still widely dispersed throughout the Narrative Field, they're capable of affecting us, so we need to be aware and constantly on the lookout.

Gender

Among the several Modalities of the Self-as-Separate/Ego Narrative, that based on gender is perhaps the most fundamental. Our first lessons in Identity have to do with whether we happen to be male or female. The reproductive organs of the newborn carry great significance for parents, siblings, caregivers, friends and relatives. Gender evokes from us a set of pre-figured, often unconscious, attitudes. Studies have shown that, regardless of our views on gender, we treat boys and girls differently, even as infants. Pink blankets and blue blankets give way to gender oriented toys. Dolls, make-up kits and pretend jewelry for girls; toy cars, trucks, guns, tools and footballs for boys. We speak differently to and about girls and boys.

Children quickly grasp that they are supposed to aspire to their society's notions of masculinity or femininity. Often parents who don't believe in emphasizing gender are surprised to find the Child's enthusiastic embrace of gender identity, leaving them wondering if gender isn't more biological than they thought. Others conclude that the Cultural milieu is more powerful than they had imagined.

Sometimes, though not always, a young Person, older Persons, too, exercising self-reflection and considering the gender codes they've been assigned, can become disillusioned with it all — because, in fact, they don't see themselves being like the role they're expected to play. ("When are you going to start acting like a man?") And so prefer to be the sex of Persons they more identify with. ("Let me be a woman then, more sensitive, gentle, nurturing.") It also happens the other way around, as well. A Person can also see themselves as being neither a "he," nor a "she;" understand themselves as a "they." Many parents today don't want their child's horizons arbitrarily limited by society's gender ideas; nor should anyone be comfortable with another Person's suffering. Our understandings evolve and change.

Women are now admitted to professions and careers previously closed to them. Girls can dream of becoming doctors, dentists, lawyers, scientists, mathematicians, CEOs, senators, secretaries of state and presidents. Access to sports programs allows women to continue making breakthroughs in athletic achievement. School administrators, business managers and the courts are aware of sexual harassment. Police departments enforce stricter laws and have better understandings about criminal behavior such as domestic violence and date rape.

Yet, streets, alleys, parking ramps, even homes remain unsafe, especially at night, for women. Almost one in five women will experience rape or sexual assault in their lifetime. One in three women between the ages of

18 - 34 has been sexually harassed at work or in educational institutions. And these are only the most blatant forms of gender-based mistreatment that plague even societies that have seen many barriers fall.

We continue to face such problems in large part because this modality of the Master Narrative generates many supporting discourses such as the one telling us that gender is biological. Certainly the female and male sexes are biologically distinct. But it's Culture that constructs much of gender identity and gender-related behaviors. We know that masculinity and femininity are sets of ideas, in part because different Cultures differ in their gender definitions and roles.

Moreover, most Cultures put a great deal of energy into gender socialization, far more than would be necessary if gender were simply "natural." All of this effort makes it difficult to sort out any biological dimensions that might be untouched by Cultural notions. While individuals receive somewhat different versions of their Culture's gender formation, and respond to it differently, social pressure urges all to aspire to the norm.

In our Culture, masculinity epitomizes the Master Narrative. Males are socialized to assume the role of dominance over Women, Nature, their own Bodies — and other Men. From the start, adults tolerate, even encourage, varying degrees of aggressiveness, as well as destructiveness in boys. Although "Boys will be boys" permits only a certain range of behaviors, asserting power and control proves manliness. Boys establish hierarchies in playground fistfights. Adult males emulate the alpha-male by aggressively battling for position and possession. Masculinity drives the popularity of sports such as football, hockey, soccer, even baseball. And spurs the consumption of pornography, violent movies, computer and video games, military histories and sensationalized press coverage of war.

Compounding the problem, punitive curbing of conduct such as crying, or otherwise being a 'sissy,' produces anxiety about gender identity. Insufficient attention from adult males can also leave boys clinging to a theoretical masculinity.

In addition to embedding a strain of violence in the male psyche, this version of masculinity fails men in another profoundly important way. Since Humans are social animals, males need companionship and Love as much as

females. The masculine mythology of the great individual, warrior, quiet and mysterious, lone hero type inhibits Relationships. Fear of being effeminate checks feelings of tenderness, dependence, vulnerability, compassion and belonging. Men have difficulty establishing and maintaining close bonds with anyone, especially other men. The expression "male bonding" has no female counterpart; it goes without saying that the feminine will bond.

Women, like men, are also engaged with the larger Self-as-Separate Culture. In the abstract, in order to attract and complement the male ego, the feminine ideal would express the opposite. So beneath a surface of Personal Beauty, delight in pleasure and appreciation of pretty things, we would expect to find the feminine to be about service, cooperation and communication.

From the time little girls learn to speak, we accustom them to accepting interruptions and teach them a special, cheerful intonation. We encourage girls to play dress-up and practice mothering skills with their dolls. Movies, books, cartoons and toys teach girls that the goal of their lives is romance. The 'happily ever after' with a 'prince charming' husband story is still being told. So how do girls see the purported means to that end?

Modeled all around them, from magazine covers at supermarket checkout lines to animated fairytales, girls learn to make themselves the object of desire, the thing to be looked at. From mothers, sisters and friends, girls learn how to put on make-up and select clothing designed to titillate. By the time women are ready to marry, they're supposed to have mastered the skills of psychological, domestic and sexual service that men expect.

Girls are also members of the larger Culture, however, and so also learn that winning is what counts. Women can be fierce competitors, although they're less likely to resort to violence. Direct forms of aggression overstep the bounds of femininity. In the feminine sphere, titles of success include most desirable sex object, most successful mother and variations on the Money theme from most fashionable clothes to most lavish dwelling. Women compete with men, too, in any realm permitted. From everyday Power-tripping among co-workers. To the Hallways of Academia and Congress. Every Profession. Wherever there's a Hierarchy. "Playing the game" easily overrides non-egoistic feminine values.

Our Culture's gender roles represent longstanding historical traditions that favor males, but do harm to both sexes. Masculinity's obsession with control produced the Victorian morality that still distorts our sexuality today. This code of sexual behavior linked Sex, Nature and Women with uncontrollables — therefore evil, forbidden, dirty. In the Twentieth Century, we came to recognize that repressed sexuality is unhealthy for both the Individual and Society. The Sixties jettisoned a long list of failing sexual norms.

Yet some People still find it difficult to accept same sex Love — and not only because of programming to Heterosexuality. Men Loving men or women Loving women so blatantly violates the gender codes in some Minds, that the whole edifice appears threatened. We cannot fully liberate Ourselves from such prejudices, as long as we cling to traditions that empower One Person over Another.

The construct of gender Inequality leaves us unsatisfied because it's out of touch with the Referent. Gender prescriptions produce antagonistic Relationships between men and women. Narratives of dominance / subordination ill serve Relationships of Love. We crave the celebration of our Being together. Our Bodies can enchant us with a Wonder, Joy and Beauty that only Intimacy and Eroticism can deliver.

Finally, gender attunes us from infancy to the underlying dynamic of the Self-as-Separate Identity — defining the Self in terms of Who-we-are-not. Which once more brings the Algorithm back to Mind.

Race

The idea of Race is itself a construct of the Master Narrative. On average, Human DNA is approximately 99% the same. Over millions of years, Human groups living in widely separate geographical locations developed slight variations, some affecting appearance. The Master Narrative of Self-as-Separate has historically turned such perceived differences as grounds for negatively charged Otherness. 'Not-being that' implies Object status.

Most historians would agree that the trade in Black African Slaves increased the force and practice of existent Racist Narratives. Before maritime technology made intercontinental slavery possible, Europeans had a long history

of enslaving other Europeans; and Africans other Africans. European trade in African Slaves took off and boomed with the exploitation of colonies in the New World. The Atlantic Slave Trade lasted well into a time when European/American Culture found enslavement of one Human Being by Another Morally reprehensible. Under the influence of the Enlightenment, defenders of slavery garbed their attempted justification in scientific-sounding language. Discourse rampant with falsehoods about genetic differences that denied the Humanity of the captive.

Brought across the Atlantic in chains, millions of People spent more than two Centuries under the brutal institution of Slavery. After the Civil War in the United States, the auction block and bullwhips gave way to share-cropping, segregation and lynching in the South.

In other regions, African Americans encountered both blatant and hidden forms of Racial hatred. Racism restricted Black People to impoverished neighborhoods, as well as the lowest paying and least desirable jobs. The Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s overturned Segregation Laws, affirmed everyone's Right to Vote and made overt job and housing discrimination illegal. Yet, as our recent History attests, Racism persists.

Many African American children still grow up in ghettos — surrounded by poverty; and the hopelessness and violence that desperation brings. We still have enormous disparities between the White wealthy suburbs and the predominantly Black inner cities — in school funding, quality of education and employment opportunities. Employers still find reasons not to hire; bankers not to give loans; realtors not to show homes. Racial profiling and disparity in numbers of police killings affect not just the lower classes, but also Black professionals and celebrities. Middle-class, even wealthy African Americans also experience the pain of both conscious and unconscious negative attitudes kept active by Narratives of Race.

The modality of race harms other groups of People, as well. It permitted pogroms and the Holocaust. It allowed the genocide of Native Americans and usurpation of their Lands. In more recent examples, it motivated the Trump administration and Republican Party to build a wall in an effort to keep Mexican immigrants out. It gave Netanyahu permission for the enormity of Gaza. Racism also underlies the activities of ICE. Authorizing violence and arrests without

warrants. It subjects whole groups of People to discrimination and racist rhetoric — Hispanic Americans, Asian Americans, Arab Americans, Mexican Americans and so on.

The Ego Narrative divides us into a "we" and "they." It adds new others to the list as contact increases with People who don't speak the predominant Language, share mainstream customs, religion or look the same. Instead of appreciating Each Other's Personal Presence, Beauty, Cultural and religious heritage and traditions; instead of respecting One Another, the Ego Narrative has us turning differences into pretexts for defiance, hatred and powering over.

The notion of the Self-as-Separate impedes our efforts to deal with the terrible history of Racism. The Ego Narrative tell us we have no Responsibility for the misfortune of others. That we can ignore the role of colonialism and economic imperialism in producing the poverty and enmities that still plague our World. It would have us ignore the debt owed African Americans for the millions killed in the Middle Passage, the brutal treatment of those who made it across, plus the 250 years of unpaid labor and discrimination. It denies any obligation to Native Americans for the loss of entire Nations, the usurpation of lands and efforts to eradicate their Cultures. Hatred of the "Other" permitted the systematic murder of six million Jews.

We see the force of the Master Narrative in that those who committed these unthinkable abominations, as well as those who approved them, didn't see themselves as choosing Evil. We also see the Master Narrative operative in the Nazi identified white-supremacist groups in our Society today.

Class

The Classism Modality of the Master Narrative normalizes the idea that the strong take from the weak. This formula defines 'survival of the fittest' in popular culture. Biologists, however, increasingly see cooperation as important a key to survival as anything else. And as we will explore in Chapter Five, evidence suggests that Life began on this Planet as Complex Long Chain Polymers began sharing molecules. And we certainly wouldn't be here if Life hadn't shown an amazing talent for cooperative organization throughout Evolution. Our Bodies couldn't function without the Organelles within every Cell working for the common good.

Yet, our World sidelines Altruistic behavior. Defines it as Idealistic, unrealistic, utopian, even Self-serving. At least extraordinary in the eyes of the Master Narrative. The underlying Algorithm pivots on motifs of taking as much as you can get; and keeping it for yourself.

The mistaken Self-as-Separate Narrative conflates Individualism with Separate Self-interest. Makes it possible for some to hoard and play with far more Money than they will ever need, while others lack basic resources. Ours is a World where Money determines whether you live or die. Whether you receive adequate healthcare; food and shelter. Whether you have a chance for a quality education and meaningful employment opportunities. Travel. Enjoy public entertainment and so forth.

The Master Narrative creates a moral climate that does not require the privileged to concern themselves with the welfare of Others. Ours is a Society requiring everyone to look out for themselves — because if you fall, well, maybe your family will help you.

We can try to change our Economic System, but unless we change the underlying Master Narrative, the effort will end in failure. Take Communism, for example. A theoretical system inspired by high ideals. Most who've taken the time to study it, generally agree, a System based on the principle that *'each should give according to their ability and receive according to their need,'* sounds like a good idea.

But when revolutionaries used violence to force such a System on Others, they aroused fierce resistance. To which the revolutionaries, in turn, responded by suspending basic Civil Liberties, trying to crush the Opposition with brutality. Additionally, because the Leaders lacked the analytical tools with which to interrogate and alter their own Relationship to the Master Narrative, they ended up reproducing their own version of Hierarchy, again characterized by unequal distribution of Wealth and gross corruption. But that does not mean that what we call "Free Enterprise" is the best we can do.

The "free market" Economic System that dominates our World rests on the belief that People are inherently lazy and selfish. It operates on the Principle that Greed is Good. Its less touted motivating force is Fear. Lower and Middleclass Workers fear for their Livelihood and the Welfare of their Families; the Middle and Upper Classes for the maintenance of their positions in Society.

In our democratic Political Culture, in popular sayings and in hallowed texts, we reiterate the theme that no one is better than anyone else. “We hold these truths to be self-evident…” On a most fundamental level, we believe that everyone should count Equally. No one above the Law, not even the President. That’s not, however, the way Classism sees it.

Classism justifies unfairly influencing Elections and Legislation, including making it more difficult to Vote, gerrymandering and sundry dubious strategies. Classism sponsors Judges without Honor. All of which undermine a government “of the People, by the People and for the People.”

When it comes to Global Relations, Classism justifies excluding millions of People from the Security and well-being that People in high income countries take for granted. In developing countries, governments have been forced to borrow money and pay it back with interest, making it impossible to provide services and ease the poverty of their own People. Trade policies, exploitative business practices and corruption also prevent hard working People from feeding their families. Multi-national corporations treat the developing World as a source of raw materials, cheap labor, even a dumping ground for toxic waste. The drive for Profit overlooks nightmare scenarios of sweatshop production, Child labor, sex trafficking, shantytowns and environmental disasters.

Classism normalizes a workplace Culture that would find the idea of democratic decision making incomprehensible. The owners, of course, take more; never show the books. Bosses expect deference. Those lower down have only two options: acquiesce or quit. Workers endure the situation because, no matter how skilled, sincere or willing to work a person is, the Free-market Economic System does not guarantee a job — unless you were born to a Social Position that insulates you from these facts.

We more easily ignore, accept and perpetrate mistreatment of One group by Another when multiple modalities of the Master Narrative overlap and mutually reinforce each other. As when Classism melds with Racism and Sexism, for instance.

Conclusion

The point of view that it’s a destructive Master Narrative, not ‘Human Nature’ or individual malice, that lies at the core of the Algorithm, enables a means to grasp and address our situation, find an effective solution, without

endless recrimination. Narratives are only made of words. The Self-as-Separate Ego identity is a Cultural Phenomenon. It's a way of Thinking of Ourselves.

The Ego, in itself, does not exist. It's a concept that Psychology found useful for Understanding our Psychic make up. The Ego refers to the idea we carry with us about Ourselves, not something Consciousness depends on. It's a product of Consciousness.

Here, early in the Twenty-first Century, we've become aware how the Master Narrative works through Words and Cultural Systems. How it informs the Ego identity. And with that, we're empowered to Change it. If we recognize the illusion, we can break the spell.

We have more resources in this endeavor than we may at first think. The Narrative Field itself has always retained Alternative Stories of Who we are, where we came from, what we're doing here. Human Beings have formed many kinds of Communities, developed a variety of Cultures — some of them less Self-as-Separate identified. Less removed from the Referent. We need to investigate such Alternatives. Discourse that the Master Narrative relegated to the sidelines likely carries traces of the Pathway to the Loving World all of us wish.

Part II:

Elements of an Alternative

Before looking into Religion, Science, the Arts and Stars for Alternative Narrative, we need to acknowledge certain difficulties. First, the limitations of single chapters make it necessary to reduce and simplify. Second, since all Narratives are found within a larger Cultural setting, all have been susceptible to contamination by the Master Narrative. Each in its own way compromised.

Consider Religion. Almost all Religions and Spiritual Traditions condemn hatred, violence and selfishness. Yet, Human history abounds with stories of crusades, inquisitions, massacres, riots, pogroms, terrorist acts, Wars and less dramatic forms of intolerance perpetrated in the name of Religion.

Nazi SS belt-buckles carried the inscription, "God with us." Suicide bombers believe they will be rewarded for their martyrdom. More commonly, Theological explanation and schemas tend to excuse us from our Responsibility to address the Evils that the Master Narrative is causing.

In the case of Science, it remains largely bound to the assumption that Nature is Mindless. Most Scientists believe that the Universe is entirely physical — driven by mechanical relationships of cause and effect, determined, closed.

Although recent technology and scholarship are leaning ever closer to discrediting our inherited notions of Self-as-Separate, Scientists face daunting challenges in shifting to the Alternative Paradigm. The Master Narrative meddles with how Scientists approach their Subject Matter, as well as the vocabulary used to talk about and present their conclusions. Research for weaponry receives virtually unlimited funding. Peace Studies, not so much.

When it comes to the Arts, History records a sometimes oppositional, sometimes complicit, always complicated relationship between Artists and the Master Narrative. Although Art offers Alternatives and can do so even if the Artist hadn't intended it, Artists have historically served Power. What more blatant example than the Nazi party employing Artists? In less stark moments, the Ego culture supports those Artists who serve the marketplace — service that can include imagery and storytelling that celebrates Wealth and Power, the glorification of War, representation of Women as sex objects, normalization of Violence and so forth. As well as more Alternative messages.

Similarly, the Stars. Astrology, with its pre-scientific roots and undisciplined tradition, understandably evokes a chorus of skepticism. Some Astrologers claim to predict the future, or at least allude to force fields affecting the probability of particular outcomes.

Some Astrological descriptions of Personality make so generalized a sweep, they could fit almost anyone. Others steep in blatant flattery. Disagreements abound among Astrologers. Factors that make it difficult to discern uncontaminated Narrative from pre-enlightenment imagination. Yet, finding an experiential connection between what One knows about Oneself and the configuration of the local Universe at one's Birth represents serious contradictory evidence to the idea of Self-as-Separate.

Surely something has helped us survive from campfire Storytelling to our present day Social Networking. If the Self-as-Separate/Ego idea were the only Narrative informing our Identity, we would have long ago destroyed Ourselves. Within each of the Narrative Fields we'll be exploring, we find carefully preserved threads, perhaps kept to the periphery; but nonetheless, instrumental in producing some of the best ideas, understandings and behavior associated with Who we are and what we're doing here. Such Narrative elements may now represent our survival, the key to creating the bifurcation we need at this Pathway's End.

Chapter Four

Alternative Narrative in Religious and Spiritual Traditions

Any discussion of Religion, whether or not that Religion is one's own, opens the prospect of conflict with Someone else's interpretation. We can only hope that our considerations here communicate a heartfelt respect and ring true for adherents and non-adherents alike.

Although the Social Sciences are far from agreeing on its significance, Anthropology recognizes that some form of Religion appears in all Human societies. Most Religious systems at least allude to the possibility of living together in a Paradise. And almost all espouse ideals of Compassion, Sharing, Community — elements of what such a World might look like, and how we could get there from here.

Religion contests the legitimacy of Separate Self-interest with some of the strongest discourse available. From the earliest texts, we find Religious and Spiritual Traditions telling us there is another way, a better way. Teachings, Prayer services, Spiritual reading, Meditation, Yoga... all encourage acting with Compassion, Kindness and Sensitivity. All cultivate an awareness of connection and Responsibility for our Selves, One Another and the World. How we Belong. Our Relationship with Mystery and the Sacred.

Religious Reunion

While the Ego Narrative would lead to complete social disintegration, Religion aims at the creation of Community. The very word religion comes from the Latin, *'religio,'* "to bind together." Although Religions have often divided us, their common opposition to the Self-as-Separate Idea could help bring us together and Save our World.

Conflicts between the major world Religions, such as Judaism, Christianity and Islam, might make them appear irreconcilable; yet they share common ground in that each offers elements of an Alternative to the Master Narrative's model of "Every man for Himself." Notwithstanding Ego-bound interpretations of selected passages in the Talmud, Bible and Koran, the foremost character and direction of these Holy Books calls for the Creation of a World where Coercive Power, dominance-submission, Separate Self-interest

have no place. Love, as the most important commandment, threads its way through every Religion. If that Love were to insist on respect for Others, Equality, real Fairness and Justice; and Everyone's needs met — shelter, healthcare... Not a single Child hungry. Peace — we would have Heaven on Earth, the promised Paradise. Which many theologians themselves may not believe could happen. But few would go so far as to say what God can and cannot do.

The idea of such a Paradise has its roots in Judaism. The Covenant formed between G-d and the People of Israel maps their Relationship in the on-going process of Creation. G-d remains ever present as Protector; while the People are to take care of One Another and look after the World. The Hebrew word "mitzvah" is crucial for fulfilling the Human side of the Covenant. Originally referring to the commandments enumerated in the Torah (the five books of Moses) mitzvah now commonly refers to all acts of Human kindness. The evolution of its meaning followed from the purpose of Jewish Law itself — the creation of a Just and Loving society.

Jews are commanded to help the poor and needy. Jewish Law forbids taking advantage of others. In Judaism, what one does, matters more than what one says. The Community envisioned is one in which members respond to One Another's needs. A model far from the Separate-Self Ego idea. Jewish scholars originally anticipated that an Individual, a Messiah, would bring deliverance from the bonds that keep us unfree in a World filled with suffering. Many Jews today understand those Scriptures as intending a Messianic Age — a time in which Everyone participates in the role of being Savior.

Approximately two thousand years ago, a Community of Jews gathered around one of their own, Jesus, whose teachings led them to believe that he was the Promised Messiah. "Forgive your enemies." "Feed the hungry." "Shelter the homeless." "Sell what you have and give to the poor." "Love One Another." Predictably, the colonial authorities crucified the preacher of so radical a counter Narrative.

What Christ told his followers to do stands in complete opposition to the Get-for-Yourself mandate of the Master Narrative. Christians believe that Christ will one day return to bring the promised Paradise. If that Second Coming were to begin in each and every Believer's Heart, manifesting in the World in acts of Altruism, Serving Others, Caring for the Planet — every Christian

uncompromisingly putting Christ's loving words into action — the Heavens might verily seem to break open, the prophecy fulfilled.

Around fourteen hundred years ago, rapid and significant social change was occurring in what is now called Saudi Arabia. Many people were abandoning nomadic patterns in favor of settlements. As local commerce and the caravan trade grew, a business mentality — driven by Separate Self-interest took hold. Get-for-Yourself began displacing former loyalties and sensitivities, pushing aside Peoples' concern for Each Other, weakening the social fabric, corrupting Spiritual Life. It was in this Historical context that the Prophet Muhammad was inspired to begin a new Religion. Drawing on and embracing the writings of the Prophets who had preceded him, the teachings of Abraham, Moses and Jesus all have a place in Islam.

