

From NEW AGE to NEW GNOSIS

On the Contemporary Significance of a New Gnostic Spirituality [Part 1]

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Questions

You have an open mind.
You have varied interests.
You have read interesting books.
You have met interesting people.
You have had interesting psychic or spiritual experiences.
You may even have accumulated elements of esoteric knowledge.
And yet...
Do you know who *you are* – your inner being?
Do you know yourself as a *part* of that being, and *not* the whole?
Do you partake of *its* knowing in your search for *self-knowledge*?
Do you partake of *its* knowing in understanding *others*?
You may be a seeker of knowledge.
But do you really want to *know*?

You know *what* you are interested in.
But do you know *who*?
Gnosis is knowledge of beings not of ‘things’.
How deeply do we want to *know* this other human being?
How deeply do we want to know our own inner being?
That is the test of our interest in gnosis.
Gnosis *is* authentic interest - *inter-esse* - inter-being.

Meditations

Whoever has not known himself has known nothing, but he who has known himself has at the same time achieved knowledge of the depth of all things.

The Gospel of Thomas

However vast outer space may be, yet with all its sidereal distances it hardly bears comparison with the dimensions, *with the depth dimension of our inner being*, which does not even need the spaciousness of the universe to be within itself almost unfathomable... our customary consciousness lives on the tip of a pyramid whose base within us (and in a certain way beneath us) widens out so fully that the farther we find ourselves able to descend into it, the more generally we appear to be merged into those things that, independent of time and space, are given in our earthly, in the widest sense, worldly existence.

Rainer Maria Rilke

He who possesses gnosis...is like a person who, having been intoxicated, becomes sober, and having come to himself, re-affirms that which is essentially his own.

The Gospel of Truth

And there shall be others of those who are outside our number who name themselves bishop and also deacons, as if they have received their authority from God. They bend themselves under the judgment of the leaders. Those people are waterless channels.

The Apocalypse of Peter

***Gnosis* is not knowledge 'of' God or of any *actual* being. Rather God *is* Gnosis – a knowing awareness of *potentiality* that is the hidden ground and source of all actual beings, linking them to their own innermost potentialities of being. Gnosis is not knowledge of extant beings – it is a Knowing that precedes Being.**

Peter Wilberg

There is a wordless knowledge within the word.

Seth

Gnosis, Old and New

Preface

The old gnosis of antiquity was a mytho-poetic critique of the ruling gods of its era, in particular those of the Old Testament, and of Greek and Roman paganism. The New Gnosis is a theo-political critique of the ruling secular gods of our era and the social and scientific cults that surround them. These include the scientific and New Age cult of ‘energy’, the worship of the ‘eternal gene’, the high-tech temples of bio-technology and the global stock exchanges, and with them, the hegemonic culture of American imperialism and its God-given ‘way of life’. Thus, in the words of Karl Marx “the critique of heaven is transformed into the critique of earth...the critique of theology into the critique of politics.” Such theo-political critique does not take the form of a theoretical treatise produced as an academic *end in itself*. For “Its subject is its *enemy* ...It no longer acts as an end in itself but only as a *means*. Its essential emotion is *indignation*. Its essential task is *denunciation*.” The “enemy” is not a person or persons, nor some force of evil. It is spiritual ignorance (*agnosis*) and lack of awareness (*agnoia*).

Lifting the Veil

In the centuries immediately preceding and following the birth of Christ, a multi-cultural mix of races co-existed under the political sway of the Roman empire and its vassals, along with a medley of spiritual mythologies and theologies – a medley mirrored in today’s New Age pick-and-mix assortment of ancient spiritual traditions and new fangled therapies. Then, as now, the main concern of the ruling powers of the day was only to ensure that no coherent spiritual movement emerged which in any way challenged their political authority or the military hegemony. But the spiritual key word of the day was not ‘therapy’ or ‘healing’ however, but ‘redemption’. This word did not mean salvation from *sin* but freedom from *slavery* to the ruling military-political powers and their religious servants.