Mohammed emphasized that God (Allah) is One; and the Universe Allah created has a Purpose. The Prophet taught that each Human Being has the Responsibility of taking care of Others and working for Peace and Justice. "He is not a perfect believer, who goes to bed full and knows that his neighbor is hungry." "Do not let your hatred of a People incite you to aggression." And, "Do not let ill-will towards any folk incite you so that you swerve from dealing justly." Islam encourages a remarkable degree of Religious Mindfulness. Adherents are required to pray five times daily, make a yearly fast and undertake a pilgrimage to Mecca at least once during their Lifetime.

All three of these major Religions share a belief that the World and Time itself, will some day come to an End. The metaphors vary, but the message is much the same. Terrible events will precede a Last Judgment. God will call all of Creation together and require the Living and the Dead to account for how they lived their Lives. Goodness rewarded. Evil punished.

Many believers feel that scriptural descriptions of the End Times sound much like the conditions we're presently Living through. One could argue that we need no more nightmare scenarios to satisfy the Apocalyptic passages — two World Wars, the Holocaust, Hiroshima, Worldwide terrorism, mass hunger, a global Pandemic... And now, in the United States, the most militarily powerful nation on the Planet — a President who defies the Rule of Law, violates our Constitution, extorts money and obedience from Others. Not only is Donald J Trump openly racist and sexist, he is likely beholden to the Russian dictator Vladimir Putin. He and those who enabled him incur personally responsibility

for the immense destruction, uncountable deaths and immeasurable suffering they've caused. Of course, it can be said that there have been other historic periods that were even worse than this. But here is a man, of questionable mental competence, who refers to the Climate Crisis as a con job. Despite the scientific evidence that if we continue our submission to the Master Narrative and go on polluting the air, depleting the Oceans, cutting down the forests, poisoning the environment, we will in effect render a Last Judgment on our Species. But it will not be the one we would have wished.

Given the force that the Master Narrative exerts on all Narratives in the Narrative Field, everyone is subject to its pressures — including rabbis, priests, bishops, mullahs, theologians, pastors, ministers, preachers, as well as their followers. If we could become aware and recognize how equally powerful, even more persuasive, updated Alternative Narratives in our Religious traditions could be, we might find that the Lifelines they offer could help us.

Aware that Sign Systems and Narratives can have us working against our best intentions might make it easier for us to create the Heaven implied and articulated in so many of our Religious texts and Spiritual traditions. We have the intelligence and means to meet the needs of Everyone. Create Peace on Earth. Heal our Planet.

The Heart of the Matter

Whatever our beliefs, most of us would agree that we don't much like isolation, loneliness, alienation. Certainly, we sometimes like to be alone; but solitary confinement and exclusion are considered harsh punishments. *Being-with* is probably written in our genes. Our greatest pleasures derive from Love. We find joy in sharing experiences. Few things make us happier than making Someone else happy. Gift-giving and helping others in time of need bring out a Spirit in us that we wish would last forever. Such moments intuitively tell us Who we are and what we mean to Each Other. We're known to risk and sacrifice our very Lives for a stranger. Work transforms when Love and Meaning engage our Will.

This same Personal sphere waits for us in moments with Nature, in Music, while gardening, time spent with our pets. Or out walking in the neighborhood, in a park, or in the wild. Along a beach. Beneath a starry night.

As we'll note in Chapter Six, Art also secures a place for Self-similar treasured moments. Those in which we feel we Belong and participate as full Human Beings. Where conflict, stress, meaninglessness, boredom, even pain fall away — replaced by a sense of Connection, Wonder, fulfillment, delight...

Jewish theologian philosopher Martin Buber found a place for these moments in his early Twentieth Century description of Human Existence. Buber takes the view that the World is two-fold, as revealed according to the Attitude we bring to it. The World of I-Thou and the World of I-It.

The I-it Sphere is a Universe of Objects. In the eyes of the I-it attitude, the World and everything in it is fragmented and separate. An assemblage of things mechanically connected. All able to be used. Measured. Analyzed. The I-it World is where business is transacted. It's where the Self-as-Separate Narrative resides.

The I-Thou Sphere is about Personal Presence. Which can happen with Other Persons, with Nature, in Solitude, or through Art. Engaging with Others in dialogue and reciprocity allows us to connect with Another who is Living the same Freedom and Possibility as Oneself. We become aware that we're not alone. It's in this Sphere, Buber asserts, that we become Who we are. It's here that we can open Ourselves to our Belonging. And for Buber, the lines of all our various possible I-Thou relationships represent radii of a Central, Absolute Thou. The Divine.

Elaborating on this Vision of Love, Emmanuel Levinas wrote that our very faces call to each Other; and that we hold the Infinite in our hands by virtue of our capacity to choose how we will respond. For Levinas, the Divine waits in our encounters with other Persons. And our Possibility opens onto the Infinite.

Paleontologist and Catholic theologian Teilhard de Chardin moved in this Personalizing direction with his book, *The Human Phenomenon.* He reached the conclusion that since we Humans are made of Matter and Consciousness, all of Matter must also have an interior. Tracing Matter as it complexified from Earth's earliest stages, through the appearance of Life, to the thought-work of the Humans, de Chardin foresees Humanity arriving at an Omega point, which may emerge in Peace as we eliminate disease, hunger and

evil itself. Or the Omega may take place midst a terrible tension during which we choose between Universal Love and brute force. This latter description, it would seem, appears to be the case. As for the outcome, de Chardin believed that Nature had invested too much in the Human Species for us to fail.

Premising the Universe as Subject Center, endowed with some kind of Mentality — similar, but not exactly like our own Consciousness — does not represent mainstream discourse in Judaism, Islam or Christianity. But neither is it utterly foreign to their theological canons. Humans have always created non-objectifying Narratives about Nature.

While diverse in expression, Native American traditions generally relate to Nature as Living, Conscious, Communicative and Sacred. In some Spiritual practices, prayer is begun by calling upon the Four Directions (or Quarters) the Heavens and the Earth, asking the entire Universe to join. Most common is the request for help to Live in Reverent Awareness. Consider these words by the Oglala Lakota Holy man, Black Elk.

"With great happiness I walk upon the Sacred Earth, Our Mother. May generations to come also walk in this sacred manner."

Living in a "sacred manner" often includes perceiving events that unfold each day as invitation for Engagement. Crossing paths with any Creature may actually be an encounter with a Cosmic Messenger, or an opportunity to prove Oneself by honoring Another or by helping a fellow Being. Additionally, Native American Religious rituals — drumming, dancing, singing, storytelling, feasting — express a Worldview emphasizing Community and the Interpersonal. The two-leggeds, the four-leggeds, the wingeds, all are Relatives.

The Book of Changes or the *I-Ching* has its roots in Ancient China. It assumes that we're capable of dialogue with the Universe, and locates the random as a Place where that Communion can occur. With a mathematically complex, but simple to use method, one consults with the Book by focusing on a particular circumstance, question, problem or idea, while letting Chance affect the drop of coins or the shuffle of a small bundle of sticks. The Coins or Sticks connect with the text by way of a binary based system of open and closed lines. Using poetry, metaphor and images drawn from Nature, the *I- Ching* offers insight into the query or the direction events could be taking, or might take, often suggesting a course of action. Consistent with the implications of this Personal

engagement with the Universe, the *I-Ching* explicitly guides the reader away from Egoism and toward Community.

Ideas gathered from the *I-Ching* contributed to the Religion and Philosophy of Taoism, formulated by Lao-Tse. All "three treasures" of Taoism express Alternative Narrative. The first treasure, Compassion. The second, Moderation. The third, Modesty. "Tao" means a small road, path or "the way." Following the way means living in harmony with the Cosmic order. In its entirety, the Tao is said to exist beyond Human comprehension; yet, the effort to grasp and live by its Principles promises Peace and Happiness.

Recognizing our Connection with One Another and Nature not only avails us to how we Belong, but can also motivate us to develop horizons of Responsibility closed off by the idea of Self-as-Separate. Being in dialogue with the Universe runs fundamentally counter to the Master Narrative. Yet surrounded by words, structures, institutions and microtheatres of Power, we can easily find Ourselves pressed into its service. Easily fall back into the I-It Attitude toward Others and the World. But with greater awareness, we can constantly return to the way we Choose.

Tools of Consciousness

Religious and Spiritual Traditions remind us that it is as essential to care for the Mental Dimensions of our Lives as it is to care for our Bodily needs. Critical thinking, quietude, cultivation of Love, forgiveness, courage, mercy and so forth are as important to the Health of our Minds as eating healthy foods, getting exercise and the proper amount of sleep are to our Bodies. The ability to respond to One Another and our World depends on being able to see Ourselves as beloved members of the same larger Community. Emotional stability, cognitive ability, logical reasoning, sufficient Self-control are only a few of the parameters that define Mental Health. Personal Happiness hinges on the Mind skills we begin developing in Childhood and refine all through our Lives.

Most Religions include practices that help adherents navigate states of Mind. Prayer turns attention to what is greater than the Self and engages the Mind with the Sacred. Retreats, for instance, provide a special time and place

for cultivating states of quietude, reflection and renewal. Fasting requires one to exercise control over impulses and, in some Religious traditions, has the express purpose of encouraging compassion by increasing awareness of how it feels to be deprived. Religious or not, People all over the World now benefit from recent adaptations of Spiritual Traditions such as Yoga and Zen.

This story from the folklore of India illustrates the importance of methods that can help us control our Psychic states. Long ago, People discovered that Elephants, with their incredible strength, remarkable intelligence and cooperative spirit, could assist Humans with heavy and difficult tasks. But when Elephants passed through a village on their way to work, their swaying trunks could wreak havoc in the marketplace, overturning tables, upsetting everything. The People solved this problem by giving the Elephants something to carry with their trunks. Our Minds, too, can also swing destructively this way and that, unless we give them something to carry.

A Mantra can serve this purpose. Originating in the Hindu tradition, passed on to Buddhists and later to People everywhere, Mantras provide a place to focus attention, an idea to occupy the Mind. Mantras can include poems, prayers, lines of prose, quotes, maxims, song lyrics, aphorisms, motivational sayings… Something to hold on to. They can vary in length from a single syllable or word to a longer recitation. Throughout the day, recourse to the Mantra can help break free of emotionally charged Narratives that can pull us into endless loops of negativity. Help return the Mind to a more desirable state. As with any Spiritual practice, use of a Mantra depends on the exercise of the Will.

We may have mixed feelings about exercising our Will. When practiced as Power-over the Self, the idea of Will Power can become a form of unhealthy and unpleasant Self-coercion. On the other hand, it's Self-evident that there's value in the ability to exercise one's Will as Power-with the Self, in dealing with unproductive emotional states, for instance. Cooperating with how our Minds work means not blocking or trying to suppress unwanted thoughts, it calls for turning our focus from one avenue to another without trying to destroy the state we'd prefer to leave. Done most effectively by creating positive energy in the new direction. But to accomplish this reliably, we need to develop our Will.

Meditation can aid in exercising and building up Will Power muscles. Most approaches suggest practicing once or twice daily for about twenty minutes each session. Some traditions advocate short meditative moments throughout the day. Techniques include paying attention to one's breathing, posing a series of questions, focusing on a candle flame, even trying to empty the Mind — as in thinking of nothing, each time you become aware that you're thinking of something.

An easier method of Meditation employs imagery and symbol-making. You imagine some scene, object or event which you choose to associate with a desired state, process or outcome — such as vibrant health, a better relationship with Someone, calming of the Emotions, even the solution to a difficult situation. During the Meditation session, you define the symbol in ever greater detail. The more you elaborate, the tighter the connection between the symbol and its signification; you soon become able to retrieve the Meaning by bringing the symbol to Mind. Whatever method, the essential meditative exercise consists of returning your Mind to the focal point, each time you drift away. And you will drift.

If you drift frequently, that too can help. Every time you repeat the action of returning your Mind, you grow stronger. Self-directed exploration of Inner Space has many benefits. Meditation can open up a place where you can become aware, edit and rewrite the Narratives you're telling yourself. In a kind of Self-hypnosis, you can sculpt the future by rehearsing responses and imagining desired outcomes. Meditation opens a space to engage with the Absolute Thou at the center of all of our I-Thou encounters.

All these Alternative Elements stand in stark contrast to the Master Narrative's Self-as-Separate/Ego Idea. In their Light, Humanity has been following a mistaken Pathway for as far back as History records. Now to arrive at its unholy End. At the same time, Our Religions and Spiritual Traditions have bequeathed us resources to help us find our way beyond this impasse. There if we have need of them.

Chapter Five

Alternative Narrative in Contemporary Science

Preface

The history of modern Science begins with quasi-heroic opposition to institutionalized hierarchy and unquestioned authority. While the Inquisition was still burning People at the stake for Heresy, Science had begun developing methods for distinguishing Knowledge from Belief. As People recognized that the appeal to tradition, political power or birth to a particular family doesn't add value to ideas, the trust in Science grew. Given Education, any Individual could contribute to the Collective conversation that generates Human knowledge.

Most would agree that Humanity has greatly benefitted from Science. But when Science cut its ties with unquestioned belief, it didn't do the same with the premise that Matter is without Mind. A strain of Ancient Greek metaphysics that had come to underlie the prevailing conception of the World.

Though Earth was no longer seen as the center of the Universe, it remained an Object nonetheless. Leaving in place the assumption that the Universe has no Subjectivity is somewhat understandable. There was little desire to fall back into the pre-Enlightenment abyss of anything goes.

Similarly, without the tools for thoroughly interrogating the Master Narrative, the Self-as-Separate/Ego idea also continued unquestioned. And even as Human Consciousness has evolved since the Age of Reason, Self-as-Separate remains the lens through which Science views the World.

The result, where Science found itself at its beginning, it still finds itself today — in the service of Coercive Power, producing ever more powerful Weaponry for War. Scientific Narratives, meanwhile, would reduce our actions to the obedience of discoverable Laws. A good biological reproductive Partner the best we might be for Each Other. A description of our Presence with One Another that doesn't quite fit with what we feel when we're together.

The good news is that Scientists in every field are beginning to move in directions that might do both them and our World much better. Part of the reason for this Change is the resurrection of the long standing problem associated with the Brain — when understood as one kind of Thing and the Mind something else

altogether. How can Mental Phenomenon even happen? How is it possible for something solely Physical to get inside our immaterial Minds?

Motivated by progress being made in Microbiology, Neurophysiology, and Quantum Mechanics, plus some serious Soul searching regarding our Moral and Ethical situation — has inspired numerous Scientists and Scholars to take up the Mind and Matter issue anew. In essence, question the metaphysical packaging that wrapped the gift of Modern Science.

Panpsychism represents an alternative paradigm to the World as machine. One that precedes ancient Greek traditions and threads its way through the History of Western Philosophy to the present.

To the question, "How can our physical Brains produce the Phenomenal Experience we associate with Consciousness?"

Panpsychism answers: "The ultimate Particles that make up the Neurons themselves possess these Phenomenal Properties."

As its name implies — *"pan"* all, every and *"psyche"* soul, Mind — Panpsychism elaborates on the premise that all of Matter has some kind of Mentality. All of Nature, all the World an Interiority. (A point of view that influences the Storytelling that will follow.) But even without this growing contemporary approach, Science in its own unique way has been steadily eroding the credibility of the Master Narrative.

Our Everyday World

The Scientific Method of today is much the same as it was at its beginning. Those who wish to contribute to the endeavor submit their findings to the Community at large. The evidence supporting their theory must be available to everyone, whether data from distant galaxies, layers of rock, fossils, particle accelerators, living organisms... Whatever the field, it all comes down to measurement, description and peer review. Narratives build on earlier understandings and constantly undergo refinement and revision.

The information Science generates sometimes turns out confusing, even illogical — for the Scientists themselves. As technology develops and permits more extensive exploration of our Universe, ever deeper mysteries appear. Scientists live with paradox.

Despite the fact that Science prides itself on reaching conclusions based on evidence, they almost never achieve absolute consensus. The Story Science

tells remains open ended — thus, on a most fundamental level, works against the Master Narrative's insistence that the case is closed.

Common sense is often cited as the explanation for why our Culture insists on the Self-as-Separate/Ego Identity. We look around Ourselves and perceive our Body's boundaries. Experience and Self-reflection tell us that we're not our World and One Another. Others also exercise the Willfulness of being Subject Centers. We recognize that we can't read each other's Minds. We're unable to feel Another's pain. So it's easy to draw the conclusion that we're Separate Selves, with Separate Self-interest.

Science at its best, however, teaches us that we sometimes need to re-think what our limited perception reports. We long ago stopped believing that the Earth is flat, or that it's the Sun's movement we observe as it crosses the sky each day. Modern Science also undermines some of the Common Sense ideas about Ourselves and our World that the Master Narrative depends on.

During the Twentieth Century, an array of discoveries and studies in physics, astronomy, biology, anthropology... provided striking evidence that we're interwoven with our World in ways we had never imagined before. Electron microscopy now allows us to see that our skin is not the barrier we once thought it was. Our Bodies are connected and exchange with our surroundings, from hourly cell replacement to breathing. Zoologist and anthropologists, in turn, generally agree that Human Beings have always lived in Communities and done best when cooperating. And like other Species, we depend on and need to trust One Another in order to survive. All the more as our Communities become larger and more complex.

Although in countless ways Science, submerged in the Cartesian Paradigm, bolsters the Self-as-Separate Narrative, it also offers Alternative Narrative that not only magnifies our appreciation of the World, but also clarifies our ideas and Understandings about it. And because based on the Scientific Method, its answers to the questions — Where we are? What are we made of? Where did we come from? — bear greater weight than speculation or tradition.

Consider the concept of Time, for instance. Common sense tells us that we live in Time. Answering the question what Time itself is, we might reply that it's an Intuitive reality, difficult to describe or define. For some, Time is independent of us; it's out there. Most would agree that we find Ourselves inextricable from it. Physicists might reply that Time is a continuously forward moving dimension.

Measurable. And then there's the explanation that Kant furnished. He reasoned that Time is a structure of the Mind. According to Kant, Time is subjective and intuitive, a framework helping us organize the immeasurable stream of our Consciousness. Not out there in the World at all. Some of us might not care what it is.

Whatever our understanding, Time probably entails some sort of structure — a past that doesn't remain in the present, a future that doesn't occur before the present or the past. The discovery that the Speed of Light is unchanging required that we radically revise our inherited Cultural notion of Time. A long distance Space traveler could return to Earth to find that perhaps hundreds of years have passed. Time is not the structure we once thought it was. In the World that Einstein invited us to understand, Time is nothing like our everyday conception of it.

Einstein's friend, Kurt Gödel, took our understanding of Time a step further. He asserted that Special Relativity renders clocks irrelevant. If Time is Relative, he pointed out, then there can be no clock anywhere in the Universe with which to "set" our own. Known to Scientists for the rigorous Logic he employed in his exploration of the foundations of mathematics, Gödel drew the additional conclusion that General Relativity makes traveling backward in Time an actual possibility. More than undermining our faith in common sense, these understandings of Time represent elements of Alternative Narrative.

Studying the behavior of sub-atomic Particles led Scientists to equally revolutionary insights regarding Matter itself. The effort to establish whether the Universe is determined or free, disclosed that two or more Particles, if once together, remain connected even if later separated by great distances. Most Physicists now accept the understanding that all of Matter is somehow "entangled" —since all was a Singularity at the Beginning of the Universe. Such a Cosmos flies in the face of Separation.

When it became apparent that there were irreconcilable contradictions between the math for Relativity Theory (equations for studying the ultimately large) and the math for Quantum Mechanics (equations for studying the ultimately small), String and Superstring Theory emerged. Mathematicians proposed that both the smallest building blocks of the Universe and the known Forces be thought of as tiny vibrating Strings.

The solution reconciled the math incongruity issue, but required more than three extended dimensions; perhaps nine curled up ones, or ten, eleven some

suggested. Everywhere Physicists look they return with information that we're living in a World more Wondrous, more complex, more Sacred than the Master Narrative would have us believe.

The same holds true in the Life Sciences. Early efforts to understand evolution explained the appearance of new species as the effect of chance and natural selection in a competition for survival. Later theory shifted the location where change happened from the level of fully functioning creatures, (an unexpected aberration, and presto, the first giraffe) to chance at the cellular level (a quirk in the genes, or the DNA). Both approaches assume a fixed, mechanical environment, filled with creatures whose luck had made them the most fit.

Even before the renewed interest in Panpsychism, Complexity Theory was revisiting that description. Researchers observed that Complex Adaptive Dynamic Systems evolve by way of "self-organization" of the Agents. The Constituents of Systems, by way of communication and choice, generate the new Patterns and structure in response to information, even chaos, in the environment. And without a predetermined blueprint.

Change takes place, according to Complexity Theory, at the level where organisms, plants, creatures... entwine with their larger Environment. Micro-interactions of Cells, for instance, enable an Organism to imagine and create adaptations with which it can continue to climb peaks of fitness in the constantly changing Landscape.

When Complexity Theory principles were found to produce valuable insights across numerous fields of study, a feat once considered impossible, Scientific vocabularies expanded. Diverse disciplines ranging from medicine to electrical engineering made unexpected progress sharing the same concepts.

Emergence: the parts effect the whole as the whole effects the parts.

Sensitive dependence on initial conditions: the smallest action by an agent can have System-wide effects.

Phase transitions: change in which the entire System moves from one state to another. Water to ice. From Nothingness to the Beginning of the Universe. From the Chemical Imaginary to the Appearance of Life. From non-nucleated Bacteria to the Eukaryotes.

Complexity Theory suggests that Systems produce their identity and retain continuity by repetition of successful Patterns. Such Pathways become

deeply embedded. Although Systems never depart entirely from the Patterns by which they came into existence, when threatened with destruction, successful Systems are capable of profound Change. Often the Solution contradicts present practice to such a degree that the Alternative is deemed unbelievable, impossible, improbable — before it happens. We will be revisiting Complexity Theory in Part III, *Working Toward a Solution.* For now, a sketch of the Alternative picture that Contemporary Science offers.

Matter / Life / Multicellulars

Based on the observed outward movement of the Galaxies, the omnipresent field of background radiation, the abundance of Helium in interstellar Space and the Laws that describe how Matter behaves, Scientists believe that the Universe had a Beginning, probably around 13.7 billion years ago. Although not all Scientists agree. Some doubt that Time as we know it could even have existed at the Beginning. And things certainly could have gotten started before that moment. Most concur, however, the evidence points to a starting point.

Before that Beginning, before Space and Time existed — remains hidden. Does something come from Nothing? Is the Universe a bud of a larger Cosmos? Does the Ground of Being go on Forever, because it has no Beginning? Although Science has no hard answers for these questions, that doesn't prevent cosmologists, like theologians, from speculation.

Most cosmologists do not attribute Mentality to Physical Matter. This makes it exceedingly difficult to conceive how the Universe could have gotten started. Most believe the crossing from before the Universe into Existence was made by Chance. Some lucky thing happened. A popular explanation for the improbability of our Universe is to imagine it part of a Multiverse. Instead of interrogating the premise that makes it so difficult to understand how our Universe could have come into Being, an infinity of possible Universes are proposed to have randomly emerged. Panpsychism suggests its own scenario.

If by 'Before the Beginning' we mean a Singularity, only *To Be* — Absolute Being and Nothing else; then, according to what Science knows about Matter and the Universe, before Existence would have been a roiling Chaos. Quantum Waves and Particles forever appearing, meeting with their anti-Waves

and anti-Particles and falling back into Non-existence. Stated in other words, every emergence from Being, as being some separate thing, meets with not-being that. For there is only Being and Nothing else.

But if every emergent Wavelet of Being, every Particle of Information is met with not-being that, how could Being ever come to know its Meaning? How could there be any Meaning at all?

The Quarks answer.

First this. Modern Particle accelerators, such as the one operated by CERN, are able to mimic the extreme energy and temperature conditions that existed during the first infinitesimal micro-seconds of the Universe. What follows is a version of what they find.

The "Top" and the "Bottom" Quarks play central roles in the first scenes, since reproducing them requires amounts of Energy similar to what theory indicates were the likely conditions at the very Beginning. Top and Bottom Quarks, however, do not last long. The Top Quark so massively overpowers the Bottom Quark, they're unable to endure. It's unlikely that any information moves between them at all. Nothing holds the two together. The Top Quark rapidly decays. And in less than a nanosecond, they both disappear.

As Temperatures and Energy levels ease, a second generation of Quarks appear. This time, however, they are closer to each other in size. The so-called "Charmed" Quark is only about ten times the mass of its partner, the "Strange." The Pair are able to engage, but only briefly. And when they do, a plethora of new entities, "Mesons," emerge. But the bonding between the Strange and the Charmed also proves unstable. We can reproduce such pairs in high energy laboratories — but only fleetingly before they fall back into non-being, as they did before the first nanosecond of the Universe had passed. The second attempt at Existence, like the first, also ends in failure.

As the Universe approaches the first ten thousand millionth of a second, the next generation of Quarks appear. This time they're nearly equal in size and, most significantly, we find them bound together in sets of three. Two Up Quarks with a Down Quark, or two Down Quarks with an Up — holding together by sharing the "Gluon" Particle, a Quantum of Energy also known as the Strong Force.

Adding to the strength of their cosmic Bond, with each exchange they make, they also transform into One Another's Color Charge — red, green, blue. Their dance, as some observers have described it, enables their Relationship to endure, thus creating Time. A dimension that hadn't existed before. As the Quarks enter into and move through Space, they acquire Mass — perhaps an unanticipated joy adding to the fun they were already having. The resulting stability of the Quark Trinities will serve as the foundation for the Universe.

So the Quarks' answer to the question, 'How could Being come to know its Meaning?'

The Up and Down Quarks emerge not as Self Separate Objects; not as not-being the Other — instead, they emerge expressing Belonging. Recognizing One Another as Equals and sharing Energy with Each Other, creating themselves as Unified Subject Centers. It's also important to note that their choosing to value One Another represents Meaning. As we'll see, the Quarks reside at the Heart of Matter.

The Story goes on. For the next 380,000 years or so, the Universe remains a hot dense Plasma. As Temperatures begin to subside, free-floating Electrons, that had arisen along with other Particles at the Beginning, find they can enter into Relationship with the Quark Trinities — which we now call Neutrons and Protons — forming the first Atoms. Until this development, ambient Photons, the Light carriers, were colliding with the Electrons and other Particles and so were constrained to the Plasma. Now though, with the Electrons drawing together around the Quark Nuclei, Space starts to open up. And Light breaks out across the Universe, leaving an afterglow that we've come to call the Cosmic Background Radiation.

Between a 100 million and 200 million years after the Beginning, Hydrogen, Helium and Lithium Atoms have formed. Repeating pathways Self-similar to their Quark Ancestors, these gaseous Elements begin drawing themselves together. As their masses increase, they produce ever stronger Gravitational Fields. Networks of filaments form with tiny, dense clumps of Matter, then thicken and tighten until Hydrogen Nuclei begin fusing into Helium, transforming into Energy. And Stars are born.

Depending on the pathway individual Stars take, their Lifetimes give rise to additional expressions of Belonging. Large Stars, toward the end of their Lives, can create a Supernova event. Burst open, leaving a wide range of

more complex Elements in their wake, such as Iron, Gold, Silver, Carbon... As Atoms exchange or share Electrons in their outermost shells, Molecules form. By about 1 billion years, Stars are gathering into Galaxies.

It may have been a Star going Supernova about 4.6 billion years ago that woke a nearby sleeping interstellar Cloud. The stir changed the Cloud's internal pressures, condensing vapors and upsetting its delicate balance. Soon gas and dust have begun to coalesce and the closer the Particles draw together, the more their individual momentums mesh. The Cloud at large begins to slowly spin. As its outmost edges pull inward — like a ballerina bringing in her arms — the Cloud spins faster. Soon a disk-like whorl takes shape, thick and hot at the center, thinner and cooler along the perimeter. The center will become our Sun. Large clumps of Matter coagulate into Planets. Smaller pieces become comets and asteroids.

To reconstruct the Story of Earth, nuclear physics and astronomy step aside so that chemistry, geology, paleontology, microbiology, botany and zoology can take center stage. Piecing together their picture, Scientists generally agree that our Mother Planet, like the Universe, was born amidst Chaos. Earth's own erratic orbit reflected the state of the entire Solar System — in total disarray. Planets whirling in unsettled forms and trajectories.

Infant Planet Earth is rocked by shock waves from falling asteroids and crashing comets. Her molten surface is a crucible of unimaginable heat. A magma ocean. Then a huge asteroid collides with Earth, tilting Her axis, becoming Her Moon.

Complexity Theory states that even in Chaos such as this, Self-organizing processes are at work. The options for Matter before Life, of course, are limited to physical and chemical Horizons. On Earth, during this early period, heavier Elements such as molten metal are sinking to the center of the spinning Sphere; lighter elements and molecules float to the surface. As Earth's rotation swirls the hot liquid Iron within, it begins to generate a magnetic field. A protective envelope that will prove critical in a future part of the Story.

About a half-billion years after coalescing from Stardust, Earth has formed a skin or crust. Although volcanoes are still spewing clouds of steam, ammonia, carbon dioxide and sulfides into the air, meteorite showers are

beginning to subside. In what will prove fortuitous, Earth's distance from the Sun permits water to liquefy. Elsewhere in our Solar System water exists only as gas or ice. As temperatures slowly fall, clouds condense into rain, resulting in lakes, oceans. The precious liquid increases.

Where exactly Life began remains uncertain. Most of Earth, around 4 billion years ago, is a steaming caldron of Elements and complex Organic Chemicals. Some of the Molecules were produced in Supernova events, delivered by Asteroids and Comets. Others are local creations, resulting from the spontaneous response of Atoms that happened to meet up. All the compounds in the turbulent, often referred to as Primordial Soup, are bonding by Chemical means alone. Sharing or exchanging outermost shell Electrons. None are what we yet call Living.

It may have been in Earth's Oceans near hot lava vents, or in the shallow waters along the shorelines of lakes and ponds, or in soft clay along river banks. One likely scenario suggests that tiny oily droplets, acting as protective domes, may have provided an environment where molecules and macromolecules could hook up.

Wherever Life began, in this version of the Story, Long Chain Polymers play the leading role. After hundreds of millions of years, these mega-molecules had developed the ability to recognize and engage with One Another. Some Research cites that they more than only wiggle together, in a kind of playful interaction they pass a smaller Molecule back and forth. Not all Polymers can participate, however; the skill requires particular Strings of information. As more Complex Polymers develop, some learn the Molecules that are required to play the little game. Soon the Polymers are passing the missing Strings to those Chains in need — so that they too, can play. This energizing of another easily fits the definition of primitive Metabolism, the signature of Life. Knowingly or not, the playful Polymers had opened the Garden Gate.

In a powerful counterpoint to the Self-as-Separate Master Narrative, the shift from Chemical activity into the Biosphere represents a new level of engagement with One Another. Giving without thought of return. Life begins with Altruism. Although the Metabolizers will continue to Bond by way of Sharing and Exchanging Electrons, they are now passing along something New. The Consciousness of Being a Unified Being. Caring and being Cared for.

Molecules meeting up with these Living Strands are excited to join. The opportunity to do good while becoming part of a Unified Caring System proves irresistible. More and more Complex varieties of Metabolizers evolve. Early means of replication, such as falling onto rocks and breaking apart, are replaced by the intelligence of RNA strands. Molecules capable of memorizing and repeating the required Molecular Structures. Cell walls follow. Some Strings learn skills of repair. Surely a welcomed Guest. There's constant invention, improvement and refinement. But all this Work requires Energy.

For the longest time the Cells were meeting their Energy needs by consuming the Sugars that happened to pass through their walls. After about a billion years of this, however, that pristine food supply begins to dwindle. Without the food that has now become the Bodies of Living Beings, the entire Living Network will die — every Agent starve.

Existent Life faces a Crisis. Can a Unified Subject Center, held together by the innovative Bonding of Altruism, destroy other Complex Subject Centers in order to survive? Wouldn't the taking of Another's Life violate Everything? The Quarks' sharing Energy; the Trust inherent in Electron exchange; the Altruism of the Long Chain Polymers? The very Pathways of Equality and Giving that brought Life into being?

Three billion years ago, with no more free floating food available, the Living had few options. We may never know the part Individuals played in contributing to the Solution. We do know what it was. To preserve the Pathways on which Life had evolved meant any taking of Another's Life in order to preserve One's own, included becoming Oneself food for Others — or Serving the larger Network in some other equally Life-giving way. As the Living turned to Communion, the crisis was avoided and Life on Earth continued to Evolve.

At the beginning, most Cells probably maintained patterns similar to their original food gathering techniques. Gradually, however, the consumption of whole Bodies of Information and ways of doing things, brings about a host of unexpected adaptations. Microbiologists observe diverse forms aimed at different tasks. Unpredicted behaviors appear.

Exploitative Cells invade and expect to live at the expense of Others. A method that can work, but poses problems. If the Parasite goes too far in harming or consuming their Host, the tactic proves fatal for both. Some Parasites

learn they can increase their chances for survival, even improve their Lives, by serving their Host. Symbiotic relationships proliferate.

One ingenious strain of Bacteria learns how to create their own food. They put it together from the ground up, Atom by Atom into Molecules. They begin by turning to the Sun for the Energy needed to break apart Water and gather the necessary Hydrogen. They then extract the required Carbon from Carbon Dioxide, which was abundant in the atmosphere at the time. They get more than enough of last ingredient, Oxygen, from both processes.

Photosynthesizers of all sorts evolve and flourish. New skills materialize and are reproduced. Some Cells acquire the ability to package and store Energy in molecules for later use. Some Cells learn to swim. Once these new ways take hold, heat loving Cyanobacteria bloom. Red, blue, green, purple, orange microbial life forms blanket the Planet.

These Cells do so well that they soon impact Global conditions. And not in a good way. The use of Water in Photosynthesis results in the release of Oxygen. For millions of years the Iron lying along Earth's surface was able to absorb the excess Oxygen, but when the Iron became saturated, Oxygen began accumulating in the atmosphere.

High above, in the Upper Atmosphere, an ozone layer was forming. A good thing as it was resulting in a kind of shield from Solar Radiation, now capable of damaging the ever more delicate gene sequencing.

Down below was another Story. Oxygen was lethal to almost all existent Life forms. Around 2.5 billion years ago, Earth again faced a Planetary Crisis. Photosynthesis, the very Life Process that these matured bacterial Cells depended on, was destroying them. The geologic record suggests that the yellow, red, blue, black, green, orange celebrations that had once stretched across seas and crawled up mountainsides — turning death gray. Entire genealogical families being wiped out. The Living had arrived at a crossroads. Either create a new way of Being or face Extinction.

Among the Life forms that existed at the time, a particular group of Bacteria had developed the rather peculiar behavior of playing around with the toxic Oxygen. After hundreds of millions of years of this dangerous activity, they were no longer poisoned by it; in fact, they had learned to use it. The larger living Network probably tolerated these Purple Oxygen Breathers; but no doubt kept them at the

periphery. Now the strange Creatures hold the key to survival. It would be an altogether different strain of Microbe, however, who would both enable and bring the Solution forward.

One possible scenario suggests the highly mobile Oxygen Breathers, who had earlier descended from a line of Heat loving Spirochetes, encountered a colony of ancient Archaeon. When they first met, each may have perceived the Other as potential food. Both groups being under the pressure of dwindling resources. But they may also have recognized that each had something to offer the Other. The Purple Oxygen Breathers obviously knew something that was keeping them alive; while the larger sized Archaeon, a host with open arms, was offering shelter, a place to rest, call home. And it may also have been apparent that digesting each other would guarantee that those survival strategies would not transfer.

However the Oxygen Breathing Bacteria and the Ancient Archaeon negotiated the transition, they crossed a Cosmic threshold. They created a Solution that Scientists recognize as the third Great Phase Transition. As improbable as it was unpredictable, the two independent Microbes emerge as a Single Being. Leaving behind their former identities, they combine; become the Eukaryotic Cell. A new creature that will do much more than bring together the abilities of the two lines from which it came.

Unlike any Living pattern Earth had ever seen before, the new Cell has a Nucleus. Intelligence, instead of being scattered in bits and pieces throughout the Cell, is now organized and concentrated in one place. And the Service that the Nucleus is charged with performing is no less than responding to information coming from all the various Cell Parts and their locations. Being at the same time, the keeper of the Cell's DNA, enables adaptations as had never been possible before.

The shift from the non-nucleated Prokaryotic Cell to the nucleated Eukaryotic Cell, again runs counter to the Master Narrative. The Self-as-Separate Mind would never have permitted sacrificing its identity in order to come together in the form of a new Unity. A Unity that, ironically, will allow for a future in which unique Species of Cells will be able to retain their Individual Identities

while becoming integral parts of larger Multi-celled Organisms; and from them, complex Multi-organed Creatures such as Ourselves. The Nucleated Cell begins a whole new chapter of Life on Earth.

Inconceivable before the Transition happened, and in complete defiance of expectation, the emergent Eukaryotes, with their improvements in handling and responding to in-coming Information, are exponentially better-suited for adapting to changing conditions. Within about a billion years, extremely elaborated Nucleated Cells are making rapid and successful adaptations.

Flotillas of independent, super-minded Cells begin meeting up, bringing together a diversity of unique forms and skills. A long quiet period follows. Perhaps the Eukaryotes needed some time to work out the details of how they might live together — carry out necessary labors, share and distribute food, reproduce and so forth. After the pause, Communities consisting of multiple kinds of Cells appear. For almost a billion and a half years, these loosely knit colonies flourish; until an Ice Age envelops the Planet. Earth will endure four more such Ice Ages. Each time waking from the long winters with greater Wonder.

Leaning into the Alternative Narrative that Science provides, we might speculate for a moment regarding the Evolutionary role that we Humans could some day play in the Life of Earth. We certainly already have the resources to gather the necessary information as well as the technology to become Earth's cherished Gardener. Even help regulate, rather than contribute to unsustainable temperatures. For now, however, back to the story.

As Earth recovers from the 'Snowball' condition, the records show thick layers of Cells metamorphosing into tissue. Some segments recasting themselves to meet the needs of the larger System. Cell groups performing specialized tasks leads to primitive organs. Colonies are soon transforming into integrated Organisms. When a group learns to make use of Calcium, shells and skeletal structures appear. As these activities accelerate, ever more complex bodies evolve.

On the way to these developments, Life overcame a significant obstacle. The ancestral Prokaryotic Cells were potentially immortal. They could die — but only accidentally. Like get dashed on rocks, poisoned, or starve, or eaten*;* but for their own part, they lived forever.

So as these first Cell groupings began meeting up, they were all but locked into their existent states. Evolutionary change could happen, but only very slowly. At some point, in order to get beyond this impasse, our Ancestors programmed aging and death into their DNA. What stronger evidence against the idea of Self-as-Separate than an adaptation that can only benefit future generations?

Around 540 million years ago, Earth bursts open with Life. Some Paleontologists refer to the period as the "Cambrian Explosion." Trilobites swim about on the ocean floor. Boned and sharp-teethed sea creatures elaborate on patterns of eating and being food for One Another. Everywhere hearts beat. Algae and insects leave the sea and begin living on the land.

Toward the end of this miraculous period, a mass extinction occurs — one of five major setbacks for Earth. While scientists do not know the exact reasons for these catastrophic events, they suggest possibilities such as Climate Change, abrupt habitat destruction, meteorite collision... In each instance, it takes Earth at least 25 million years to recover.

By 400 million years ago, marine Life populates the seas. The first forests cover the land. Ferns grow beneath the trees. Plants with seeds have appeared. Insects and spiders crawl about.

Around 360 million years ago, using fins for arms and hands, the Tetrapods crawl from the sea. For almost 100 million years these vertebrate amphibians linger on the shoreline, slowly metamorphosing. Reptiles, crocodiles, turtles, frogs, salamanders, dinosaurs, lizards and mammals will all evolve from the Tetrapods.

The third great extinction event is known as the Great Dying. It occurred around 252 million years ago.

During the Jurassic Period, 208 million to 146 millions years ago, huge plant-eating Dinosaurs roam the land. Carnivores feed on the herbivores. Later, birds appear. The land hosts flowering plants. Mammals continue to diversify.

Around 200 million years ago, Earth's previously unified landmass, Pangaea, breaks into continents.

The fifth mass extinction event, took place about 65 million years ago, wiping out the dinosaurs along with 85% of all other living species.

Crocodiles, turtles, lizards, birds and several mammals number among the Species that survive the Dinosaur extinction. From the mammals, two groups emerge. Marsupials, who give birth to offspring with a short gestation period

the new born living in pouches. And placental mammals, who give birth to babies fully developed. This latter method proves so successful that within 25 million years, Earth abounds with animals that run, leap, walk, trot, jump, glide, soar, burrow, creep, climb, crawl, graze, grasp… A continuum of individuation with ever deepening Brain power.

Around 8 million years ago, ape-like animals appear. Approximately 5 million years after that, some of them, after freeing their hands by standing up on their hind legs, develop a distinctively brainy Relationship with One Another. They invent and begin using a Sign System. Language enables whole new levels of communication, imagination, ingenuity — ultimately leading to Civilization, institutions, learning, refined art forms, science, medicine, technology...

It took only 10,000 years for we Humans to completely transform the appearance of our Mother Planet. Megacities. Satellite Systems. Interstates and autobahns. Canals, shipping lanes and flight patterns. Pipelines, cables, cell phone towers. We've woven the continents together.

Embedded with the Self-as-Separate narrative, however, we've also brought Ourselves to a critical tipping point.

The Stories Science has uncovered remind us that the Universe, Earth and Life have faced moments like this before. Conditions such as the Bacteria encountered when the Great Oxidation Event nearly killed them all. In each transition, individuals making choices changed the course of history — both resolving the crisis and opening the World to unanticipated Wonder.

Chapter Six

Alternative Narratives in the Arts

Prelude

We're each in our own way artists. Born with a Love of Beauty. A desire to create. We're drawn to moments that offer a glimpse of what makes us Who we are. An astonishing Sunset, a starry Night, a perfect Flower. Art transcends Time and Space. Waits in an in-between for a moment of Relationship with the Artist.

Art resides where the Master Narrative doesn't go. For Artists, going to that place is their Life, their work. Yet, so fragile, so precious the gift to get there, even to talk about it can impede. In a World where Microtheatrical Power chains us to the Self-as-Separate Narrative, many Artists develop a reflex of side-stepping any words one might use to describe them or their work.

None of us like being labeled, told what to do, or how to do it. Least of all Artists, for whom listening to such talk could mean interference in the mysterious and elusive process of Creation.

Spanning from the earliest Human societies to the Postmodern present, the sheer volume of artistic production sets limits on what one chapter can do. Experts have dedicated their entire lives to subdivisions within Art history, Music history and Literature. Merely to sketch an outline requires so great a reduction of the materials and oversimplification that important names and works will inevitably be left out. We can only mention a few as we trace the development of Alternative Narrative in this important dimension of Human Life.

Art Connects

The Arts, with Freedom and creativity at their core, have developed a multiplicity of ways that counter the Master Narrative. Artists may twist the Sign System's rules, making sense only if the Narrative of Separation doesn't. Or they might find and open cracks in the Sign System, allowing us to see more than the Ego Narrative admits. Or make us aware of the Sign System itself, as when painters draw attention to the paint and the act of painting rather than the subject matter. Or create out of Sign System experiences by setting up narrative

or melodic expectation and then thwarting it. Artists are also known to undermine the foundations of the mistaken Master Narrative by challenging our sense of Perception, so that we ask, “What am I seeing?” “What am I hearing?” Even supremely skillful application of the Sign System rules can bring moments of deliverance through sheer Beauty. Art engages alternative ways of relating with One Another and our World. It can unexpectedly connect Consciousness with the Referent.

Artists have shown themselves adept at breaking through the most formidable array of Cultural, economic and political obstacles. Perhaps no other members of Society show greater Freedom of Mind than Artists. Their creativity and commitment to the Truth has sometimes meant courageous and direct confrontation — stubborn integrity in the face of beatings, jailings, exile, death threats. Art can so subvert the Sign System, that no one, not even the Artist, becomes aware of the challenge to the status quo.

We hardly need to search the archives of poetry, classical music, popular song, dance, theatre and film to know that Love outnumbers all other Artistic themes. Love longed for, dreamed of — Love greater than the Ego imaginary. Whether explicitly talked about or not, Love nourishes the dedication and sacrifice required to be an Artist.

Art actively engages Artist and Audience in an I-Thou Relationship. Listening to music, attending a concert, visiting a museum, watching a film, reading poetry... do more than stretch our World by changing our habitual frame of reference. Art brings us into Relationship with the Artist and Others who share the moment. Performance Art can leave both Audience and Artists stunned, moved to tears, shouts and wild applause. Art calls to our Hearts. To who we are.