Thus it was that in closest secrecy, small circles of initiates formed covert spiritual ‘cells’ whose purpose was to quietly educate others in a new and coherent religious philosophy. This philosophy, unlike the ‘New Age’ style medley of gods and religions that preceded it, was indeed spiritually and politically subversive. Its sheer *spiritual* power was a covert challenge to the ruling military-political powers. For, it was capable of restoring a sense of authentic spiritual communion between individuals that transcended those ethnic, class and cultural divisions on which those powers rested.

One outcome of the work of these initiates was the birth of a ‘Christianity’ which very soon deformed itself into a personality cult of saviour worship and redemption from ‘original sin’. Another, less visible outcome was the continued survival of a powerful

underground spiritual tradition – the ‘gnostic’ tradition. This tradition had begun with the secret cells of initiates – spiritual teachers who taught that the key to ‘salvation’ lay neither in political rebellion nor in redemption from ‘sin’, but rather in overcoming spiritual blindness and ignorance. In place of this ignorance they offered knowledge or *gnosis* – not in the form of dogmas but in the form of direct spiritual experiences undergone by individuals through initiation.

For those in the business of creating a new structure of spiritual-political and cultural-communal authority – the Church – gnostic Christianity became subversive *heresy*. The ‘official’ canon of Christian gospels were carefully selected to remove as many traces as possible of the gnostic message or ‘gospel’ that Christ had been chosen to publicly enunciate and embody. Direct knowledge of spiritual reality through individual experience was regarded as inherently suspect and replaced by official rites or ‘sacraments’ which merely *symbolised* initiatory experiences.

In today’s world however, ‘knowledge’ is something identified solely with academic studies and science, whereas religion is seen as a matter of ‘belief’ or ‘faith’, ‘culture’ or ‘community’. All claims to knowledge that fall outside its officially sanctioned sources – science and academia – are deemed to be ‘unscientific’ rather than ‘heretical’. Nevertheless, the very idea that there is such a thing as *subjective knowledge* is of course sheer scientific *heresy* in modern scientific terms. The fact that we no longer see any scientific truth in direct subjective experience – not least spiritual experience – is testament to the spiritual ignorance or *a-gnosticism* fostered by centuries of institutionalised Christianity.

The official churches fulfilled the function of nurturing and sustaining a *communal* spirituality based on personal faith and sacramental rites. The underground ‘anti-church’ of traditional gnosticism focused on the enlightenment of the *individual* through initiation in secret societies. But as Martin Buber emphasised:

The individual is a fact of existence in so far as he steps into a living relation with other individuals.
The aggregate is a fact of existence in so far as it is built up of living units of relation.

Martin Buber

Here Martin Buber writes as a prophet of a New Gnosis, being the first spiritual thinker to identify spirituality *as such* with a realm transcending both the individual *and the* community, the realm of human relationships or ‘inter-being’ that he called *The Between*. The primary focus of this New Gnosis is neither the fostering of a communicable faith nor the spiritual enlightenment of the individual. Instead its whole purpose lies in the redemption and spiritual deepening of relationships *between* individuals. The spiritual practices of the New Gnosis are geared to this goal, allowing us to experience a new depth of inner contact, connectedness and communication with

other individuals. The goal exists because, in today's world, the *taboo* against deep soul-spiritual intimacy and intercourse with other human beings is greater than any taboos that once held sway regarding sexual intimacy and intercourse. Why else do we shrink from sustained silent eye-contact with others – the intimacy of the mutual gaze? For, through such intimate forms of communication we recall an inner language of the soul which is the very medium of intercourse between beings in the life between lives. The nature of this intimate soul-spiritual intercourse, as experienced in the life between lives, was well described by Rudolf Steiner - another prophet of the New Gnosis:

...at the first stage after death the human being moves among the spirit-physiognomies of those who connected with him by destiny: he beholds these physiognomies. Human beings learn to know each other in the spirit-form, they learn to know each other's moral and spiritual qualities. But at this first state it is a beholding only, a seeing; although it means that the souls come into intimate connection. Then begins the period I described as the growth of mutual understanding. The one begins to understand the other; he gazes deeply upon him and looks into his inner nature, knowing the while that the sure working of destiny will link the future to the past. Then the great process of transformation begins, where the one is able to work upon the other out of a profound knowledge and understanding, and the plastic moulding of the spirit is taken up and changed to music and to speech. And here we come to something that is more than understanding; the one human being is able to speak to the other his own warmth-filled creative work. On Earth we speak with our organs of speech; by means of these we tell each other what we know. Our words live in the physical body as something fleeting and transient; and when we express what we want to say by means of our speech-organs, in that moment we completely shut off that which lives behind the merely material. But now imagine that what a man thus utters, what goes over into the fleeting word, were an expression of himself, were not alone a manifestation of him but was at the same time his very being...The human souls are themselves words, their symphony is the symphony of the spoken Cosmic Word in its very being – communion. There, men live in and with one another; there is no such thing as impenetrability. The word which is one human being merges into the word which is the other human being.

The type of intimate soul-spiritual connectedness with others which Steiner describes as a feature of the *after-life* is also the key to *gnosis*

or inner knowing. Getting to know this depth of inner, spiritual communication in our earthly lives breaks the *ultimate taboo*. For it not only lifts the psychological veils that separates us spiritually from other human beings in *this* life. It also lifts the *ultimate veil* – that which separates our earthly ‘being in the world’ from the spiritual *world of beings* to which we return after death. The essential message of *gnosis* has always been that this other world is one in which our innermost spiritual self *never ceases to dwell*, even after birth. The outer human being or ‘personal’ self is but one embodiment or incarnation of another ‘trans-personal’ or spiritual self - the inner human being. That is why we are ‘in’ the world but not ‘of’ it. It is also why, even whilst being ‘here’ in this world, we are also already ‘there’ in that other world to which we most truly belong. This other world is not some other place in cosmic space – it invisibly permeates physical space and the physical world, just as our innermost being also invisibly permeates our physical body. The spiritual relationships we enter into in that other world also set the stage for our human relationships in this world – and can be re-experienced through the spiritual deepening of those human relationships.

Gnosis and the Alien God

At the heart of gnostic spirituality is the understanding that the inner human being has a trans-personal, trans-human, and trans-physical character - that it is a being fundamentally *other* than the personal, human and physical self we know. Man’s alienation from his inner being can lead him to interpret and experience it as a being of an entirely foreign or *alien nature* - a libidinal unconscious, an unidentifiable presence or an extra-terrestrial life-form. In contrast, the earliest gnostic religions recognised that *we ourselves are the aliens*. It is not from UFO hunters or Hollywood science fiction but ancient Mandaean scriptures that the word ‘Alien’ first gained its significance - denoting the living spiritual essence of the human being.

In the name of that Alien man who forced his way through the worlds, came, split the firmament and revealed himself.

In the name of that first great alien Life, from the worlds of Light, the sublime that stands above all works...

Manda means ‘knowledge’ – *gnosis*. According to the Mandaean tradition, we are still called by that other, forgotten ‘alien’ self that constitutes our innermost being. Not called from the distances of outer space but called from the distances of inner space that surround it: “He stands at the outer rim of the world and calls to the elect.” Those that help human beings to hear this call of this Forgotten One, our inner being, were known as the *Uthra*. For ‘UFO’, we can then read something entirely different: *Uthras of the Forgotten One*.

What is ‘Gnosis’ ?

The word *gnosis*, like the terms *diagnosis* and *prognosis* derive from the Greek verbs *gignoskein* or *gnoskein* – from which come the Latin *gnoscere* and *noscere*. The verb *gignoskein* meant to know by *direct experience or first-hand acquaintance*. Ordinarily we understand ‘knowledge’ as experience represented indirectly in words or symbols. The word *gnosis*, on the other hand, came to refer to each individual’s capacity for a direct wordless knowledge of spiritual reality, free of signs and symbols. *Gnosis* is not objective knowledge *of* or *about* some ‘thing’. Instead it denotes the sort of subjective knowing we refer to when we speak of knowing ourselves, or of knowing someone intimately. The way in which we know ‘some-one’ – a *being* – is never reducible to any ‘thing’ that we know ‘about’ them. *Gnosis* is an inner knowing that belongs to our own innermost being, but that can only be deepened by deepening our direct inner relationship to *other* beings.