In ballet, opera, musical performance and theatre, Artists strive for a perfection the Master Narrative would have us believe unattainable. Dancers seem to defy the Laws of Gravity. Actors transport us to other times and places. Musicians press the edge of harmonic possibility. Art can call for feats so challenging that they require a concentration momentarily eluding the Master Narrative’s chains. The multi-layered cooperation necessitated by such creations suggest that we are at least as hard-wired to work together as separately.

Notions of who is an Artist can also work against the Master Narrative. In the Medieval World, so little value was placed on individuality, that Artists

belonged to the social category of workers, artisans whose labors remain anonymous. Today, we make some Artists into celebrities, even superstars. And we see Artists' work as qualitatively different from the tasks performed in factories, offices, restaurants and such. We take for granted that the Artist must be Free. And Artists do rely on free thinking, experimentation. The Artist's job is to venture beyond the established borders. Tell us what we didn't know before. Open our World for us. Show us more.

While we highly value originality and see individuality as central to an Artist's Creativity, Art takes root and comes to fruition in Relationship. And not just because the meaning of an Artist's work depends upon Others and changes with different audiences at different times. Artistic genius derives from inspiration — a calling from the center of One's Being. Which many Artists do not interpret as a Sphere separate from the larger World, since they cannot bring themselves to take credit for the thought, the idea, the melody, the dream that came to them.

Carl Jung theorized that all of Humankind participates in a Collective Unconscious. Artists delving into this shared underground River may surface with connections to the Referent that they themselves do not fully understand. A timeless and shared field of our Psyche might help explain why Art holds so much potential for helping us get free of the Master Narrative.

Historical Perspective

Art comes entwined with geography, Culture and politics. Artists work and Live during specific historical periods, marked by events, characterized by particular mentalities, an imaginary and Change — making it virtually impossible to understand how Art performs as an Alternative Narrative without at least briefly describing the History in which it arises.

We will limit our outline here to artistic developments in the Culture that originated in Europe, spread to the Americas and has come to dominate the World. To be sure, the Art of other Civilizations has offered a wealth of Counter Narrative, as well. The Artistry of Native American and African Peoples, for instance, bespeaks a deep Personal Relationship with Nature. It's also important to note that the Art of People cast as Other by the Western World has always, in one way or another, enriched the dominant Culture.

It's in Western Civilization, however, that we find Ourselves. And it's in Western Civilization that the Master Narrative, with its practice of Coercive Power, has attained its most overwhelming force and influence. To retrieve Alternative Narrative from this context though means we will need to focus on Art supported by the empowered Classes, since it was not until the Twentieth Century that this so-called 'High Culture' opened up a place for Art created by Popular Culture or colonized People. We'll catch up on that History as we sketch the role that Art plays in Civilization, both in its coming into being and its possibilities. We need to start at the Beginning.

Early Art

The Story of the dialectic between Art and the Master Narrative fades into pre-history. Art that survives suggests that a Goddess Religion and societies governed by Women may have preceded the Patriarchy in which we presently live.

The earliest records of Human Civilization that we have indicate that the Self-as-Separate Master Narrative has already taken hold. Slavery, social hierarchy and militarism characterize both Mesopotamian and ancient Egyptian Worlds. Yet, even in the service of chronicling Wars and celebrating Power, Art manages an element of a counter force by expressing Beauty — exquisitely skilled and careful work, that taps into a deeper Human capacity. Glimmers of our possibility shine through in the sculptures, paintings, mosaics and hieroglyphics. The structure and orientation of the Pyramids signal connection with the larger Universe. Depictions of the Heavens suggest Personal Presence. Narratives bear a sense of the Sacred. Point to something more than the Stories Language tells.

Jumping to Ancient Greece and Rome, we find the Master Narrative of Self-as-Separate culturally secured. Male supremacy, class hierarchy, military conquest, slavery... The Greeks take the power of Sign Systems and the Master Narrative to a new level. Refinements in the use of Language, plus progress in geometry, astronomy, mathematics and physics, all define this next step that Western Civilization took. Greek Literature sets down enduring Human themes, also rationalizations for the gross inequity and injustice of the Self-as-Separate World. Sculptors reproduce graceful flowing lines, evoking Nature's Wonders, although idealized and abstracted from the actual irregularities of the Referent.

The conquering Romans take everything that Greek Culture and Society had to offer. Then added to it. Making significant innovations in architecture, the upper class Romans beautify their private villas. Distinctive mosaics adorn their walls and floors. In an environment driven by the violence of a brazenly Self-as-Separate/Ego Narrative, beauty and intense detail can carry a different message. Counter Narrative can also peek through more directly. An annual Saturnalian festival affords a brief performance moment when hierarchies are inverted, slaves freed, everything turned upside down. Cicero writes against the corruption that makes it easy for warrior tribes to overrun Rome.

The Middle Ages

In the centuries following the fall of Rome, chaos reigns. Warlords sack one another's holdings — enslaving, raping, murdering. Monasteries and convents become a refuge for People, for piety and for Art. Literacy as well. Not even the individuals reigning at the top of the social hierarchies know how to read. Eventually, men who command the largest forces in feudal alliances become kings and nobles.

Meanwhile, the Religion that grew from Christ's message, "Love one another... Feed the hungry... Shelter the homeless... Turn the other cheek," has become an Institution with its own rigid hierarchy and entwinement with the Secular Powers. Social inequality receives theological justification as divinely ordained.

In this context, Art became a means of displaying wealth, in the status competition among lords and high ranked clergy. The significant role that the Church plays in the Medieval World becomes evident in how Religion serves up the subject matter for mosaics, statuary and manuscript paintings. Biblical scenes with iconic faces convey Spiritual Affinity with the viewer. Architects take the concept of Heaven to new heights. Slender pillars supporting vaulted ceilings attract the eye upward. Permit stained glass windows to replace stone walls. Gothic cathedrals exemplify transcendence, yet their sculptural adornment includes real individualized faces looking out at us — sometimes with irreverent expressions. Images of animals and plants also find their way into artworks.

Although Church doctrine devalues Nature, *The Canticle of the Sun*, a Thirteenth Century prayer attributed to Francis of Assisi, sings the Wonder of a Nature closely connected with God. Overall however, in a period when communities could be condemned for heresy and massacred by papal armies, and individuals were being burned at the stake, Art as Alternative Narrative confined itself to expressions of Beauty and feats of Artisanship.

In the early Fourteenth Century, Dante's *Divine Comedy* summarizes the theology and cosmology of the Medieval World. More importantly, its beautiful poetry, written in the People's spoken Italian rather than Church Latin, expresses one Human Being's Love for Another.

By now, the growth of cities and increased trade are beginning to effect a transition from the Feudal system to a Money economy — with a nascent Middle Class. But in the mid-Fourteenth Century, a plague wipes out as much as 50% of the European population, perhaps as many as 38 million People are taken. The Medieval World comes crashing down in pestilence, famine, war and a crisis of authority in the Church.

Renaissance Means Rebirth

Europe comes alive again in the Fifteenth Century as population and the economy begin to recover. The Mediterranean ports of Italy and the fast sailing ships of Flanders contribute to a slight expansion of the Wealthy Classes. People who can read have begun to pursue intellectual activities and pleasures, including enjoyment of the Arts. More urban than the rest of Europe, Italy, with its historical and archeological links to ancient Rome and Greece, opens the Renaissance Period.

A new "Humanism," catalyzed by Petrarch, the Fourteenth Century Italian poet, reaffirms Human Value and encourages revisiting classical antiquity. The abundance of paintings depicting scenes from Classical Mythology document the interest in it at the time. The enthusiasm sends individuals searching through monastic libraries for lost Roman texts and Greek philosophical fragments. Luckily, Arab scholars had preserved and commented on them during the intervening centuries, so some had survived.

Renaissance artists turn to Nature with renewed attention. What did real trees, real flowers, real People's faces look like. In the Netherlands, Jan Van Eyck emphasizes tiny details in his work. In Italy, painters use mathematical formulae to perfect their representation of natural phenomena. Leonardo da Vinci investigates mechanics, optics, the behavior of light and the movement of water. He gives his Mona Lisa a face that seems to move. Her smile will have people talking for centuries.

Michelangelo celebrates the beauty of the Human Body. His eighteen-foot marble sculpture of David stands emblematic of the re-awakening. When commissioned by the Pope to paint the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, he creates a monument to Human capability. Some twenty years later, he returns to the chapel and paints *The Last Judgment*. The extravagance and corruption of the Renaissance Papacy is provoking a reaction that will change the Western World.

Reformation

The Cultural Milieu in which European Artists were working changed dramatically after the publication of Martin Luther's Ninety-five Theses in 1517. Many followers of the new Protestantism rejected, even made an effort to destroy, Religious Art. Several Protestant denominations declared that any decoration in their Lives was sinful.

Seen in a larger perspective, Europe was transitioning from a single, highly controlled version of Christianity to multiple interpretations. Previously unthinkable possibilities of Cultural Pluralism were opening up. Yet the shift would bring more than a Century of massacres, heretic and witch burnings, and the Wars of Religion.

Given the Historic conditions — Europeans killing each other over differing Religious views; poverty alongside ostentatious wealth; voyages of discovery which in effect amounted to the pillaging of distant shores, enslavement and genocide — Western Civilization appears submerged in the Self-as-Separate Narrative. Yet, even here, Art proves capable of offering an Alternative. In Thomas More's Utopia, a fictive explorer reports finding a happy and prosperous People who share everything they have. They elect a governing council that provides health care, education, sanitation and a degree of Religious Freedom; all of which is unheard of and sounds impossible at the time.

By the mid-Sixteenth Century, more People can read, thanks partly to Protestantism's encouragement of Bible study and partly to the printing press making books less expensive and more available. Peddlers carry pamphlets to the countryside, where communities gather around a single hearth to hear someone read.

The Literary Arts flourish. In Spain, Cervantes' novel, *Don Quixote,* makes fun of the old order of European society, while inviting the reader to love the crazy, ridiculous dreamer. In England, William Shakespeare uses Language to lift us over Sign System walls. Wake us to Ourselves. Shakespeare undermines the Master Narrative by celebrating Nature, Love, Integrity — condemning greed, dishonesty and ruthless ambition.

Among the most educated, international dialogue leads to what has been called the Scientific Revolution. In Poland, Copernicus formulates his theory that the Earth moves around the Sun — directly conflicting with tradition and the Church. In Italy, Galileo with his telescope, publishes observations that support heliocentricity. Although the Inquisition can still force him to recant, a profound change is happening.

Narratives about the Universe have become open to inquiry, less controlled by a single Institution. Francis Bacon expounds the Scientific Method. Tells his followers to treat Nature as an Object. Descartes argues against believing anything before subjecting it to rigorous methodical examination. Newton introduces a mathematical system to describe the Laws of Gravity and Motions of the Planets. All challenging the Master Narrative's insistence that there is only one Story.

As Seventeenth Century monarchs consolidate their power, Artists make a living by entertaining and glorifying them. Architects and artisans build and furnish palaces. Painters and sculptors decorate. Musicians, dancers and artists create elaborate courtly spectacles. Some Artists manage to insert counter narrative. Molière writes comedies to amuse Louis XIV and his Court, but makes the point that young People should be permitted to marry for Love.

Bolder criticism appears in the highly popular German novel by Von Grimmelshausen, *The Adventures of Simplicius Simplicissimus*, where the narrator's comically exaggerated naïveté covers for a scathing critique of the Thirty Year's War. In the Netherlands, where it's no longer kings but wealth that rules, Rembrandt shows us faces of greed and corruption, as well as those who radiate the goodness of the Human Heart.

Enlightenment

As the Eighteenth Century begins, better musical instruments, larger orchestras and choruses take music to new heights. Bach and Mozart compose with elaborate complexity. Despite serving the Monarchical elite of the time, Classical Music nonetheless works against the Master Narrative by touching us with a sense of Awe. Antonio Vivaldi connects with Nature's sounds in his Four Seasons. Later, Mozart will pare away decoration and express feelings with mathematical perfection. One of his operas, based on the play, *The Marriage of Figaro,* questions the social order by depicting a servant with greater personal merit than his master.

Meanwhile, early Eighteenth Century Literary Arts come into open conflict with the existent Coercive Powers. Writers such as Voltaire and Diderot spend time in jail for their words. Their books become all the more popular for being banned. Calling, often in humorous ways, for reason, education, tolerance and more Humane values. Enlightenment Literature sweeps Europe and ultimately the World. Refuting Narratives of a fallen and corrupt Human Nature, the Enlightenment asserts that Human Beings have a natural goodness, an innate sense of justice.

Montesquieu imagines two Persians traveling through Europe, commenting on what they find. In an emblematic moment, one worries that Humanity might invent something even more lethal than gunpowder. The other responds that unanimous consent would immediately prohibit such weaponry.

Voltaire uses the power of laughter to attack the madness of war, slavery, colonial exploitation and religious intolerance. Rousseau invites the reader to consider how many horrors would have been avoided if People would have responded to the very first attempt to fence land as private property by tearing up the stakes and insisting, "The fruits of the Earth belong to Everyone and the Earth itself to no one." In Germany, Emmanuel Kant writes, "What is Enlightenment?" His answer, "Dare to know... have the courage to use your own understanding." In England, Mary Wollstonecraft uses Enlightenment reasoning to make the case for Women's education and Equal Rights.

By Century's end, as the new ideas contribute to the outbreak of revolutions, the monarchs and aristocrats who had enthusiastically embraced the

Enlightenment change their tune. In the "New World," the British colonies declare themselves independent; and do so with the assertion that "all men are created equal," and have "inalienable rights," such as "liberty and the pursuit of happiness." The writers of the new nation's Constitution draw on Montesquieu's ideas for ensuring the future of democratic government. They make an inspiring example for the Old World, yet disregard the Humanity of Native Americans, retain slavery and establish voting rights for property-owning white males only.

In France, during the Revolution of 1789, the king refuses to cooperate in creating a Constitutional Monarchy, provoking the overthrow of the existent Monarchy and his own execution. As the monarchs and aristocrats of Europe gather military forces against the new French Republic, moderation gives way to riot-driven popular democracy and the "Terror." Artists such as Jacques-Louis David heroicize revolutionary moments. Motifs connect with Athenian and Roman roots of democracy.

The General Napoleon starts out saving the Revolution from its external enemies, then extends French control across Europe. He raises hopes, especially among young Europeans, that he will liberate their countries, too. But bitterly disappoints with his dictatorship and overblown imperial ambitions. Goya paints the mass firing-squad executions and such, documenting the attempt to conquer Spain. Napoleon prolongs and loses the war to defend the Revolution. Nonetheless, his rise from the lowest ranks of the aristocracy to a World transforming role takes on an archetypal significance in Western Culture, representing the importance one Individual can have in history.

Romanticism

The fall of Napoleon adds to a growing movement in reaction against the Enlightenment. Romanticism turns from living with Reason and Logic alone; asserts instead, the importance of knowledge that can come from Feelings. "I am certain of nothing," writes John Keats, "except the holiness of the heart's affections and the truth of the imagination."

Emerson, Hopkins, Emily Dickenson and others emphasize our inseparability from the whole of Living Nature. Women writers, some hiding behind male-identified pen names, offer an alternative point of view. Jane Austen, George Sand, George Eliot, Charlotte and Emily Brontë provide

narratives of Humanity and Human metamorphosis. Whether written by women or men, Love is paramount to the Romanticists. Narratives spun by Herman Melville, Victor Hugo and Alexander Dumas reference Poetic Justice. That Nature, the Universe, how things happen is more than Chance.

Beethoven bridges from Mozart's perfected classism to the emotional power that Romanticism wants to deliver. Chopin brings listeners to tears. Tchaikovsky and Verdi combine evocative music with Storyline. A Love story. In operas and ballets, performing Artists are developing technical repertoire, showing Human capability something greater than had been imagined. In painting, Joseph Turner foregrounds the background. Skies, mists, seas, landscapes. His moody canvases draw our attention to the features we're missing in our ordinary ways of seeing things. Edward Hicks counters the Master Narrative by painting more than a hundred versions of the *Peaceable Kingdom*, where the lion lays down with the lamb.

The era's tumultuous political history, of course, affects Romanticism. Many of these Artists are anti-Revolution as well as anti-Rationalism. And their Romanticization of the Medieval Period proves useful to Conservatives who are calling for a return to unquestioned Authority — in the Church, in Society at large and in the family. Conservatives want to drag the World back to the way things had been before the Enlightenment. Before democracy.

Romanticism, however, is also a Movement that calls to our Hearts, and so fundamentally conflicts with that Old Order. Beginning with its opposition to slavery as expressed in the writings of Thoreau and Emerson. Some Romanticists translate the Revolution's ideas of Liberty into expressions of Artistic freedom. Romanticism's creation and celebration of the Napoleonic legend feeds notions of Artistic genius at odds with the World at large.

Many young People from privileged families are feeling dissatisfied with the easy comforts of a Life without greatness. Some dedicate themselves to the grand project of changing the social and political order altogether. Individuals and groups form around ideas of creating a Humane and intelligently organized society that will bring happiness to Everyone. These early Socialists believe that people of the upper classes can and will choose to redistribute their Wealth. Experimental communities spring up throughout Europe and the United States.

Karl Marx scornfully dubs them "Utopians," for thinking that anything except the use of force will stop the upper classes from taking more than their fair share. His Communist Manifesto calls on Workers everywhere to unite and throw off their chains.

In 1848, pro-democratic Revolutions erupt in France, Germany, Austria and Italy — none of them successful. Worse yet, in response to these efforts to create a more Just and Equitable Society, Authoritarian groups violently retaliate. They take over and will rule over Europe for the next several decades, making dissent far more difficult.

The tremendous failure of 1848 pushes artists in various directions. After initially siding with the Revolutionaries, poet Charles Baudelaire now asserts that Art should serve no cause or purpose whatsoever. Yet his *Flowers of Evil* expose the hypocritical morality inherent in the Master Narrative and shocks readers with its unconventional sexuality. Other writers and painters turn toward a more realistic portrayal of the problems they see around them.

The Industrial Revolution, begun in Eighteenth Century England, is by now transforming Life in both continental Europe and America. While new technologies — such as the steam engine, precision machinery, superior methods of mining and smelting — hold the promise of improving daily Life, their immediate effect reduces the Majority to misery. People move from the countryside to the city as factory production replaces rural cottage industry. Underpaid Laborers, with no regulations to protect them, struggle to survive in horrendous working and living conditions.

Charles Dickens, Emile Zola and others recount in detail, the suffering of the poor and working classes. Gustave Courbet shocks the establishment by painting scenes from peasant Life, hinting at and depicting the ugliness of poverty. Courbet, a Socialist, will be jailed and exiled for his convictions. Marx makes no exception for such Artists. He insists that Culture only serves to perpetuate the Capitalist Economic system. Art will disprove so narrow an assessment.

Modern Art

In 1860s Paris, aspiring young artists including Monet, Renoir, Pissarro and Degas take painting in a new direction that will powerfully, if indirectly, challenge the Master Narrative. Struck by Manet's assertion that "There are no lines in nature

only areas of color, one against another." Impressionists rethink what our Minds might be imposing on the World. Seek to paint only what they see. They often worked outdoors, rather than in studios, and painted quickly — trying to capture the fleeting shadows in the changing light. Monet does multiple paintings of the same scene, drawing our attention to the never to happen again moments. Trying to remain true to Nature. The Impressionists perforate Realism's Real.

Some work at addressing the viewer directly by embedding images and meanings in their portraits that spill over with the question — "What am I seeing?" In that swirl of smoke? Dancing in that curl of hair? In that person's eye?

The best known Impressionists do not take a stand on the misery of the lower classes. Say nothing, even as the last Revolution, the Socialist Paris Commune is brutally crushed. Nor do they adopt the Bohemian Lifestyle that will soon become a stereotype for Artists.

Yet the Impressionists paint in ways that subvert. They remind us that ordinary perception does not deliver Reality as simply as we assume. Their techniques invite the viewer to respond, not just to the content, but to the paint and the act of painting itself. And any increased awareness of Sign Systems weakens their Power over our Minds. Equally important, Impressionism opens the door to Modern Art by making it conceivable for later artists to go even further in disrupting the processes of representation — and the workings of the Master Narrative.

By the 1880s, most European countries had at least quasi-democratic Political Institutions. And Life had improved slightly for the lower classes. Labor Unions had won reforms such as Child-labor Laws. And to lessen the appeal of Socialism, a few countries had even established rudimentary Social Welfare Systems. Which led the ruling classes to view themselves as Humane, enlightened, refined and civilized. Yet the contrast in living conditions even between middle class and working class remained stark.

Internationally, a scramble to colonize the rest of the World intensified. Motivated by competition for Power, as well as the lure of gold, diamonds and

other natural resources, European Nations laid claim to lands and territories where People had been living for centuries. Advanced military technology makes taking over easy. Heads of State meet in 1884 to carve up what King Leopold of Belgium calls, "that magnificent African cake."

In the Americas, the United States ruthlessly seizes Native American Lands as the drive for empire pushes Westward. In the name of Civilization, men everywhere carry out acts of brutality and treachery.

Some Artists directly oppose these crimes against People designated "Other." Joseph Conrad's novel, *Heart of Darkness*, exposes atrocities the author witnessed in Africa. Conrad, Mark Twain and Arthur Conan Doyle join the Congo Reform Association founded in 1904. Photography provides a new and powerful tool for Artists. They record the hideousness of the moment in images such as the well-known U.S. War Department photo of a Slave's whipping scars. Criticized later for not showing the mistreatment of Native Americans, Edward Curtis chooses instead to emphasize their Dignity and Beauty.

Paul Gauguin's paintings of Polynesian Islanders, enhanced by his handling of color and perspective, similarly remind us of the Wonder that our World has pushed to the periphery, exploited, destroyed. The title of one of his most famous works interrogates the foundations of the Master Narrative itself: *"Where do we come from? What are we? Where are we going?*"

Before turning to painting, Vincent Van Gogh anguishes over the poverty he witnesses in London. Gives all he owns to the poor while working as a lay preacher among Belgian mineworkers. After losing that job, he paints like a madman — some 800 canvases in the ten years before his suicide. His work releases the writhing, living movement of the Referent that the Sign System will never tame nor still.

Teenaged poet Arthur Rimbaud describes the poetic process as a 'rational derangement.' His genius goes deeper than free verse. Sensing the expectations that words can carry, he suddenly turns the line, effecting a Sign System shaking surprise. Adding outrageously non-conformist behavior, Rimbaud enacts the Modern Artist's absolute rebellion against any Narrative that might occupy his Mind, or interfere with how he understands the creative process.

As the Nineteenth Century comes to a close, artists and intellectuals alike recognize the serious disconnect between the celebratory narratives of an Enlightened Civilization and the actual Historic conditions being produced. Nietzsche drops all pretense and frankly calls for 'great' men to wield all the Power they can get their hands on and cease weakening themselves with moral scruples.

In contrast, playwright Alfred Jarry rips the mask off Social Hierarchy. His King Ubu personifies the abuse that comes with the exercise of Coercive Power over Others. The play, scatological and sexual, draws attention to all things repugnant to middle class sensibilities.

The Twentieth Century brings automobiles, electric lights, radio, telephone, new architectural materials, a quickened pace to Life — at least to the cities. Modern Art mirrors this transformation, exploding into a variety of new approaches and tools. Artists encourage each other as the Art establishment at first rejects each innovation — then comes to identify with it. Art more and more becomes a commodity. Movements branch out.

Labeled 'Savage Beasts' by Art critics, Fauvism works with thick, wild brush strokes. Rouault deepens Fauve, while Matisse moves on. Picasso and Braque develop Cubism from Cezanne's subtle geometrics. Showing how the Sign System works at simplifying the World into straight lines and right angles. How everything can be seen from multiple points of view.

Duchamp's abstract *Nude Descending a Staircase* pictures motion. Picasso, whose career will span seven decades and multiple movements, infuses his work with borrowings from African Art. The uncategorizable Chagall brings us Worlds where things are upside down, animals play musical instruments, the cellist is his cello.

Expressionists use paint to represent States of Mind. Munch leads the way with his famous painting, *The Scream*. Kandinsky highlights the un-said with patches of color, geometric confetti and chaotic mixes of squiggles, lines, spirals. Moving completely away from representation, abstract Art further distances itself from the Sign System. Making it conspicuous by its absence.

In 1909, Sergei Diaghilev's Ballets Russes opens in Paris. Its Stars, Anna Pavlova and Vaslav Nijinsky, cause a sensation. This new ballet company becomes legend — engaging Picasso, Matisse, Braque, Rouault and

others to create sets. They dance to music composed for their productions by Debussy, Ravel, Satie and Stravinsky. New tonalities, unexpected turns, dissonances and energies of Modernity. Meanwhile, Isadora Duncan's "free dance" lays the groundwork for Modern Dance.

Despite artistic subversion, the Master Narrative rules the moment. Driven by competition among family monarchs, the logic of military buildup and the press of industrialists for territorial expansion, the Rulers of Europe declare war. Cheering crowds sent off the troops as if to a sporting event. Expected to last just a few weeks, World War I dragged on from 1914 to 1918, leaving some 10 million People dead. Millions more are maimed and sickened by the insanity of chemical weapons, machine guns, hellish trenches and on and on. The treaty that ends the War perpetuates the enmity with vengeful demands on the economy of Germany, where People are already starving to death.

In response, some Artists generate anti-war narratives. Novelist Erich Maria Remarque recounts the cruel absurdities suffered by ordinary soldiers in *All Quiet on the Western Front.* Painter Georges Rouault combines images of War with moments in the Passion of Christ. The Dadaists, a group of Artists from all over Europe, express disgust with Culture and Society at large. They announce, "the great rebellion of artistic movements." Dadaism declares itself "against everything."

Meanwhile, Artists are finding new ways to speak. Some explore form. Poets such as Apollinaire have their words running in circles, up and down hills, even the shape of the Eiffel Tower. James Joyce turns prose writing inside out with his Stream of Consciousness technique.

Surrealists aim to delve beneath the surface, expose what underlies the Master Narrative. Poets such as André Breton try to draw forth subconscious material by means of automatic writing. Painters depict ordinary Reality's unreal as real, and vice versa. In a painstakingly representational style, Magritte's *The Human Condition* subverts the Sign System by having us looking out a window at a landscape, the view mostly blocked by a barely discernible canvas representing that same landscape. Jean Cocteau and Luis Bunuel make dreamlike, often nightmarish, films. The Surrealist Movement aligns with the Left in the political

crisis that was gathering in Europe. The group expels perhaps the best known Surrealist painter, Salvador Dali, for supporting Fascism.

In the years between the World Wars, Totalitarianism threatens to extinguish democracy. In Russia, the Communist Revolution sets up a dictatorial hierarchy that uses brute force against any resistance to its idea of sharing the National Wealth. Millions die in Stalin's famines, at the same time as men at the top are indulging in sumptuous feasting. In Italy, Mussolini plays on Middle and Upper Class fears of Communism, using electoral politics, violent thugs and dirty tricks, he's able to establish himself as dictator.

Hitler follows suit in 1930s Germany. General Francisco Franco turns his army against the Left leaning democratically elected government of Spain, and with help from Hitler and Mussolini, wins the Civil War.

Even in established democracies, Totalitarian ideology seems to be gaining adherents. Hundreds of thousands join Fascist and other Right-wing groups in France. But their violent riot in 1934, seen by many as an attempt to seize power by force, prompts the majority to unite and elect Socialists in 1936.

In the United States, powerful individuals including American ambassador to England, Joseph Kennedy, give verbal and material support to the extreme Right in Europe — and at home. Hitler decorates Henry Ford and IBM director Tom Watson for befriending the Nazi regime. Corporations including General Motors and Texaco supply military vehicles and fuel to Hitler, Mussolini and Franco.

Some Artists take a powerful stand against Fascism. Ernest Hemmingway joins other Artists fighting for the Republic in the Spanish Civil War — and memorializes that experience in his novel, *For Whom the Bell Tolls.* After the Nazi bombing of the city of Guernica, Pablo Picasso turns his genius to portraying the horrific event. Jacques Lipschitz sculpts his feelings about Fascism into the 46-foot *Prometheus Strangling the Vulture* for the Paris World Fair of 1937.

People colonized and exploited by the dominant Culture increasingly find ways to add their vision to the oppositional energy. Mexican painter Diego Rivera develops a distinctive style that powers his portrayal of peasants, workers. Frida Kahlo paints elements of Mexican Folk Culture into disturbing expressions of a multiple Otherness. Harlem Renaissance writers including poets Claude McKay

and Langston Hughes bring African American Self-affirmation and critique of dominant Culture into the mix.

The Négritude movement, founded by youthful poets Leopold Senghor of Senegal and Aimé Césaire of Martinique, works at decolonizing Minds. A wave of enthusiasm for African, African-American and African-Brazilan expression sweeps the Art World. While the Nazis attack Jazz for its Black roots, prelude to banning it outright in 1935, musicians such as Coleman Hawkins, Benny Carter and Josephine Baker have Paris watching, listening, dancing. Classical composers are integrating elements of Jazz into their music as well.

Modern Art challenges the power of Sign Systems and the Master Narrative as never before. Totalitarians seems to understand this. Hitler declares all such Art "degenerate," and bans it. Stalin, too, will reject it.

The World again goes to War as imperialist desires spun by the Master Narrative again overtake the Intelligence and Love that we're actually made of. Japan invades China in 1937, occupies Indochina and later attacks the United States. Germany invades Poland in September, 1939. By the following July, the Nazis control Denmark, Norway and France.

By the time the Second World War ends in 1945, as many as 60 million People will have been killed — almost 20 million of them Civilians. The Master Narrative's hatred of the Other permitted the systematic murder of 6 million Jews. Individuals responsible for the Concentration Camps also murdered millions of Gypsies, homosexuals, disabled people, Communists, union organizers, dissenters, resistance fighters, clergy and intellectuals from all the occupied countries. Some 4 million enslaved died of overwork and brutal treatment.

Despite the magnitude of the horror, the World emerging from the War remained chained to the Self-as-Separate Narrative. Dependent on Stalin's help, the Allies let him occupy the Eastern European countries that he took from the Nazis. And after the United States used the Atomic Bomb, there followed a race for the ever more powerful version of the weapon.

In addition to grief, famine and ruins, postwar Europe confronts a moral dilemma. In Germany and Italy, majorities supported Nazism and Fascism. In occupied countries, such as France, many People had in one way or another collaborated. Although some had acted bravely, protecting Jews, for instance;

very few risked their Lives in the La Résistance, or by writing and publishing resistance literature. And then there were those who took collaboration much further than the small compromises that seemed necessary to get on with One's Life. Officials energetically served the Nazis by suppressing resistance, rounding up Jews and deporting them. People informed on their neighbors. Or stood by watching as they were taken away. After the War, a frenzy of unofficial reprisals brought killings, beatings and mob violence even to small villages. The Nuremberg trials clarified the Principle that "just following orders" does not excuse a person from moral responsibility.

In the Art World, the moment belongs to those who had resisted. German playwright Bertolt Brecht had spent the War years in exile, attacking Nazism in plays such as *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*. Thomas Mann, whose earlier novels were targeted for Nazi book burnings, now uses the theme of Doctor Faustus to examine the mentality leading up to Nazism. With *The Tin Drum,* Günter Grass will begin his series of novels exploring the question on everyone's Mind: "How could this have happened?" Italian writers, too, emerge from years in jail, exile or hiding. In fictionalized versions of their own experiences, Carlo Levi, Elio Vittorini and Natalia Ginzburg emphasize the harm Fascism did to those already suffering the cruelties of class hierarchy.

In France, the Existentialists work at describing the moral issues that we have yet to resolve. Jean-Paul Sartre insisting we're fully Responsible for our actions. "Condemned to be free," he writes. We either respond with integrity and authentically to situations we encounter, or live in "bad faith" by choosing to be dishonest with Ourselves. A gifted writer as well as a philosopher, Sartre weaves his understandings into literary works. In his Spanish Civil War short story*, The Wall*, a captured resistance fighter must choose between revealing his comrade's hiding place or face the firing squad. He makes a small compromise. Sends the police to what he's sure will be the wrong place — but where it turns out his friend had unexpectedly gone to hide and gets caught.

Albert Camus rejects the label Existentialist, but writes in a similar vein. In short stories, novels and plays, Camus calls us to live our lives as if everything depends on our choices — and when confronted with the absurdity of life in this World, choose to rebel against it. In the play, *State of Siege*, a character named The Plague and his Secretary systematically condemn People

to death. They intimidate a whole community, until a single individual breaks the spell by daring to defy them.

Asserting that one is not born, but becomes a Woman, Simone de Beauvoir's masterpiece, *The Second Sex*, explores how society and culture have made Woman the "Other." Later, de Beauvoir writes memoirs that recount her own struggles to define herself authentically in opposition to microtheatrical pressures of family and Social circle. In 1945, however, her wartime novel, *The Blood of Others*, focuses on individual responsibility in larger theatres of Power.

Playwright Eugene Ionesco mocks and shreds the Sign System in *The Bald Soprano* and other plays. Ionesco's absurdist humor makes for highly effective commentary on recent history. In *Rhinoceros,* he depicts the rise of Fascism with the metaphor of one character after another choosing to turn into a Rhino, while the bemused hero stubbornly refuses. After the War, an immense Artistic outpouring brilliantly elaborated such themes. And more.

In 1956, filmmaker Alain Resnais brings together footage from the liberation of the death camps in his documentary, *Night and Fog*. The gas chambers. The heaps of corpses. The skeletal survivors looking searchingly into our eyes. The Narrator asks, "Who is responsible?" And warns against attributing these horrors to some singular aberration rather than our everyday failure to see and hear those suffering around us.

As the Cold War becomes a race for more and more destructive nuclear weaponry, Resnais releases the film, *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*, with a screen play by the brilliant novelist, Marguerite Duras. This history that cannot and must not be forgotten remains a source of powerful counter narratives in European Art.

As Europe rebuilds and struggles to regain its moral footing, it's a different cultural climate in the United States. Emerging from the War economically and politically strong, and inspired by the collective image of the War Hero, the United States is seen and sees itself as a super-Power. It assumes an adversarial stance in relation to the Soviet Union, and for more reasons than only opposing the USSR imposing its idea of Communism on smaller nations. And so begins the Cold War.

Meanwhile, Postwar Americans are doing better than they had just twenty years earlier. Mostly due to the New Deal and social programs now in

place. Laborers are earning better wages and enjoying leisure afforded by the forty-hour workweek that Unions had fought for and won. Steady employment and pay increases were bringing more and more workers into the middle class.

As the 1950s unfold, product advertising becomes a tool in reinforcing cultural conformity. A flourish of local newspapers and radio stations add their power to that of the evolving movie industry. Television soon has families enchanted by the shows — including the commercials that model identity and behavior. The media has become the message.

Men shave their faces and keep their hair cut short, military style. Women strive to obey fashion dictates, including each year's prescribed length for skirts. The Ego Identity as informed by the Self-as-Separate Narrative constantly prompting comparison and competition, drives the growth of consumerism. Advertising equates the purpose of Human Existence and the meaning of success with conspicuous consumption. Owning your own house, buying the new car, appliances, the carat diamond, the latest fashions.

While parents who suffered through the Depression and the years of World War savor the newfound comforts and stability, many young people vaguely feel that something's amiss. In 1955, teenagers flock to theaters to see James Dean in *Rebel Without a Cause*. The following year, *The Wild One* portrays motorcycle riding, black leather jacketed young men troubling the quiet life of a small town. When a local girl asks the lead character played by Marlon Brando what he's rebelling against, he replies, "Whadya got?"

In fact, they've got a World with serious problems. In a large section of this great democracy, African Americans are denied the Right to Vote, enter libraries, sit where they wish on buses, eat at restaurants and so forth. The threat of nuclear war with the Soviet Union weighs on peoples' minds. School children practice "duck-and-cover" in case of an attack. And political conservatives in the federal government have begun trampling democratic ideals in the name of national security. Senator Joseph McCarthy's House Un-American Activities Committee effectively made it a crime to join certain groups or espouse ideas associated with Socialism or Communism.

Artists bear the brunt of this repression. Names including Aaron Copland, Leonard Bernstein, Charlie Chaplin and Langston Hughes appear on a "blacklist," dissuading anyone from hiring or working with them. Driving

some into exile. Ruining lives and careers. Arthur Miller's play, *The Crucible*, uses the Salem witch trials as a metaphor for the anti-communist hysteria.

It's in this context that a journalist adds the Russian suffix "nik" onto the name "Beats," that Jack Kerouac had given in 1948 to small groups of non-conformists. A tiny segment of a Generation that was turning the insights of Existentialism into poetry, art and Lifestyle. A phenomenon happening in New York's Greenwich Village, San Francisco's North Beach and on college campuses and in cities coast to coast. Beats were defying the prescribed codes. Some of the men were growing beards, women long hair. They might wear sandals. Or adopt the black turtleneck, sunglasses and beret that jazz musicians were wearing.

In a society that permits segregation, the Beats gravitate toward African American Culture. They steep themselves in the latest "bop" jazz, use its slang, and emulate the attitude known as "cool" — all rooted in Black People's oppositional relationship with White culture. Beat artists plumb the depths of loneliness in a World made alien by the Master Narrative. Alan Ginsberg's long poem, *Howl*, reviles civilization as a devouring monster, celebrates homosexuality and refers to every body part as holy. It becomes a cause célèbre when banned. Kerouac evokes unheard of Freedom in the Land of the Free in his 1952 classic, *On the Road.*

Painters such as Jackson Pollack and Marc Rothko bring Abstract Expressionism to an apex. Exposing the Sign System's secret weakness — no necessary link to anything outside its Chains. Pollock creates windows of chaotic coincidence by dripping, splattering, pouring paint on the canvas. In music, John Cage challenges assumptions with new rhythms, new motifs, new sounds. Modern dance thrives as Cage's partner Merce Cunningham, Katherine Dunham, Martha Graham and Alvin Ailey found new companies.

The early 1950s hold the beginnings of a more widespread musical phenomenon as well. One that will prove truly Earth shaking. With improved technology, radio stations were operating with greater broadcasting power, reaching ever larger audiences. Thanks to shows such as Dewey Phillips' *Red Hot and Blue*, in Memphis; and Alan Freed's *Moondog Rock and Roll Party* in Cleveland, White teenagers were encountering the electrified guitars and amplified sound of African Americans — Blues and R&B. And Teens

everywhere were falling in Love with it. When White singers began covering Black songs, Rock and Roll takes off. Bill Haley and the Comets make a hit with *Rock Around the Clock*. Black artists Chuck Berry, Little Richard and Fats Domino are selling records to White audiences. Elvis Presley goes over the top. His *Heartbreak Hotel, Hound Dog* and *Don't Be Cruel* sell an unprecedented ten million copies in a single year. Entrepreneurs catalyze the enthusiasm.

Soon Rock and Roll is blasting from juke boxes, record players and radios all across the country. Teenagers are swiveling their hips and watching American Bandstand. Walls are beginning to shake and rattle. Smokey Robinson and the Miracles; Gladys Knight and the Pips; Martha and the Vandellas; the Temptations; the Supremes and other Motown Acts keep the Soul floodgates open and the Bodies moving. Since parents typically dislike the music, it feeds an emerging rebellious Youth Culture.

Rock and Roll counters the Master Narrative in several ways. Given its beat, tempo, lyrics and unexpectedness, it connects us musically with the Referent that each of us are. Rock and Roll engages us Physically, Sexually, Spiritually — in the 1950s that meant celebrating what mainstream Culture was busily suppressing.

Although the Civil Rights movement had begun, pop lyrics generally avoid engaging in politics. And many Black Artists take pains to present themselves in ways pleasing to mainstream culture. In time, however, the music industry matures. Music plays a significant role in American society. Later Rockers like Chrissie Hynde, Lucinda Williams, Annie Lennox, Patti Smith will further break through Sign System walls. Coming from those made "Other" by society, Rock and Roll carries an inherent oppositional relation to the Master Narrative.

Around that time, another thread of long-peripheralized pop culture enters the historic weave. A Folk Music revival arises in part from the journeying of John and Alan Lomax who recorded musicians such as Huddie "Leadbelly" Ledbetter, David "Honeyboy" Edwards, Texas Gladden and Woody Guthrie. In coffee houses and nightclubs of the 1950s and early '60s, performers such as Pete Seeger find an audience for traditional work songs, reels, ballads and blues that express the struggles and hopes of the lower classes — Black and White. Including newer songs such as Woody Guthrie's anthem for democracy, *This Land Is Your Land*.

Folk music attracts the college audience. Many of the songs bring to Mind the early days of Union Organizing. Some were being sung by the demonstrators at the time, struggling for Voting and Civil Rights. The Kingston Trio, the Clancy Brothers, Ian & Sylvia, Peter, Paul and Mary and Others tour campuses. Joan Baez wins Hearts with her wondrous voice and appearance on stage in a simple shift, sometimes even bare feet. College students hold their own "Hootenannies," where they sit in informal circles, sing and learn songs, accompanied by guitar or ukulele.

By the early 1960s, more young People than ever are graduating from high school. And compared to their parents' generation, nearly three times as many, including some children of the working class, are going to college. The times are turbulent, though. African Americans are confronting segregation head on. As the truth about the War in Vietnam was coming out, it led many young people to question Authority in ways few generations had ever done before. People were thinking for themselves and found they wanted nothing to do with enforced conformity in the Land of the Free.

Bob Dylan takes a strong political stance in his early songs such as *Masters of War* and *Oxford Town.* He has a gift for picking up and re-processing bits of language out there in popular parlance. Putting into words what many are feeling. When called the "voice of a generation," he rejects the label. If he's leading anything, it's a Post-Existential shift of leadership from the hands of the few — into everyone's. From the very beginning Dylan invents himself as absolutely free, cool, rebellious, never categorizable. He refuses to appear on the career-making Ed Sullivan show, parries with news reporters, insults People who are trying to honor him and infuriates Folk Music purists when he goes electric. His act has profound effects on other musicians. As the Music cascades, more songwriters and performers address real problems, talk real dreams.

By the mid-1960s, an anti-conformist mood has grown strong enough to affect advertising. Change is in the air. Broadway star Barbra Streisand revolutionizes notions of Beauty. She pronounces the You in her first top ten hit, *People*. DJs create programming that fosters an emerging Consciousness.

When the Beatles come to the United States, parental objection to their long hair only adds to the appeal of their sound. *I Want to Hold your Hand*

sells a million copies in ten days. A month later, an unprecedented 73 million people watch the Fab Four on the Ed Sullivan show. Two months after that, Beatle songs occupy all five of Billboard's top slots. With their hair, their clothes, their Presence and their lyrics, they suggest new notions of Masculinity. The unbridled passion of screaming female fans persuades other males to adopt the style. Young men everywhere begin growing their hair at least longer and wearing mod flowered shirts. By 1965, the Beatles are experimenting with musical forms and writing lyrics with greater depth and intellectual content. They, too, question the status quo in *Nowhere Man* and *Think For Yourself*.

The Rolling Stones display a more conventional Masculinity than the Beatles, but give voice to the ambient alienation, actually raise the issue of manliness with *(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction*. Simon and Garfunkel's *I Am a Rock* reminds listeners that we are not islands; while *Sounds of Silence* tries to get at a truth beneath all the noise. In the hit theme song from the film *Alfie*, Dionne Warwick asks the question, "What's it all about?"

"Love, love, love..." answer the Beatles in the World's first satellite television transmission in 1967. By this time, millions of young People wearing long hair, beads and bell bottoms have turned off their TV sets and tuned into the music. Many come from relatively privileged backgrounds, nonetheless, question the values of the very Society that so favored them. Most are abandoning mind-numbing alcohol for mind-expanding drugs. Marijuana, Hashish and LSD. Some explore other seriously dangerous addictive substances.

Although a multifaceted Movement, some threads during this historic period were generally shared. Including the insistence on Sexual freedom. An end to the War in Vietnam. A rejection Racism and Sexism. And later, opposition to Environmental Destruction. From its very beginning, Artists provided the Sixties with inspiration. Musicians standing up and talking back to the Master Narrative, for instance, such as Jefferson Airplane's, "When the truth is found to be lies."

Opposition reaches its deepest, however, when it can evoke Love. And not a naïve Love unaware of the World's enmities, clarifies Marvin Gaye in *What's Goin' On?* "War is not the answer," he asserts, "for only Love can conquer hate."

The Sixties Counter-culture searches for a positive Vision. Tries to rethink everything — Identity, Nature, cosmology, religion, patriotism... Songs record specifics. "I used to be a woman you know," Neil Young dares to say. "We are stardust," sings Joni Mitchell. Buffy Sainte-Marie declares that, "God is alive," and, "Magic is afoot." Laura Nyro asserts that "Love is surely Gospel." The Fifth Dimension has People singing about the Age of Aquarius, "when harmony and understanding... sympathy and trust abound." Jimmy Hendricks turns the mirror on America with his rendition of *The Star-Spangled Banner*. John Lennon suggests we imagine a World of where everything is possible.

A lot of People in the Sixties were into exploring alternative Spiritual and Religious systems. Contending that everyone should be an Artist, or at least live Artistically. Many try to actualize the ideals, creating communes and collectives, both in the larger cites and in the country.

In the 1960s and '70s, African Americans win the Right to Vote and legal protection of their Civil Rights. Women organize, struggle and gain admission to previously closed occupational and political arenas. The Sixties open the door for Individualism and Pluralism, Personal Freedom with diversity — more than previously dreamed possible. Hairstyles, clothes, body-art, whole Lifestyles unthinkable in the Fifties become normal by the end of the Century.