What is ‘Gnosticism’ ?

The term ‘gnosticism’ is generally used as a generic term for a variety of spiritual teachings that emerged in the first centuries before and after the birth of Christ. Uniting them was a ‘heretical’ belief in salvation through inner knowledge or *gnosis* rather than sacrifice or death on the cross. Our knowledge of these teachings comes principally from the Dead Sea scrolls and also from a variety of extraordinary manuscripts discovered at *Nag Hammadi* in Egypt in 1946. These include numerous ‘gospels’ not recognised in the Christian canon and known as the ‘Gnostic Gospels’. Still today, however, there is much debate about the exact definition of ‘gnosticism’ as a religious movement. The difficulty in providing such a definition belongs to the very nature of gnosticism, whose essence remains something that cannot be determined by historical definitions but needs to be directly experienced. From a gnostic perspective, ‘gnosticism’ can only be understood dia-gnostically: through inner knowing or *gnosis*.

Prominent in the *Nag Hammadi* treatises are those representing that major stream of gnosticism called ‘Sethian’. Its followers regarded themselves as the spiritual seed of the biblical Seth, third son of Adam and Eve, and at the same time understood Seth as the name of a spiritual entity or *aeon* who brought redeeming knowledge to humanity and was closely related to another such entity – the Christ entity. The mythological theogony, cosmogony and anthropogony of Sethian gnosticism bears a remarkable resemblance to the ‘SETH books’ – a collection of highly sophisticated teachings stemming from an entity calling itself Seth. These teachings were transmitted orally in trance through the American writer and poetess Jane Roberts and first

published in the 1970s. Like Jung, Seth identifies the Hebrew god as a symbol of man's emerging ego, and offers an account of creation, the cosmos and the Christ drama remarkably similar in content and spirit to that of the Sethian gnostics. Unlike Jung he does not reduce gnostic mythology to a symbolism of the human unconscious, but like the Sethian gnostics themselves, presents an alternative understanding of the nature of the Godhead or 'All That Is', its relationship to the Being and to the inner human being or 'inner ego' of the individual.

The Genesis of Gnosticism

In his book subtitled "The message of the alien God and the beginnings of Christianity", Hans Jonas presented an account of the nature of the gnostic religion, the historical background and cultural preconditions of its emergence. This is an account which provides remarkable parables to our times. The story begins with the decline of regional state cults such as those of the Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians and Jews. War and conquest and the expatriation of ruling elites starts to separate *regional religious cults* from their urban centres of state power. Mass migration of peoples leads these regional cults and religious cultures to not only spread geographically but eventually to transform themselves into *global ideologies* and *world religions*. Thus according to Jonas, the Egyptian exodus and Babylonian exile of the Israelites led to the emergence of monotheism as a world religion, the conquest of Babylon by Persia led to the spread of astrological fatalism, and the fall of the Persian empire led to the spread of magic and religious dualism from its erstwhile regional locus in what is now Iran.

To begin with, therefore, we have a migratory melting pot of ethnic cultures and religious cults detached from their regional soil. At the same time, however, another force is at work. Greece transforms itself under Alexander into a great *imperial power* which conquers the Near East. Through the Greek language and Greek philosophy it imposes its own Hellenic culture – a *cosmopolitan* culture in which individuals, no matter what their origins, are seen not only as citizens of a local *polis* or city state like Athens but of a grand rationally ordered *cosmos*. Greek language and Greek philosophy offer the older spiritual traditions of the Near East a powerful new language in which to *conceptualise* themselves. Thus the Hebrew Yahweh cult found expression as a universal philosophical and ethical monotheism. But along with the Hellenisation of Judaism went a general revival of all the old spiritual traditions of the Near East. The sophisticated and subtle Greeks begin to take an interest themselves in 'the wisdom of the barbarians'. The result was a 'New Age' style marketplace of ancient mystery cults and religious philosophies – but all couched in the common currency of Greek concepts. What was missing in this marketplace however, was any concept of *individual spirituality* and *spiritual individuality*. The inner self was identified with the outer self

or ego, and the monotheistic God of the Jews served as a divine superego, needed to keep man's unruly libidinal nature under control.

The central message of Christianity was designed to correct this god-concept, to remind individuals that they were fleshly embodiments of their innermost spiritual being. This gnostic message soon gave way to something quite different - an *identification* of each individual's divine essence or spiritual individuality with a *single* divine or divinely inspired individual - first Jesus and later Mohammed.

Alexander's conquest of the East, however, not only prepared the ground for the Hellenic 'New Age' but gave birth, under the Roman empire, to a new Christian gnosis - one that would 'heretically' reject the dogmas through which Christianity itself was eventually turned into an imperial state religion of Rome. The gnostic 'heretics' rejected both Graeco-Roman cosmos idolatry and what they perceived as the false god of orthodox monotheism - a Supreme Being that, like the Big Bang of today's cosmologists - was the 'cause' (*arche*) of everything in the cosmos and its dominating power (*archon*) but had itself no deeper source or origin.

The 'knowledge' that the gnostics rejected however, was not as important as the *gnosis* that they affirmed - the inner knowing that is the heritage of each individual, that re-linking them to their own inner being and to an entire spiritual world of beings. This spiritual world was not conceived as an astrological cosmos of planets and stars but as an inner universe made up of planes and spheres of awareness.

The Greek language was rich enough to not only provide a medium of intelligent discourse and dialogue but also to resonate with a deeper type of knowing or gnosis - the "wordless knowledge within the word". This was not the case with Latin. Through Latin translation Greek theosophical language lost all its inner senses and resonances. Hence people can still speak today of 'gnosticism' as a dualistic world outlook which treats the *material* world as an abomination, forgetting that the Greek language had no word for 'matter'.

The Contemporary Significance of Gnosticism

With the expansion of the Roman empire and the Latinisation of Christian thought, the Greek West became the new Roman East - leading to the split between the Roman and Byzantine church. Similarly, today's European West is no more than a frontier to the new 'East' of the American global empire. Wars continue to rage in our own world between religious and racial, ethnic and national *particularism*, on the one hand, and an ethical and economic *universalism* on the other - the latter now taking the form of an American-led globalised capitalist culture in which, as Marx long ago predicted, all genuine qualitative values give way to a single quantitative value - the dollar. In this war of universalist vs particularist values there is, despite the much vaunted 'individualism' of the West, no room for the individual, no spiritual understanding of individuality and the nature of individual values. Today's Western

‘individualism’, dominated by the imperial culture of American global capitalism, is a spiritual sham. All deep spiritual values have been subsumed by superficial symbolic values attached to material commodities. And like commodities, individual identity has become private property – an *identi-kit* assembled from the global marketplace of brands and commodities, ethnic and ethical values. Coca Cola can be swapped for Mecca Cola, tee-shirts bearing the cross for those with a crescent or six-pointed star. Participation in the rat race can be alternated with periods in a Buddhist retreat or Ayurvedic health centre – at a price. In this way all sub-cultures are ultimately forced to prostrate themselves before the dominant global culture of technologisation and commercialisation, and indeed forced to partake of them – to brand and market themselves in order to ‘compete’. Not all the forces of Islam, either in the form of regional state religions or international religious movements, will be able to resist the imperial forces of global capitalism. For, like all of the other world religions it has not room for a deep individual spirituality of a new sort – one that cannot be reduced to a shared *communal* spirit or culture, religious or secular, regional or international, racial or ethnic. An authentic *individual spirituality* can only have its source in our own deeper *spiritual individuality* – the inner being we each bear within us and whose spiritual embodiment we are.