But the questioning of the Master Narrative went neither deep nor wide enough. While Laws had moved toward inclusion of Minorities and Women, some individual Minds hadn't changed. Some members of Society, particularly those in privileged positions, felt no need for any kind of updating or upgrading of anything. Possibly intuiting that their unquestioned privileged status in Society was threatened — and so opposed what was happening. A Culture infected with the Self-as-Separate/Ego Identity, is without empathy. Perhaps fueled by Self-interested ignorance, or fear, or... Conservatives and the Republican Party staged a Political backlash that would ultimately test whether the United States would remain a democracy.

That Story, or where this part of it begins, is in the 1980s. When people who'd been on the verge of stepping 'from the Old South into the New,' became the targets of manipulation by politicians using a calculated political

scheme they called "positive polarity;" which amounted to identifying and demonizing some social group as 'Other,' and against whom you could then rally a base. Ronald Reagan and the Republican Party's "Southern Strategy" illustrate the tactic. Quietly approving Racism. Opposing Affirmative Action. Applauding the War in Vietnam. Celebrating greed and the exaggerated display of wealth. Winking at violence. Mocking everything the Sixties represented. Eventually, anything "Hippie" went decidedly out of fashion.

Never really unified in the first place, the Sixties Youth Movement disintegrated for a multiplicity of reasons. Although the goal was oft stated, "A World of Peace, Love and Happiness," to get there from here, requires something more than words. For many though, saying "Love" was enough. Some objected to any kind of analyzing of the problems and solutions. In some circles, there was no end to the Political rhetoric.

The thinking and cultural practice that did emerge failed to address the ways that the Master Narrative keeps us from the World we'd prefer. There was little talk about being embedded with its modalities nor the power of language. Postmodernists such as Foucault and Derrida had begun writing in the 1960s, the tools they will provide, however, do not become widely available until later. Without Consciously understanding the power of narratives, microtheatres and performance, people can unknowingly reproduce the patterns of oppression they're trying to eliminate.

Even as the Sixties dream was fading, Artists continued undermining the Master Narrative. A Feminist Women's Music genre emerged with a less exploitative perspective, winning Hearts and enduring into the Twenty-first Century. As did the desire for Peace and Justice World wide. In an unprecedented global performance moment, the World welcomed the millennium with the sounds of Bob Marley's, *One Love*.

In the decades surrounding the millennium, the pace of cultural innovation dramatically accelerates. Computer technology and the internet revolutionize the production, distribution and consumption of all forms of Art, particularly music and literature. Voices of the Colonized come to the fore. Woman assumes the role of Subject Center. Everyone is "hip." Twenty-first Century Artists might take any movement of the past as their starting point. Or invent something entirely new. Postmodernism broadens the definition of Art to include virtually all activity.

In a Museum of Contemporary Art, you might come upon a wall of shelves filled with kitchen utensils, books, souvenirs, rocks, CDs, etc. Or a huge stack of 17 by 22 inch paper with a black border printed on each sheet. And next to the pallet, a sign inviting you to take one home.

Art History maps the journey of the Human Mind from our earliest expressions of Civilization to our Possibility. Art engages, enhances, sometimes changes our Storytelling. Since all narratives are constructed of Signs, none inherently rise above others. Yet, we've also learned that all narratives are not of equal value. It's up to us to judge their merit on the basis of where they're coming from, where they take us, what they point to. If we continue down the Path we are presently traveling, we seal our fate.

Earth cannot long sustain a Species producing the havoc that our present Master Narrative tells us is normal. It cannot be natural to cause One another this much unnecessary suffering and pain. We are a Species better than that. We're capable of averting the planetary chaos that Scientists keep warning us about.

The Arts have always offered Alternatives. Narrative threads of Beauty, Freedom, Love. Artists are living proof that we can over leap the Sign System. Free Ourselves from the grip of a destructive Master Narrative. Get in touch with the Referent.

Chapter Seven

Alternative Narrative in the Stars

Problematic Tradition

Given the history and subject matter of Astrology, it would be surprising if the system didn't come riddled with problems. Any branch of knowledge that has a place for Feeling and Intuition is likely to include elements of the unreasonable. The more so an undisciplined, non-institutionalized body of knowledge, peripheralized by Science, passed down from generation to generation and susceptible to the pressures of modern consumerism. Astrologers themselves do not agree on some of the most basic ideas.

Add to these issues that the aim of Astrology is not so different than that of Psychologists when they turn their efforts to describing Personality. The obstacle both groups face is that our Minds do not submit to static profiling. Who we are is not a measurable quantity of something. Human Consciousness is more accurately portrayed as a Wave. A Sea. A Moving, flowing continuum, spread out and composed of intertwined qualia — complex highly Subjective first Person Experiences. Above all, our Presence tells us that we have Free will. We're not reducible to being a thing, an Object. Our Minds don't avail themselves to yielding the kind of knowledge associated with Matter.

So much conflict and dispute surrounds Astrology that it's surprising that it receives scholarly consideration at all. Not surprising, controversy even surrounds the Sociological and Psychological studies that have been done —every time proving that Astrology fails as a system able to predict anything.

But Science and Academia dismiss Astrology on deeper grounds than only that. First, Modern Science requires a physical link for there to be any relationship between Objects — in this case, between the delivery room, and the Sun, Moon and distant Planets. And second, the very idea that the material world could bear meaning conflicts with the basic premise of Western Civilization. Matter is understood as being exclusively physical. The Universe and everyone in it, mechanical. For Modern Astronomy, the celestial sphere is measurable; but wholly incapable of any kind of Personal Relationship or Meaning.

Organized Religion also rejects Astrology on the grounds of working with Meaning, but for different reasons. Most Religions still assume the Existence of the

Medieval Universe held in the Mind of the Omniscient Father God, Master of it all. Astrology doesn't necessitate that Worldview. Also, like Science, Religion objects to Astrology for presuming it can predict events.

Compounding these problems, we know that the Mind can play tricks on us — seeing what we wish to believe, reconstructing what we thought we saw. We know, too, that Astrology can be used as an excuse for abdicating Personal Responsibility. Even sold as flattery. And probably most important of all, we fear for our treasured Freedom when we hear any talk about Personality and Behavior connected somehow with Birth.

Despite these objections, many People, relying on Personal Experience, conclude, "There's something to it."

Perhaps we could agree on this much — If we could formulate a version of Astrology that limits itself to describing dimensions of individual Personality that are verifiable by Personal experience, respects our Personal Freedom and does not presume to make predictions — the Stars would represent an Alternative Narrative of considerable significance.

As regards the requirement for a physical link between the Heavens and the new born, Quantum Mechanics suggests entanglement and the Principle of Non-locality satisfy that concern. That such a connection could exist — given that we as a Species evolved in this Cosmic environment from our bacterial beginnings, Reason would suggest some Self-similarity more likely than not.

Beginnings

Clarifying the alternative narrative that the Stars carry requires disentangling its core values from centuries of misrepresentation, distortion and contradiction. Discourse that might best succeed by starting at the beginning.

Other groups of people and past civilizations organized, named the Stars and told different Stories about them, of course; even when identifying the same clusters. Studies suggest that our present constellations originated in prehistoric Mesopotamia, modern-day Iraq and Syria. From there, the chosen patterns and their stories made their way to the temple walls and tombs of Ancient Egypt. Thence to Greece.

These first astronomer-astrologers divided the sky by marking the location of the Sun at the Equinoxes and Solstices and further subdividing these quarters

or “Seasons” by three, according to the average number of complete lunations (Moon cycles) in each period. Having divided the entire year into twelve segments, their next step involved creating a Sign System with which they could link and retrieve the meaning of each of the places. A task they accomplished by associating the Stars found in each particular segment with what they experienced during the time the Sun traversed the segment. Connecting the points of light, dot-to-dot, they came up with symbolic icons which served to bring the meaning back to Mind.

For example, the Sun during late July and August might be described as Lion-like. Roaring. Fittingly, the Stars behind the Sun during that period somehow lend themselves to suggest just such an icon. Other months, such as the thirty degree segment of sky at the beginning of Spring, require more imagination. How the four stars there suggested a Ram is anyone’s guess. But certainly a Ram is known for getting through no matter how mountainous or obstructed the path — as Spring pushes through the cold of Winter every year. The zodiac evolved in this mythic fashion. Astrological signs and astronomical constellations aligned when the configurations were originally created.

Arab scholars preserved and refined the knowledge during the Middle Ages. Europeans prized the manuscripts during the Renaissance. Greek Star maps and records proved indispensable for navigation during the period of European exploration and global conquest. Thus into the Modern World.

The present misalignment between signs and constellations came about as time passed. Earth slightly wobbles on her axis, which causes the location of the spring equinox and each of the successive periods of the year to move slightly backwards through the visible Stars. A complete cycle takes approximately 26,000 years. Due to this slight wobble, the first degree of Aries (the Beginning of Spring) instead of occurring at the start of the constellation Aries, (as it did when the Zodiac was written) now occurs at the beginning of the constellation Aquarius. Likewise, the sign of Taurus appears just inside the constellation Pisces. And so forth.

This discrepancy is one of several contested issues among practitioners of Astrology. “Tropical” Astrologers disregard the visible backdrop and hold that the Meaning of the signs derives from the unchanged internal relation between Earth, Sun, Moon and Planets. “Sidereal” Astrologers shift the original Meanings of the signs to coincide with the visible Stars.

For skeptics, the difference between signs and constellations is evidence enough that Astrology cannot be trusted. For Astronomers, Astrology is little more than a quaint artifact, a souvenir from the History of Science.

Prior to the Age of Reason, metaphysics and unverifiable assertions of what things might mean ran rampant through the halls of knowledge. Anything could be said to mean anything. Descartes, as we noted, endeavored to set knowledge down on a firm foundation. Free from all the speculation and superstition. Mission accomplished — but at a price. Reason, already locked into the Self-as-Separate premise, responded by confining Science to observations of the reliable, extended physical World. Modern Scientists work exclusively at describing appearances; limit themselves to mechanical cause and effect relationships. Descartes distilled the Patriarchal assumption that the World has no personal Presence, no meaning.

In the past, great Astronomers such as Kepler had been Astrologers. With the Scientific Revolution, Astronomy separated from Astrology. For modern Astronomers, the Stars represent distances, magnitudes; submit to every sort of measurement; and give expression to every kind of causal law. The misalignment between sign and constellation, meaning and visible stars, long ago ceased to matter.

Getting back to the point. What concerns us here is the possible alternative narrative that the Stars represent. The truth of which hinges on whether or not a connection actually exists between Oneself and the Celestial configuration at One's birth. For if it does, that recognition seriously undermines the legitimacy of the Master Narrative.

Our focus then, will be on that question. We forgo all claims that the various versions of Astrology may or may not make. Limit the scope of what we will mean by "the Stars" to a connection between the moment of birth and something we can experience about our own or one another's Personal Presence.

Unfortunately, this doesn't make our task of verifying that the Stars are a reliable source for describing a dimension of Personality any easier. As cited above, there's difficulties with any effort to represent the Human Psyche. The fact that we can choose profoundly adds to the complexity of our Minds. We're not determined to do anything. We decide. And so with gifts the Stars may describe. A sensuous disposition, for instance, would suggest a deep appreciation of music, gardening, cooking, the visual arts... Yet, we can choose to disregard or even suppress predilections. And Someone born without such Stars can certainly develop those capabilities.

Other factors also influence our Personality — gender roles and other forms of cultural and social conditioning as well as our individual response to them; birth order, parental and sibling relations; genetic information, childhood experience, education, economic opportunity and so on. If we hear about our Stars, it's usually long after we're deeply entangled in a web of constructed and learned identity.

See for Yourself

Like the Arts, the Stars would link Consciousness with the Referent. Because the Sun Sign descriptions refer to the centermost, most apparent, most important element of the stellar picture, they offer the best opportunity to judge how well the Stars do or do not correlate with what you might know about yourself, as well as the Personalities of your friends, relatives, co-workers.

The Signs

Aries (March 21 - April 21) Spring is on the Mind. Buds on trees. Seeing possibility. Awakenings. Forward moving. Enthusiastic. Morning energy. Fiery and intuitive. Beginning things.

Taurus (April 21 - May 21): The fragrant Earth. Young leaves. Grasses greening. Gardeners planting seeds. Birds in song. Flowers in bloom. Practicality. Sensuality. Taking root.

Gemini (May 21 - June 21): Up from underground. Treetops reading the forest floor. Meadows abuzz with talk. Adaptations. Communication. Thinking and re-thinking.

Cancer (June 21 - July 21): Warm rain and rivers, lakes. Heartstrings tied to home and family. Being Real. Concrete. A dream growing. Appearing.

Leo (July 21 - August 21): When the Sun shines like a Lion roaring. Golden hearted. Assertive. Leadership. Making things clear. Definitive.

Virgo (August 21 - September 21): Vacations end. Going back to school. Things returning to order. Everything in place. Organized. Nurturing the Harvest. Perfecting. Patience. Taking care.

Libra (September 21 - October 21): Equal days and nights. Harmony and balance. The Harvest. Confidence. Truthfulness and honesty. Fairness. Justice. Fulfilment. Completion.

Scorpio (October 21 - November 21): Hillsides turning red. Drama and passion. Secretive. Feelingful and Mysterious. The Magic of it all. On Stage.

Sagittarius (November 21 - December 21): Everywhere signs telling of what's to come. Motivated, deep thinking, energetic, goal oriented. Going somewhere. Friendship. About Something more.

Capricorn (December 21 - January 21): The longest night. The quiet and stillness of winter. Caprice of snowflakes. Purifying cold. Strength. Perseverance. Responsibility.

Aquarius (January 21 - February 21): Now the Winds disperse Winter's frozen air masses. Change. Gift giving kindness. Helping Others. Altruism.

Pisces (February 21 - March 21): Galeries of snowflakes melt. Rivers run free. Not counting costs. Sacrifice. Forgiveness. Compassion. Empathy. Serving Others. Bridging the old to the new.

The Sun, Moon and Planets

The Sun, Moon and Planets travel through the Signs. If we hypothesize that the moment of birth bears the meaning of a facet of the Self, we might approach that meaning by describing our experience with each of the Celestial bodies composing the moment. The description of the phenomena itself being the Meaning.

In whatever Sign the Sun appears, that Meaning will be described as centermost. The Moon, so associated with the tides and things that lie beneath the scene, suggests the contours of our Emotional Life. The Subconscious. Mercury, so close to the Sun and moving so quickly, befittingly describes our Minds. Venus, what one Loves. One's Art. Mars, What one finds inescapable. Special. Spotlight red. Jupiter, what one has in abundance. And Saturn, the limits, the boundary — and in that way a key experience to add. The stepping stone to recent discoveries of Consciousness.

The three outermost Planets (Uranus, Neptune and Pluto) attain their Meanings in like manner. Describing the phenomena associated with each. Being recent discoveries of Consciousness — we can look to their Meaning in the Epochs of their discoveries, the knowledge and awarenesses emerging as each Planet was being discovered. Awareness we can access by considering what artists and writers were saying as the period was happening.

Uranus - Discovered in 1781. Enlightenment moving into the Age of Democracy. Writers include: Rousseau, Voltaire, Diderot, Mary Wollstonecraft, Thomas Paine. The Awareness of Human Responsibility for our Social, Economic and Political structures. And our ability to make Changes. A Consciousness of Significance in the World.

Neptune - Discovered in 1846. Romanticism. Writers include: Blake, Keats, Hopkins, Melville, Thoreau, Emerson, Emily Dickenson, the Brontë sisters, Darwin. The awareness of Relationship with Nature, of Universal Dreams and Utopian Visions. A Consciousness of Significance in the Universe.

Pluto - discovered in 1930. Existentialism, Relativity, Quantum Mechanics. Writers include Heidegger, Sartre, Martin Buber, Simone de Beauvoir. Consciousness of Significance in the Cosmos. Awareness of our Responsibility for Reality.

Implications

The Stars convey an Identity infused with Belonging. A much more complex and nuanced Identity than the Master Narrative's Self-as-Separate model that normalizes competition, reduces our worth to material possessions. Additionally, the alternative narrative that the Stars offer implies a deep Relationship with Earth, a connection with the Universe and One Another.

Delivering an individuated Identity, yet composed of elements shared with each other, the Stars hold great potential for liberating us from the Ego Identity informed by the Self-as-Separate narrative. Simply recognizing that the Stars describe a dimension of our Personal Presence, however, doesn't necessarily free us from the Master Narrative. The Stars become alternative only when we open our Minds to the very different answers this Identity submits to the questions: "Who are we?"

"What are we doing here?" and, "Why are we here?"

Part III:

Toward a Solution

None of us would wish to pass onto our Children an abyss frothing with problems. A World mired in endless Wars. Where some hoard much more wealth than they will ever need; while others are starving to death. No one likes the insecurity of knowing, at any moment, their Children could be the victims of the next school shooting. No one likes thinking about terrorism. Nations upgrading their Nuclear Weapons. Global warming. The Climate Crisis. Fires. Floods. Looming shortages. Oceanic collapse. Over-population pressing the limits of Earth's ability to sustain us.

We set out in Part One to understand what brought us to this edge. And concluded that a mistaken Master Narrative lies at the root of our problems. Our Culture informs the Ego with idea of Self-as-Separate. Celebrates separate Self-interest.

In Part Two, we investigated alternatives to the Self-as-Separate/Ego idea — in our Religious and Spiritual traditions, in various discourses of Contemporary Science, in the Arts and in the Stars. We know there are more ways to understand Ourselves than the mistaken assumption at the core of our present Master Narrative.

In Part Three, we turn to exploring how the insights we've gathered suggest a way beyond this Pathway's end. Here we will delve more deeply into Complexity Theory, a field of study that focuses on how Change happens in situations that defy simple description.

Chapter Eight: Complexity

A Fractal Universe

Setting aside for a moment the larger issue regarding the premise that the Universe is Mindless, Science has now reached the threshold of affirming what Artists and Religious traditions have long maintained. Our Universe turns out to be much more complex and nuanced than our Sign System conventions and Aristotelian categories imply. Even the borders between dimensions have proven less distinct than traditional geometry would have us believe. We live not only in a multi-dimensional Universe, but also and more accurately, in a Fractal multi-dimensional Universe.

So what does a Fractal Universe mean? Commonplace experience can help explain. At first glance, the kitchen floor, a tabletop, the computer screen all appear as smooth planes. Two dimensional objects of length and width. We know, however, that greatly magnifying any one of these planes would reveal a a rough gravel-like surface with a changing landscape of slopes, hills and scattered hairline cracks. Engineers take these characteristics into account when designing a product requiring a particular finish. But for practical purposes, these micro-irregularities seldom enter into consideration. If for some reason, however, we would wish to document the smallest details that contribute to the actual brokenness of the plane, we would need to add a fraction of depth or height to our description. The actual surface, we would note, is greater than two dimensions, but not quite three. Two and a fraction of a dimension. Fractal, however, is more than a description of surfaces. The Fractal quality permeates our World.

“Lightning doesn't travel in a straight line,” observed Benoît Mandelbrot, the Mathematician who gave Fractals their name. In fact, you can’t describe the Path of a lightning bolt without referring to its actual jagged three dimensional movement. Or measure the length of a shoreline without first determining what unit will be your means of measurement and how you will accommodate its contours. Rivers, rocks, plants, clouds, our faces, galaxies... All are examples of naturally occurring Fractals. Dimensions in our World escape into one another. We live in a Fractal Universe, surrounded by Fractal processes.

Scientists have long known that the forms in Nature result from repetitive actions. Waters cut the Grand Canyon. Rivers and lakes smooth stones. Cells divide again and again. In a phenomenon seemingly distant from these Natural processes, Mathematicians had observed that repeating the simplest mathematical formulae, often resulted in unexpected irregularities. The iterations required to produce even one such event however, precluded serious study into the curious phenomenon.

In the second half of the Twentieth Century, however, computers became widely available that could perform mathematical operations at speeds once thought impossible, enabling Researchers to compile and visualize the chaotic oddities, discovering that even chaotic Systems have an inherent order.

Computer generated Fractals emerge from the chaotic and fragmented. Studying them added to an evolving understanding, vocabulary and refinement of methods with which Scientists had begun investigating how change happens in Complex Adaptive Dynamic Systems. Not only did they learn that apparent Chaos in such Systems bears emergent Patterns, but they also observed that these Patterns are embedded throughout the entire Fractal entity. Magnification of any part of a Fractal reveals recurring details, a likeness to the Whole.

Although "Self-similarity" reaches through every scale of Fractal structure, it doesn't appear as a rigid duplicity or exact symmetry. Self-similarity shows up in resemblances. The individual leaves of a fern differ in size, while the basic shape of each leaf and the veins within repeat the overall pattern of the frond. The branching in trees repeats from root to bud, yet with a variability that illustrates Nature's spontaneity. Trees grow in relationship with their environment and all its unpredictability. The unpredictable Beauty at the Heart of our World.

The Fractal quality of the Universe and the ubiquity of Self-similarity offer insight into the direction that our Solution will need to take. Consider how the Narratives we tell Ourselves appear logical and consistent to us; yet were we to examine our storytelling in granular detail, we would likely come upon contradiction. Likewise, imagine magnifying a day, moment by moment — we would probably find that our beliefs about Ourselves and what we practice are not perfectly consistent, either. A Reality that Psychologists and Sociologists would affirm.

Were we to gather the inconsistencies, we would likely find that the thinking and acting that qualify as anomaly, represent the products and Pattern of the Master Narrative. Similarly, the Chaotic contradictions in our political World express that same Pattern. Failing to abide by the Rule of Law, disrespecting One another as equals, not caring about each Other's welfare, epitomize the Self-as-Separate/Ego Identity. The inference we can draw from this tells us that the Master Narrative conflicts with the Goodness we understand Ourselves as being and how we most commonly act. Perhaps that's a truism, for if the case were that we as a Species had become wholly submerged in the 'Everyman for Himself,' and 'the End justifies the Means' Narratives, were we without Alternatives — we would have destroyed Ourselves, long ago.

Psychology recognizes that psychic balance, the pursuit of happiness, the appreciation of life... all depend on a positive Self-image. Concepts such as kindness, love, altruism, empathy, turn out deeply rooted in our physical being. A healthy Self-image is woven with threads of alternative narrative such as we visited in Part II. They, not the Master Narrative, express the heart of Who we are. The reality is — we can't live without Love.

As Fractal Biological Selves, with Minds open to every Possibility, we need to remind Ourselves that our survival depends on making correct choices. Living in a Self-as-Separate Culture means that each of us carry elements of the identity learned in childhood, embedded in language, performed and reinforced in Microtheaters. Unless we maintain constant vigilance, we can unknowingly reproduce the very patterns of coercive power responsible for bringing us to this Pathway's End.