The same constellation of circumstances that gave birth to a gnostic spirituality in the centuries just preceding and following the birth of Christianity, are reflected in our contemporary world as we move into the third millennium AD. In place of a Hellenic cosmopolitanism and Roman imperialism we have scientific cosmos worship and American imperialism. In place of a Christian sacramental culture of communion we have a secular culture of commodification, commercialisation and consumerism. In place of the Assyrian, Babylonian and Persian East we have Syria, Iraq and Iran. In place of the ‘Near East’ we have the ‘Middle East’ – where Judaism has regressed to the status of a regional state-backed religion and where the Palestinians have become the new Jews of the ‘Holy Land’. In place of the revival of interest in ancient spiritual traditions that constituted the Hellenic ‘New Age’ we have our own – a mix-and-match marketplace of *second-hand* spiritual knowledge lacking any philosophical or spiritual depth – sold through the symbolic allure of ancient traditions or given a pseudo-scientific gloss in the jargons of quantum-physics.

The Enduring Tradition of Gnosis

Ancient gnosticism was the most heretical and iconoclastic and politically subversive spiritual movement ever to emerge and challenge the ruling gods of the day and their earthly priests and bishops. The *Nag Hammadi* gospels are ample evidence of this iconoclasm. The gnostic movement arose in the centuries around the beginning of the first millennium supplanting the ‘New Age’ style ‘pick-and-mix’ of religious cults and philosophies that had sprung up

within the Alexandrian empire. Weaving together elements of esoteric Judaism and Christianity, and giving new expression to ancient mystery traditions in the language of Greek philosophy, the gnostics forged a new and radically dualistic religious philosophy, characterised by five fundamental distinctions:

1. Between the egotistic and genocidal god of the Old Testament and that deeper spiritual source and reality which it arrogantly denied (“No other gods before me”).
2. Between the outer human being that is ‘in the world’, and the inner human being – a being that is not ‘of’ this world at all, and gives each individual direct access to spiritual reality through inner knowing or *gnosis*.
3. Between holy scriptures and symbols that merely represented spiritual reality and *gnosis* – the direct inner cognition of that reality.
4. Between distorted ideas of salvation through struggle against sin, self-sacrifice, martyrdom and death on the cross, and salvation through struggle against spiritual ignorance or *agnosis*.
5. Between the seed of Cain and Abel, symbols of an unending war of ‘good’ and ‘evil’, and the seed of Adam’s third son Seth – the bearer of authentic inner knowledge.

Gnosticism survived repression by the Roman Church, to leave traces in the mystical traditions of the Eastern Church, Judaism and Islam. It re-emerged in Europe in the heretical theology of Meister Eckhart and Jakob Boehme. Just as gnostic spirituality had first found expression in the language of Greek philosophy – whilst at the same time imbuing that language with an otherwise missing dimension of spiritual passion and depth – so did the resurgent gnosis now find expression in the language of German and German-Jewish philosophy and poetry. Whilst the heretical ‘Gospels’ discovered at Nag Hammadi provided decisive evidence of the early gnostic spiritual movement, the ‘Gnostic Gospels’ of our own *time* remain largely unacknowledged. Karl Marx’s profoundly spiritual critique of the false gods of capitalism is but one example of the re-emergence of an *underground stream* of wordless inner knowing or *gnosis* that has, in the last two centuries, been finding expression in entirely new frameworks of thought. Examples of latter-day gnostic philosophies are those of the twentieth-century German thinker Martin Heidegger, his Jewish counterpart Martin Buber and the ‘spiritual scientific’ thinking of Rudolf Steiner. More recently, gnostic thinking has found indirect expression in the experiential psychology of Eugene Gendlin, the writings of Peter Sloterdijk and above all in the SETH books of *Jane Roberts* – SETH being a name with deep resonance and significance in the history of gnosticism. As we enter the first years of the third millennium AD, humanity finds itself in a similar position to that which it faced in the first centuries of the first millennium. Our

New Age spirituality co-exists with the rampant religious and political egotism of a New Rome – US imperialism – whose only god is its own global economic and cultural hegemony.