Complex Adaptive Dynamic Systems

Long before the development of Complexity Theory, Henri Poincaré forewarned us of the problems associated with predicting anything. In 1889, Poincaré demonstrated that Newton's Laws of Gravity could not foretell the future of the solar system. He showed that even if we knew the initial positions of a three-body system of Sun, Moon and Earth, the slightest perturbation afterward would result in dramatically different orbits. Since we have no way of knowing what the initial conditions of the entire solar system might have been, Poincaré reached the conclusion, "Prediction becomes impossible." To Science,

unpredictability equals Chaos. Not a promising field of research, especially if your goal is to discover Laws. So at the beginning of the Twentieth Century, Scientists turned their attention elsewhere. Electromagnetism. Gravity. The composition of the Atom. Radiation...

In the 1960's, however, the topic of unpredictability re-emerged. Edward Lorenz, a meteorologist at MIT, was using an early model computer to study atmospheric change. Aiming to improve weather forecasting, he programmed a virtual environment with all the known meteorological laws, then added in weather data; anticipating that he would soon be watching patterns evolve that would lead to reliable forecasting tools.

Not long into the project, however, his computer crashed. To pick up where the program had left off, Lorenz input the last data readings, which he had from the printout before the System had gone down. But not long after entering the data and getting the program up and running again, the weather went wildly erratic. A situation that turns out to have been caused by the difference between his 'three-digit decimal point' printer and his 'six-digit decimal point' virtual World. A difference so small that Lorenz concluded that the Weather is unpredictable. He dubbed the now well-known phenomenon that he had stumbled upon, "the butterfly wing effect." A butterfly wiggling its wing in Brazil, he wrote, could literally affect the weather over Texas. Some years later, as Biologists, Physicists and Researchers in Medical Science confirmed similar instances of "sensitivity to initial conditions," the value of understanding Chaos and Complex Adaptive Dynamic Systems became apparent.

Complexity Theory would not have developed without computer technology. Computers permit the observation of how Complex Adaptive Dynamic Systems behave and evolve through time. Some critics of Complexity Theory see little value in descriptions of Systems that defy prediction. Most Scientists, however, recognize that knowing how Complex Adaptive Dynamic Systems share characteristics holds tremendous potential for understanding how Change happens in our World.

No one would disagree that Complexity Theory has cross-disciplinary applications. Complex Adaptive Dynamic Systems exhibit common attributes whether such Systems are ecological units, living cells, immune systems, clouds, sociological networks, stock markets, neurophysiological phenomena, periods of historical transformation, Language, sand piles or traffic jams.

Discoveries made in one area translate readily into another. Work done by Physicists doing research into turbulence contributes to understanding the behavior of financial markets, devising public relations strategies and developing advertising schemes. Studies of evolving microbiological Worlds provide insights for computer software design and earthquake prediction. Research into the noise of electric circuitry proves valuable to space exploration and business administration. Economists, biologists, medical doctors, physicists, psychologists, astronomers, mathematicians, politicians, meteorologists, historians, sociologists, even military strategists have found Complexity Theory to provide valuable insights.

How could a single theoretical approach yield understandings about phenomena as diverse as sand piles and Human Societies? Complexity Theory recognizes different types of Complex Systems. Fixed Systems include Objects that don't share information System wide. A pile of rocks, for instance, or a tool. Mentality is certainly present at some level, but not in a way that allows such aggregates to change themselves or act freely.

The category of "adaptive" Complex Dynamic Systems most interests us. In such systems, Relatively free Agents combine to create unified networks. Being so composed, the individual agents are able to respond to One another. Enter into dialogue. Share. Examples include, organisms, societies, ecological networks, even businesses and corporations.

Complex Adaptive Dynamic Systems are made up of parts interacting with each other and their environment in ways that enable them to change over time. Almost all share the trait of being "Non-linear." That is, Complex Adaptive Systems depend on feedback loop Relationships among the Agents. In a feedback loop, information generated by Agents of the System, goes back into the System. Rather than one way communication coming in from the outside or down from above, Agents make free decisions based on their experience, communications with other Agents and their own thinking. This enables the System to make informed choices and adaptations as needed to ensure its survival.

Turning on the oven and setting the temperature, for instance, sets-up a very mechanical feedback loop. Here, no choices are involved. When the flames warm the oven to the desired temperature, the thermostat informs the flames to slow down. Information from the system directs the system. Oven heat to thermostat and back to the flames represents a relatively simple feedback loop.

The Master Narrative and its institutions are another example of a feedback loop. The Master Narrative has us think of Ourselves and our interests as Separate from One another and our Planet. We in turn produce hierarchies in our Microtheaters and consent to economic, political and social systems that normalize performances of competition and Coercive Power over others. Reinforcing that same Self-as-Separate/Ego Identity.

Like Fractals, Complex Adaptive Dynamic Systems create their emergent patterns by iteration — repetition. As the parts or Agents of a system repeat activities, pathways, routines of thinking, System-wide patterns emerge. These patterns map the System — where it is, what it's doing, where going. Such emergent patterns could never be studied were the System taken apart and analyzed piece by piece. The property of "emergence" draws our attention to an underlying Principle of Complex Adaptive Dynamic Systems — the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. In other words, you will no longer have a flower, if you disassemble it.

In an interesting paradox, the Principle of Emergence enhances, rather than diminishes the importance of the individual Agents who make up such Systems. Complex Adaptive Dynamic Systems are said to be "Self-organizing." Each Agent exercises a freedom that can only be attributed to a Subject Center, which results in the entire System acting from within. In one of the more spectacular and oft cited examples, individual birds making choices in relation to their immediate fly mates create the stunning murmurations, swirling flocks that enchant the eye.

Although Agents making up Complex Adaptive Dynamic Systems themselves create the emergent patterns*;* in some cases, they're likely to have differing roles, functions, and Relationships with One another. Some may have more information than Others, more power to influence the System's trajectory, more opportunity to effect change. The job description of the nucleus of living cells, for example, is to process in-coming information from the organelles. If necessary, the nucleus can respond to possible problems, evaluate solutions. Being responsible for the patterns of the protein structures that determine the cell's overall shape, form and function, the nucleus can direct adaptations to meet the changing environment. Other parts of the cell produce energy from

food, remove waste material, maintain the walls, play a part in reproduction. No matter the role, every individual Agent is important to the System as a Whole. In successful Complex Adaptive Dynamic Systems, such differentiation of responsibility is based on competency to perform the particular task.

Human History, however, under the influence of the Master Narrative, does not fit that description. When Societies are formed on the basis of violence, and coercive power, individual responsibility is buried beneath Separate Self-interest. Societies can also violate sustainability patterns by giving Agents authority, again, not on the grounds of competency, but rather according to arbitrary criteria — such as membership in a social circle, reward for favors or fear of reprisal.

Researchers use the term "nested" to describe how Complex Adaptive Dynamic Systems reside within one another. Like Russian Matryoshka dolls, Systems are located inside ever larger Complex Dynamic Systems. For example, each of us carry on our own personal iterations. We think and do things along lines we choose. As we repeat what we favor we create a highly unique emergent pattern, reflective of the individual persons we are. Yet, as members of a society, our decisions and performance also contribute to the creation of the pattern that characterizes that larger network.

In healthy Complex Adaptive Dynamic Systems, information moves freely and honestly among all the Agents. Energy is shared at all levels, the needs of each Agent met; ensuring the well being and the overall fitness of the System.

Interaction among Agents, even in healthy systems, however, does not always result in agreement. Whether a living body, a society, a business... ways of doing things can become outdated, information corrupted, things can go wrong. As Self-organizing Subject Centers, Agents can choose which narratives to activate, which to discredit. If the interests of individual Agents fall out of alignment, disagreements happen. Resonance can give way to conflict. In stable systems, such disturbances last for only a short period and have little effect on the overall pattern. Networks, in fact, depend on alternative ideas and sometimes conflict. Better information can lead to improvement, inspire the system to shift to higher ground, look for an enhanced solution. Differences also produce untried possibilities that may prove useful later.

Creating successful adaptations by responding to the micro-intentions and needs expressed by Agents on local levels benefits the entire System. Such activity enables it to climb from one fitness peak to the next by adapting, complexifying, progressing. Solutions to problems move networks toward constantly transforming goals. These moves and shifts are made possible by maintaining a balance between reliance on existing solutions and an openness to innovation and change. This middle ground is often referred to as the "edge of chaos."

Complexity Theory draws our attention to an important factor regarding this universal 'middle ground' dynamic. A point that brings our search for solutions back into focus. Because Complex Adaptive Dynamic Systems are nested within other systems which are also evolving, systems inevitably encounter changed circumstances. Conditions that require new solutions. Even successful pathways that may have served the network well, after a time, no longer suffice. If a system fails to evolve in relation to these changed conditions; or responds with inadequate solutions to the altered circumstance, destructive forces can multiply. Systems can go over the edge. Fall into chaos. Fail.

Successful Complex Adaptive Dynamic Systems address contradictions and problems long before total disorder sets in. They perform well, even when sudden and unpredictable catastrophic circumstances arise. If threatened with complete dissolution, Complex Adaptive Dynamic Systems can respond by wholly recreating themselves. Complexity Theory calls such total transformations, "Phase Transitions."

Phase Transitions

Phase Transitions occur on a small scale, everywhere, all the time. Ice melts. You add cream to your coffee. You fall in Love. Complexity Theory's efforts to understand how these transitions happen has led to new insights in almost every field of Human endeavor. Economists have used Complexity Theory to study recurrent patterns in stock market crashes. Complexity Theory perspectives have assisted Sociologists analyzing urban planning. Medical practitioners have found Complexity Theory useful for recognizing the interaction between the individual and society with regard to health outcomes. Political Science, in the relationship between social class and political allegiance. Geography, in globalization studies focusing on income inequalities among nations and their effect on life expectancy.

Phase Transitions also happen on a grand scale. We noted in Chapter Five that Science recognizes three major Phase Transitions. The Beginning of the Universe, initiated by energy-sharing Quarks. The opening of the Gateway to Life, by virtue of the altruism of the playful Long Chain Polymers. And the Transition to the nucleated cell created by the sacrifices of the Archaeon and the Oxygen Breathing Bacteria. Each Phase Transition not only resolved a crisis, it resulted in such a profound outcome that the changes would have seemed improbable, unbelievable, almost inconceivable — before they happened.

The magnitude of our problems and so also their solution suggest that the transformation we Humans as a Species are being called on to make, qualifies for the description of a Phase Transition. Who can believe that we're capable of moving from our present World — chained to a Master Narrative that has us upgrading our nuclear weaponry, treating Nature as a thing, allowing children to starve to death. From all that — to a World of Peace and Love. Sharing and trust. Community. The Wealthy wholeheartedly dispersing their privilege and accumulations in order to care for Others and Heal the Planet. Nations disarming, hammering their swords into plowshares.

Although Phase Transitions rely on alternative narrative that networks in some way preserved, Phase Transitions don't unfold previously existing patterns. The metamorphosis of caterpillar from chrysalis to butterfly, for instance, is not considered a Phase Transition; since the transformation is pre-programmed. For the same reason, most adaptations do not qualify. In a Phase Transition, Agents are known to transform whatever is needed in order to resolve the crisis. The outcome is both unprecedented and unpredictable.

Phase Transitions can take place rather rapidly and look quite spontaneous. Or systems can approach Phase Transition boundaries slowly, then suddenly leap them. In any case, Phase Transitions result from the choices made by individual Agents.

In a major Phase Transition, such as the one we're being asked to create, among the first things we might expect to see happen, would be to learn of Agents calling attention to circumstances that are threatening the health of the system at large. If these first Responders also tell us that the conditions causing

their alarm are not sustainable, that the issues involved raise questions of the system's survival, the quality of its future; a healthy Complex Adaptive Dynamic System will address the conditions and fix what's broken.

It might happen, however, in a stratified Complex Adaptive Dynamic System, that upper level Agents wouldn't perceive the issues clearly enough. Or in the process of evaluating the threat, their intelligence gets overwhelmed. Or Separate Self-interest could present an obstacle to thinking with integrity. For whatever reason, if instead of taking up the called-for new responsibility, upper level Agents reply that nothing needs to be done; or that there is nothing that can be done; or should be done; or that the best possible is already being done; or that minor adjustments will suffice; since upper level actors have greater effect on the network at large — due to their lattices of influence, their money and power — they can to some extent suppress lower level urgings.

Among the ways this can take place is by "canalizing" information. That is, limiting or distorting what's available system-wide. Individuals can introduce "noise" — such as spreading disinformation, using flawed logic, playing on people's fears and prejudices, stirring up animosity and so forth — in order to drown out Agents trying to appropriately respond to the information that's been made available. Such gamesmanship leads to lower level Agents making decisions on the basis of limited or inaccurate information; jeopardizing the entire system. Using the end to justify the means is a formula for disaster. Given the problems we're facing together, such tactics could prove fatal.

Yet, it appears that this scenario is presently being played out here in the United States. Already by the early 1970s, Scientists were warning us about global warming, that if not immediately addressed would lead to serious weather anomalies — heat waves, drought, increased wild fires, flooding... And if not addressed in the long term will result in the catastrophic. Economists added to the warnings of the climate scientists when they alerted us to the growing income inequality in our World. In forty years following the Reagan Revolution, nearly $80 trillion moved from the bottom 90% of Americans — namely the lower and middle classes — to the topmost brackets of society. Then all through 2025, historians, political scientists and legal scholars have been warning us that our democratic political institutions and way of life are under threat —

owing to the Republican Party pledging its loyalty to Donald J Trump rather than defending the Constitution.

How we might create our needed Phase Transition from these circumstances is first of all unpredictable. Given the Complexity involved, such a great correction can hardly be expected to follow some outline. Something more magical. More wondrous will likely be the case.

Nonetheless, we can imagine our Phase Transition developing from a growing awareness that the system is not responding to the crisis conditions that we're facing. Leading in time to an inflection point, a defining moment when the Agents come together in a Unified Spirit.

A condition that any Agent could have helped bring about; since Complex Adaptive Dynamic Systems are sensitive to initial conditions. Meaning that even a small act can have immeasurable results — "the butterfly wing effect." Alternative narrative and performance can begin on any level and cascade upward. Reach down. Sideways.

As the stakes involved become well defined and increasingly better articulated, a Second Stage of our imagined Phase Transition might open with a kind of second enlightenment. Agents discrediting and abandoning the failing Self-as-Separate Ego idea. A choosing of a World of equality and Love. A collective reconsidering of narratives which may have been kept at the margins because differing from the overall pattern. Alternatives coming together to help formulate the answer.

Just as canalization could doom the first steps toward our Phase Transition, the second stage could also end in failure. Empowered Agents might agree about the need for change, but they may have a very different idea what that change should look like. Particularly the goal. So it could happen that an empowered minority might try drive the system back into failed solutions of the past. A strategy that can cause the entire system to lose integrity. A series of such insufficient solutions, each failing in turn, can cascade through the system and ultimately lead to total collapse.

Another possible scenario finds alternative pathways forming, but without stability. Or adequately forming, but meeting with indifference. Agents recognizing the need for change might generate alternatives or even a series of them; but without focus or sustained Energy, they can disappear. Then reappear, repeatedly — without being able to save the System at large.

If the System is successful, genuine and sustainable alternative pathways emerge. The sought-after passage, however, doesn't come from a simple repetition of previously peripheralized material. What was marginalized is not taken up in its entirety, but can help form the basis of the new solution. Agents might sort through the side-lined alternative narrative and build new possibilities and understandings with it. Create unforeseen, unexpected new ways.

If the new pattern truly does represent a viable alternative, it begins to inform the entire system. As individuals and clusters of individuals choose to abandon the failing pathway and migrate to the new patterns, the bifurcation cascades. The third stage would see implementation. Agents secure and elaborate the Alternative by constructing institutions that reflect the new values — no matter how radically improbable or unbelievable the solution may have seemed earlier.

In order to succeed, each stage of a Phase Transition requires communication, input of time and energy. Individual Agents with their varying degrees of knowledge and influence carry the drama forward. The smallest act can have immeasurably far-reaching effects.

The war after war of Human History adequately documents the failure of the Master Narrative that we've been Living under. The Self-as-Separate/Ego Identity has caused immeasurable suffering and destruction. We've now arrived at its Pathway's End. We're at the crossroads of a World broken — everywhere hurting. Life was not meant to be this way.

As complex as our situation is, as seemingly impossible the goal, we've already begun to understand how we can reach it. Complexity Theory affirms that these kinds of Transitions have happened before.

Chapter Nine:
A Plan of Action

In the last chapter, we learned from Complexity Theory that it's the individual Agents of a Complex Adaptive Dynamic System, such as a society, who generate the overall pattern. Everyone plays a part in the thinking, speaking and performing of the narrative that determines what the system is all about. In our World, the dominant pattern, the Master Narrative is informed by the Self-as-Separate idea.

Although the Wealthy have historically exerted every effort to produce and keep the inherited economic, political and social institutions in place, Complexity Theory agrees with the Postmodernist observation that the upper classes are not alone in that production. The thinking and behavior of Agents across the political spectrum contribute to the normalization of power over others. A pathway we've been on since the emergence of the Patriarchy. To successfully move beyond this Omega requires each of us playing a part in replacing the Master Narrative with a better alternative.

This chapter aims at sketching a plan of action, by way of answering the question: How might we change the Master Narrative from Separate Self-interest and Nature as mindless to a story of Ourselves as loving One another and caring for Earth?

We begin by acknowledging those who have come before us. All who have given their lives, pledged their fortunes and sacred honor to make the World a better place. We owe them for the ideals they bequeathed us and for the Civil Rights and Liberties they procured — for the tools of democracy. Without their gifts, it would be difficult to imagine transforming our World into the Paradise we've desired since the beginning of civilization. Because the changes we need to make could never be made by violence.

Microtheatrical Change

Each of us are complex, wholly free and unpredictable individuals, living absolutely unique lives. We generally attribute this quality of being Human to the freedom we associate with Consciousness. Our freedom of Mind also enables Self-reflection. We can become aware of the narratives that we're telling Ourselves. Moreover, we can choose. We're Self-organizing Subject Centers. We can change our storytelling. And no one can force us how to think.

Second by second, a myriad of possibilities invite our attention. We decide which pathways to pursue, fantasies engage, worries to keep, plans to make, who to listen to — how we use our Time. Already by our Teenage years, we rebel against anyone trying to make choices for us. We want to decide who will be our friends. How we're going to dress. As Agents in a Complex Adaptive Dynamic System, however, we're not independent. We grow up and live in a World with Others.

In earlier chapters, we cited how language and cultural conditioning deliver a World already constituted with meaning. Albeit unconsciously, we each carry with us and enact the Master Narrative. Our Minds, homes, school, work and social places serve as microtheatres where the Self-as-Separate/Ego Identity is articulated and performed — unless, of course, we're engaging the World, Nature and Others along the lines of an alternative.

Our larger macrotheatres, namely our political, social and economic institutions — products of how we understand Ourselves — close the loop, as we noted earlier, by surrounding us in environments and ways of doing things that propagate and normalize that same Self-as-Separate Narrative.

Historically, these feedback loop relationships have repeatedly limited our progress because we weren't aware of them. Without deconstructing and critiquing the Self-as-Separate/Ego Idea, political revolutions replaced one hierarchy with another. Even alternative narratives, we observed — such as those provided by our Religions, Spiritual Traditions, Science, Arts and the Stars — can themselves become compromised, end up directly or indirectly serving the Master Narrative, instead of discrediting it.

Insofar as Phase Transitions imply a new emergent pattern, the plan of action becomes somewhat self-evident. In order to replace the pattern of the Master Narrative with goals and understandings that lead to a better World, it falls to each of us to create alternative narrative that does just that. Such Narrative, in Complexity Theory vocabulary, might qualify for the category of a Strange, or Chaotic Attractor. "Attractor," because it describes what our thinking is being most attracted to. What we're choosing to do, believe, advocate... "Strange" or "Chaotic" because alternatives to the Master Narrative suggest thinking and behavior too foreign for it to absorb.

The World our Hearts desire resides outside the Master Narrative's basin of attraction. Altruism is not a ploy of Separate Self-interest. Forgiveness transcends revenge. Such is the "Strange Attractor" that we need to create.

For most People, the needed alternative narrative probably sounds more familiar than strange. Society could not function without the civility and respect we anticipate from and have for One another. We regularly experience consideration and generosity within our families, from friends, neighbors, co-workers, teachers, nurses and doctors, first responders, passing strangers, volunteers...

Many who've greatly profited from this World's get-for-yourself economic system consider philanthropy a must. We can envision forgiveness, altruism and community because we already know how to enact them. But we need more than a city, a state, a nation with a reputation for courteous driving or hospitality. More than national and local news stories of unexpected kindness by individuals and groups. We need our World to discredit and abandon the Master Narrative. Leave the Self-as-Separate Identity behind by consciously creating alternative narrative and practice — loving and serving Others.

It's not at all difficult to envision the Wealthy dispersing their accumulations because we're already seeing individuals doing that. Corporations could prioritize the environment. Legislators could pass Laws that ensure everyone is cared for. We could create a pathway leading to international disarmament. Peace on Earth.

"Absolutely un-realistic," declares the Master Narrative.

Believing it possible is only the first step.

For the Microtheatrical phase of the Plan to be successful, each of us would need to practice certain mental skills. Foremost, paying attention to the thoughts flowing through our Minds. Being more aware of what we're telling Ourselves — the words we're using, the assumptions beneath our storytelling — while using the core Identity that our favorite alternative narratives carry to edit as needed.

In addition to doing the garden work required by the narratives comprising our interior dialogue, we would also need to pay attention to narratives we hear and encounter. Be aware the underlying storytelling informing dress, gestures, activities, spaces and objects. Everywhere replace narratives normalizing inequality with narrative contributing to the new pattern we desire. Mapping pathways to sharing, compassion, cooperation, to all the happiness we find in doing Good.

Luckily, we have an array of tools that can help us acquire the skills to do this work. Beginning with every occasion where we're required to exercise our Will. Practicing meditation and mindfulness, as in yoga, dancing, running, walking, working out, playing a musical instrument... we can develop our Will power muscles. Our ability to choose is prerequisite for success.

Additionally, inspiration and encouragement wait in moments with Nature, with our pets, in music, film, drawing and painting, cooking, reading, candlelight dinners... in dialogue with Others or in solitude. Whatever works for getting you closer to the Being you are — free of the limitations and Self-doubts produced by the Master Narrative.

Maximizing personal resources, we're more capable of standing up to the seductive coercive power in our immediate environments. No longer susceptible to the influences that work at squelching Self-development, expanse of Soul, Personal Creativity. Qualities each of us has stubbornly kept alive.

Understanding the role of narratives and the power of microtheatres can also help us to forgive each other. Mistakes and misdeeds have caused immense suffering; they've also brought us to the edge of planetary destruction. Yet we have all done harm, most often not out of malice, but rather from the pressure of cultural forces.

Liberating Ourselves from the Master Narrative enables us to imagine what living together as a community might look like. Alternatives to the Self-as-Separate idea welcome pluralism. Inspire respect for individuality and One another's Personal space. Love finds expression in as many ways as there are individuals among us.

In a community, decision making moves away from the hierarchical toward the authentically inter-Personal. Thus, a community, whatever size, makes Love possible; while at the same time, protects against microtheatrical tyrannies disguised as Love. Real Love does not demand or in any way coerce. Love depends on Freedom and Freedom depends on Equality.

A true community treasures the wildness that generates the endless variations on beauty. Would view Nature as Mother, rather than a force needing to be gotten under control. Would cultivate a whole new mindset regarding the Plants and Animals. Instead of drifting into fantasies about possible parallel Universes, simulations or clinging to metaphysical speculation, the meaning

of community draws us to an appreciation of Earth, a new responsibility for our home. Can open to the recognition of a Personal Universe, one in which each of us plays a part.

Alternative Narrative would gather our moments of coincidence and dream into a bouquet of wild flowers. Slip us into a kind of timelessness, where the spatial and historical context recede. Believing we're capable of the World we've always desired, brings us closer to it. If we can envision what that World might look like, we can create it.

Macrotheatrical Change

Our Microtheatres — minds, homes, workplaces, social spaces — are not isolated. Networks link us together. We depend on networks for water, food, energy, sanitation, healthcare, news, information, entertainment... We communicate via satellite, wireless and wired networks. We travel along railroad tracks, streets, highways, interstates, air and sea corridors. Networks combine our Microtheatres into Macrotheatres.

Complexity Studies tell us that Complex Adaptive Dynamic Systems — cells, organisms, bodies, societies, flowers, eco-systems — survive as long as their members, their agents, make appropriate choices. A system assures itself the deepest cooperation, the widest range of intelligence and the making of correct decisions when all its Agents have equal access to the available resources, receive undistorted information and participate in the decision making.

Successful systems integrate the input and care for the needs of all its members. Thriving Complex Adaptive Dynamic Systems resemble a grand, democratically organized symphony of free acting Agents, Self-directing Subject Centers, unified in their commitment, combining to make music together — rather than a king or dictator ruling over a hierarchy.

Majority Rule proves the operative Principle. Because Agents are free, they can make mistakes. As long as the majority rules, when errors are recognized, corrections can be made; change can happen. And by the results, the minority can be persuaded, or something else tried. But if a minority rules, then change doesn't necessarily happen. No matter the gravity of the mistake, nor how large the majority recognizing the error.

When Complex Adaptive Dynamic Systems reach the end of a pathway, or begin showing signs of going over the edge because of something they're doing, everything can change. Phase Transitions are known to take place when it becomes clear to the system's Agents that the survival, the future welfare of the entire system is at stake.

If canalizing takes place — such as efforts to push aside or discredit essential information, obstruct or distort the reporting of what's happening or happened — it may take longer for the seriousness of the situation to register. Separate Self-interest and ignorance can overwhelm Human Beings. Cause us to disregard anything that contradicts what we believe or want to believe. You can't blame people for the hold that the Master Narrative can have over their minds.

Nonetheless, it's equally important to remember that without free, accurate and effective channels of communication, Agents can fail to make informed decisions. Complex Adaptive Dynamic Systems can fall into extinction.

Help Wanted

On the other hand, if reliable and vital information were to freely circulate; and robust networks were to begin resonating with alternative narratives, effects of the desire for a more loving World would likely begin appearing everywhere. Agents in prominent social positions recognizing their cosmic roles — whether news reporters, editors, critics, teachers, news analysts, talk and music show hosts, advertisers, writers, disk jockeys, politicians, entrepreneurs, marketing and public relations professionals, artists, actors, musicians, producers and owners of mass media — could bring Love cascading through the collective narrative field. Ever greater Microtheatrical liberation among Agents would likely follow. Leaving audiences hungering for more. A feedback loop unlike any other.

The beginning of a Phase Transition could look like this. More and more Millionaires and Billionaires going far beyond Philanthropy in order to end World hunger, ensure a vibrant Planet far into the future. We can imagine politicians and legislators acknowledging their previous gamesmanship, proposing better ways. There could be investigations into the root causes and realizable solutions for sexism and racism. Recognition of the problematic way we've been constructing Masculinity. Growing support for reparations and justice

movements. New writing on the Human's relationship with Nature. Film and storytelling that model respect, celebrate diversity. Teach-ins and opinion page articles inspiring civility, how to love One another. The list goes on.

In the end, the results of elections would bear the clearest signs that a Phase Transition was happening. Because in voting, we choose who will represent us, we give voice to who we are and the kind of World we want to see.

Imagine if we were to learn that the Republican Party is joining with Democrats to make it easier to vote, that they regret their doubts now, and are expressing trust in the integrity of our electoral system. Encouraging everyone to participate. People are good at Heart. We know that all of us are made of Quarks sharing Energy. Were we to begin voting in massive numbers, that Goodness would come through.

The Historic Period might resemble a second Enlightenment. A great surge of enthusiasm for increased, widening and deepening of Consciousness. A burst of Human dignity. A renewal of Mind. An unpredicted, unexpected Springtime for our Species. A moment that couldn't come too soon.

Back to Reality

That scene is not yet happening here in the United States, of course; instead, signs that we've arrived at the Self-as-Separate Pathway's End continue to mount. An oligarchy, driven by a competition for money and power, has yet to hold Donald J Trump accountable for the January 6 effort to overthrow our democracy. In fact, individuals given the responsibility to uphold the rule of law, are not holding him accountable for anything. A shocking failure of leadership, adding to the atmosphere of a society severely polarized, misinformed and unsure of exactly what's going on.

As cited earlier, in an elaborated complex society such as ours, we depend on One Another for everything. Obviously, not every member of a society is able to contribute equally. Some — such as children, the aged, the mentally or physically challenged — rely on the Community's sense of social responsibility, Other's Goodness. And among those able to contribute to the Common Good, we find a wide range of skills, inventiveness and motivation.

Societies also differ. Our Globe provides varying quantity and quality of resources. In addition, a history of colonialism has profoundly affected relative levels of power, poverty and wealth. Plus we've created a variety of cultures.

Economic systems, from the Greek words, *ekos nomos*, meaning "house rules," embody how people do what they do to meet their needs. A village economy differs significantly from that of a technologically advanced cyber society. Yet both will have rules, structures and ways of doing things; methods of distribution, exchange and reward. Economic Systems reflect how a people understand themselves, Others and the World.

A few societies, notably indigenous groups living on various continents have proven Humanity capable of economic systems characterized by cooperation and sharing. Our present and most powerful economic systems, however, are based on the Master Narrative of Self-as-Separate, with its Get-for-Yourself imperative manifesting as a competition for and hoarding of money and power.

Historically, when we've tried to do something else, we've failed. And at least one factor contributing to our failures, has been the lack of an analysis of the Master Narrative. Caught up in that Ego Identity, Communist Revolutionaries did not succeed when they tried to force Others into versions of a Classless Society — where everyone would work for the common good and share equally in the wealth. Even where Communism improved certain aspects of peoples' lives, the effort to impose a system on others inevitably evokes resistance.

Humans are Free-thinking creatures, Each of equal value and dignity as the Other. Each would have a say in creating the laws that effect their lives. Totalitarianism, with its peculiar justification for the gross disparity in political power and living conditions between the men and women at the top and the rest of the people, plus its disregard for environmental destruction, perfectly expresses the Master Narrative.

The Self-as-Separate/Ego Narrative directly informs the economic system we call "free market," "free market capitalism" or "capitalism." The roots capitalism reach back through feudalism, back through Rome and Greece, back before the Egyptian dynasties, back to when writing first appears. By the records of emperors and their wars, the Master Narrative appears to accompany the very emergence of the Patriarchy. If you could take over and defend a piece of land,

you were welcome to it. You then owned that property — the resources on it, the plants and animals who lived there, even the people. Ownership brought along the corollary of slavery.

Roman Law codified that idea of private property, including the right to unlimited individual property accumulation. History chronicles only part of the strife and suffering that resulted.

In our present situation, technology has transformed earlier modes of exchange into a vast globalized economy. Multi-national businesses and corporations exploit planetary resources and people's labor in order to produce a profit for the shareholders. Aligned with the Master Narrative, individuals and nations labor at enlarging their Wealth in order to maintain and expand their power — while people in developing nations are unable to meet their basic needs for survival. Food. Medicine. Shelter.

Meanwhile, the Workers in the more developed nations, although enjoying a much higher standard of living, stand at any time to lose their jobs, go without healthcare, struggle to makes ends meet, deal with the daily insecurities of a system that provides no safety net. Moreover, Workers belong to a social class with less influence on legislation than the millionaire class.

The role that the Master Narrative plays in this is multiple. It helps keep the lower classes from rising up in civil rebellion by encouraging them to compete among themselves and admire the symbols of Wealth. While at the same time giving permission to the ruling classes to use any means necessary to protect their privilege; that is, obstruct change, including ploys such as stirring up racism in order to divide and manipulate.

In a World produced by the Master Narrative, nations arm themselves against other nations — to keep them from invading and taking over. Navies ensure access to raw materials and secures Worldwide markets for Labor and Consumers. The United States, for instance, presently maintains seven naval fleets, global military bases, international radar installations, a deadly nuclear submarine arsenal, intercontinental ballistic missiles, satellites, drone technology, space based espionage, a super-secret National Security Agency and a gargantuan defense budget. And still we do not feel safe. But such ineffective reliance on the ability to inflict mass destruction is only one of the problems associated with an economic system founded on the Self-as-Separate/Ego idea.

In guise of being good for the economy, the Master Narrative has had extremely toxic effects on the democracies so hard-won by our ancestors. Since laws and regulations can interfere with profit-taking, money and power drive elections and influence legislation. And because the Master Narrative justifies individuals enriching themselves whenever and however they can, bribery and corruption infect every level of government. All of which undermines the democracy that we and those who came before us have sacrificed to establish and preserve.

An economic system that proudly boasts of being based on greed and fear, cannot take us where we want to go. As corporate spokespeople and economists explain, the competitive strategies required by free market capitalism lock them into a "profit first" business model. The system can only reward activities when there's money to be made. It doesn't pay to stop polluting or cleanup the damages already done, any more than it pays to keep workers on the job in a downturn, or feed the hungry. Which is the main reason why we haven't yet adequately addressed the Climate Crisis. We're a Species capable of better than this.

A Phase Transition would completely transform our economic system. Once we would recognize that our true Self-interest is not Separate from One another, not separable from an international community and inextricable from the needs of our Planet — we could figure out how to base our house rules on sharing, trust, responsibility. Such an economic system could meet everyone's needs. Care for the Earth. Given the political will, we could provide sustainable, non-polluting Energy for all. We could have a social safety net. Build housing for those who have no shelter. Heal the sick.

Only the Master Narrative keeps us from creating a World in which everyone receives adequate nutrition, housing, health-care and education. We could engineer a system that guarantees everyone meaningful employment, a sustainable income. An economic system embodying our best ideals would respect democratic principles, ensure true participation in decision making in both government and the workplace. The very idea of a small privileged group taking advantage and exercising power over Others could go the way of similar crude practices we have abandoned in the name of civility and sanitation.

In a Phase Transition, we would rethink our Justice System as well. Punishment and revenge have failed us. A Phase Transition would shift to efforts such as rehabilitation programs, substance-abuse treatment, psychological help, understanding and forgiveness. Crime and sick behavior are symptomatic of the insanity that characterizes our Self-as-Separate driven World.

Justice also requires the payment of debts — even those we as individuals may not have directly incurred. In the United States, for instance, we live on Lands taken by force from Native Americans who had been living here for tens of thousands of years. We enjoy a standard of living founded on centuries of slavery. Our Wealth was built by exploiting the resources and labor of People in other Nations.

Freeing Ourselves from the Self-as-Separate/Ego Narrative, we would want to set right the wrongs of the past. Take responsibility to correct the errors that Others may have made. Were we to take such steps the World would see us differently, we could begin setting aside our weapons. Turn our military resources and personnel into projects aimed at helping People around the World. While 'turning our spears into pruning hooks,' we could also develop new skills of Personal responsibility and strategies of non-violence. Explore the meaning of honor and integrity so that we could defend our Constitution, protect each Other's Civil Rights. We could replace our war colleges with Peace campuses, convert ROTC into Peace Preservation programs.

Some might hope that Changes of this sort would eventually happen, but think it will take centuries. Others, looking at Human history, shake their head in disbelief that it could ever happen. Our Problems, however, no longer afford us centuries. Phase Transitions can and often do take place rather rapidly.

Constitutional Change

We define democracy according to the principle that We, the People, are capable of governing Ourselves. Democracy implies that each Agent of the system is equal and has an equal voice in the creation of the laws that all of us will live by. None above the others. No one above the Law. We long ago learned that majority rule and the Rule of Law is better than violence and might makes right.

In contrast, dictatorship, oligarchy and bureaucratic totalitarianism allege that only certain individuals or small groups should govern. They believe that a privileged class has the right to maintain advantage and exercise power over the Majority. Submerged in the Master Narrative, authoritarians do not believe that all Agents are equal. They believe themselves superior. Complexity Theory supports our feeling that democracy works better.

In a government "of the people, by the people and for the people," it follows that the Citizens retain the Right to determine the form and practice of their institutions. Democratic government includes, sometimes explicitly always implicitly, the Right of the Citizenry to construct and reconstruct their systems and institutions — in case some form or practice chosen in the past might prove tyrannical at some future date.

During the framing of the United States Constitution, George Mason raised this very point. James Madison recorded the debate. In the end, Article V was written and approved. It outlines a mechanism securing the Right of the People to call for a Convention for proposing and ratifying Amendments — outside the purview of the established National Legislature.

Article V states:

"The Congress, whenever two thirds of both Houses shall deem it necessary, shall propose Amendments to this Constitution, or, on the Application of the Legislatures of two thirds of the several States, shall call a Convention for proposing Amendments, which in either Case, shall be valid to all Intents and Purposes, as Part of this Constitution, when ratified by the Legislatures of three fourths of the several States or by Conventions in three fourths thereof, as the one or the other Mode of Ratification may be proposed by the Congress..."

No one disputes that Article V provides the means for the calling of a Constitutional Convention. And all agree that the results of such a Convention would require ratification. It is also clear from the debate surrounding the passage, as well as the final wording of Article V, that such a Convention stands independent of Congress. Almost everything else about a Second Constitutional Convention, however, remains undefined.

What form would such a Convention take? Within what time frame and with what sort of petition could it be called? Who would fund it? How would its delegates be chosen? What powers would such a Convention have? Could it re-construct institutions? Remake whole systems?

Legal, editorial, professional and personal answers vary for all of these questions. For the most part, a generalized distrust of One another taints discussion surrounding Article V. Those on the Right have historically feared that the Left would get control of such a Convention and curtail unlimited private property rights, increase taxes on the Wealthy, create a more just society. Those on the Left fear that conservatives and Right leaning politicians would use a Convention to produce a White nationalist constitution, destroying the Bill of Rights and other Amendments, resulting in an authoritarian government.

Some believe another Convention should never be called. Others conclude that the unanticipated power and influence that corporations and the upper class presently exercise over Elections, on Legislation and even on the Supreme Court, make the Convention method the only way that needed reforms and change can happen. Some suggest that such a Convention can have no more than the ability to propose amendments. Others contend it represents the Premier Assembly of the People — and given its only precedent, could assume Unlimited Power — especially if the People so entrusted it. Innumerable websites and articles are dedicated to the topic, its history, the opinions of legal scholars, the why and why not.

In the early years of the United States, threatening to invoke Article V was used to urge passage or blockage of various bills. After a while, it was no longer taken seriously. In the 1960s, however, Senator Everett Dirksen began collecting petitions regarding Supreme Court intervention in the re-apportionment of State Legislatures. The strategy was ultimately abandoned; but it motivated research into what such a Convention might involve.

The issue was set aside, however, until the late 1970s, when the Convention option again surfaced, this time advanced by a movement for a Constitutional mandate for a balanced federal budget. That initial effort faded, but was revived in 2017 when a group of Republican lawmakers convened in Phoenix and performed a dress rehearsal around the idea. In November of that year, the Wisconsin State Legislature submitted the twenty-eighth petition for such a Convention. Thirty-four are required.

Why is this important to us?

To transform our World into the Heaven on Earth we can imagine it could be, we'll need a place to come together and carefully create orderly and profound change. Only if we upgrade our institutions democratically and non-violently will they express the alternative narrative we're aspiring to. A Constitutional Convention promises just such a place, while at the same time retaining continuity with our past.

Until the present Master Narrative has been exposed and discredited, however; and is being replaced by alternative narratives, we can all too easily be misled. Recent political rhetoric by the Republican Party, for instance, indicates that they favor trying to drag the system back into failed solutions of the past. Repeal Voting Rights. Rescind Civil Rights. Deny a woman the Right over Her own body. Turn a government of the people into a government run by a small ruling class. A Convention called for with such ideas in mind bodes systemic failure.

In the name of full disclosure, in the 1970s and '80s, I suggested we call for a Constitutional Convention — for the same purposes that this Handbook is advocating — as a means for orderly change from what we've got to the new World which all of us together could create. Among the Age of Enlightenment insights is that of recognizing that we create our social and political institutions. They are not ordained by someone's idea of God. The awareness of our responsibility for the World led to the overthrow of kings.

We'd all like to be part of answering the call for a "higher love," that Steve Winwood sings about. We'd all like our World to be on that pathway not yet taken. We'd prefer honesty and fairness on the rise, talk of a new and fully altruistic economic system emerging — Human progress instead of the old conflict and obstruction. Love the prayer on every lip.

If we as a people are ready, a Constitutional Convention could help unify us; catalyze even greater movement toward actualizing Peace on Earth. As long as we do our best to see that it's called for and conducted in such a way that it leads to the kind of Loving World we envision.

The process of calling for the Convention itself could facilitate translating Phase Transition ideals into reality. State and local governments could provide places and forums for people to give their input or participate in discussions.

Consistent with our goal, we would be best served if the details of the Convention itself, were specified by the people. Live streaming of local participation events, televised town hall meetings, newspaper and editorial reporting, news feeds, social networking, radio talk shows, all could serve as platforms for harvesting — and winnowing individual Agents' ideas. Each State could aim at producing a document attuned to the will and voice of its citizens. The logistics of the Convention — from delegate selection and Convention form, to a set of guidelines and mandates, to the required mode of ratification — all could be defined beforehand.

To ensure that the Convention would be called in a reasonable amount of time, we might link the Calling of the Convention to our national elections. The formal process could begin with we, as a People, voting for or against the Calling of it. And we could do that by electing a Presidential candidate whose platform is the Calling for the Convention. The candidate might carry a petition, drawn from points of agreement in those made by the States. If the candidate were to win, their first duty as President would be to request the State Legislatures to submit to Congress that same petition which the candidate carried, that the People had created and now approved. This could happen with a Third Party emerging, widely unifying itself, then offering a Candidate with the Petition. An even better scenario might be for both candidates of the existent major Parties to carry the same Petition; again, the one drawn up by direct participation of the People earlier. If the work of the Convention proved true to the Petition for which it was called, it would meet with swift and unanimous approval in the ratification phase.

Whatever pathway we would take to calling for a such a Convention, it could serve as a significant step in a Phase Transition — drawing on the resources and collective input of our best economists, scholars, bankers, investors, entrepreneurs, laborers from every field. It's impossible to predict the exact forms that the new systems and institutions would be given. Assuming the success of the Convention, we can certainly anticipate our new World will be one of greater happiness and love than what we've got. And we do know that Constitutional continuity requires a ratification process of whatever changes the Convention would propose.

Belonging

Drawing from insights provided by Complexity Theory, we've sketched a Plan of Action. Knowing a Phase Transition can only happen with each of us suggests it will be easy to know when it's beginning. We'll see it happening.

We'd surely notice the uncountable and unexpected expressions that alternative narrative might inspire. New models of heroism. Surprising acts of kindness. More satisfaction with our jobs. A drop in the rates of crime, suicide and depression. Public Service announcements explaining how sign systems and narratives work. How we each need to do our part in keeping in touch with the actual Referent. Learning about Microtheaters and coercive power. Tips about meditation and other important skills, helping us to learn how to control our Minds. Television and cinematic narratives celebrating relationship and compassion. People in positions of power and privilege shedding their advantage in favor of equality and democracy. The Wealthiest throughout the World dispersing their fortunes in order to help Others. Unbelievable Goodness. Everything the Master Narrative would call impossible.

Of course, it's easy to doubt that such a Great Change could actually happen. We look around and see how far we would need to go. We know that terrible evil has been wrought in the name of good intention. Some of us have come to distrust joining in to do anything —even if there is no membership, no leader, no organization. No name. We worry about making matters worse. We fear the unknown.

But none of that is what the Universe is asking of us. It's true, of course, that Love carries risk, and it's Love that's being asked of us, so there is risk involved. But the chaos we risk by not acting outweighs the doubts. The Master Narrative keeps telling us that we can't; but now that we understand what that voice is, we know how to talk back.

Crossing from where we are to the World Humanity has long dreamed may be less difficult than it appears. We are an ingenious and inventive Species, more intelligent, more brilliant, more loving than the Master Narrative has ever let us believe. We are descendants of the Quarks sharing Energy at the beginning of Time; the Altruistic first Metabolizers who playfully opened the Biosphere; the Purple Oxygen Breathers and Archaeon who saved Life on Earth by sacrificing their identities, ultimately enabling multi-organed Creatures such as Ourselves to evolve. We can do this.

The World all of us desire begins within. It is there we know our Freedom. No outside power controls us. We created and can correct the narratives that have been misleading us. With the awareness of how language and sign systems work, we as individuals can more freely create narrative more befitting Ourselves, One another and our World. We can decide what thoughts to think, which to repeat, elaborate; which pathways pursue, which abandon; what's most important in our lives.

Love, and the desire to be Loved, have always proven a far deeper and more enduring joy than money, power, fame and privilege. By whatever mystery and series of events, we've arrived together at this crossroads. It's here that we decide whether as a Species, we are worthy to go on. Our meaning waits to be discovered — though not much longer.

As Mother Earth's sign-system-making child, we appear well qualified for assuming the role of Her gardener, caregiver of Her children. A place in Nature we could belong. A Possibility now in our hands.