As Marx long ago predicted in the Communist Manifesto, the march of corporate capitalism would inevitably result in its globalisation, creating a global secular culture which would economically trample and militarily terrorise all traditional, regionally rooted spiritual cultures – whilst arousing in the process the most violent forms of reaction from them. In Europe and Russia this reaction to global capitalism took the form of racist Nazi militarism and Stalinist industrial feudalism. In China it took the form of a religiously enthused ‘Cultural Revolution’. It now takes the form not only of Islamic fundamentalism, but of reactionary Christian and Jewish fundamentalism. Now however, the underground tradition of gnosis and gnostic spirituality *is destined to once again surface and fulfil its subversive mission* – that of undermining the false gods of global capitalism, scientific materialism, religious fundamentalism and New Age eclecticism. The New Gnosis will once again be a subversive *Sethian* gnosis – one which challenges a whole host of false gods worshipped in our time. ‘Globalisation’, ‘energy’ and the ‘eternal gene’ are just some of the clay-footed idols worshipped religiously in the current ideologies of global capitalism. These include *economic hegemonism and competitive egotism*, as well as the scientific and philosophical ideologies of *genetic, energetic and linguistic reductionism* – all of which constitute a new form of spiritual-scientific ignorance or *agnosticism*. These ideologies are not only in the high-tech temples of the global finance markets and bio-tech corporations – dedicated to the worship of Mammon or the Human Genome – but also in the healing sanctuaries of Neo Age ‘energy medicine’, in Neo-Nazi politics and Neo-pagan religions and in ‘narrative’ psychotherapy.

Under the title “A World Revolution of the Soul”, The *Nag Hammadi* Gospels were first published in Germany by Peter Sloterdijk, one of few contemporary thinkers to acknowledge the extraordinary significance of the gnostic tradition for our age. Commenting on Sloterdijk’s work, Wim Nijenhuis writes:

This [Gnosis] is a path followed by many philosophers and artists...Hegel, Schopenhauer, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Cioran, Beckett and Baudrillard. Without exaggerating, we may say that a discussion is underway regarding the dissidence potential of the language of Gnosis in the post-historical media age. Within this debate Sloterdijk's position is that a new 'epoch-making' revolution is possible, and that, analogous to Gnosis in the past, it must come from an individual revolution of the soul....Sloterdijk's thesis on unworldliness is that, for the first time in history, Gnosis has formulated a dualistic principle which makes it

possible to live in this world without being *of* this world. The Gnosis investigation provides Sloterdijk with a set of instruments for making a diagnosis of our age which demonstrates that our culture displays signs of a sort of neo-Gnostic turn. After two hundred years of attachment to the world, many people are now turning away from it and thereby spontaneously following the second path of Gnosis.

Gnostic Politics – a “World Revolution of the Soul”

Religion and politics have always been and remain inseparable. The supposed separation of spiritual and secular power, ‘church and state’, merely sanctifies that other unrecognised world religion – that of the global money markets. The economic military and media power wielded by this religion is unparalleled. It makes a complete mockery of democracy, a term which means nothing in societies in which it is not elected parliaments but *unelected* corporate managements that have the most impact on people’s everyday working lives. The gnostics of old struggled against worldly power of both church and state. They did not do so through parliamentary or extra-parliamentary action, martyrdom or mass demonstrations, militancy or armed revolution, communal mobilisation or media campaigning. They did so by recognising the innate spiritual power of each individual to ‘change the world’ by changing themselves – learning to be in ‘in the world but not of the world’. But a spiritual world revolution, a “world revolution of the soul” (Sloterdijk) is in essence neither an individual nor a social revolution. Fundamental social changes, economic and political, can only come about through a revolution in a third realm transcending the individual and the social. This is the realm of immediate human relations *between* individuals which Martin Buber called the ‘inter-human’. The spiritual, mental, emotional and physical *health* of both the individual *and* society are all inseparable from the health of human relations *within* society and *between* individuals. A revolution in human relations however, can in turn only come about through the way in which we ourselves *relate* to other individuals. It demands that as individuals, we take unconditional responsibility for the manner in which we relate to other human beings, not *relegating* this responsibility to some ‘thing’ – whether our genetic programming, neurological functioning or childhood upbringing. It demands re-ligion in the most essential sense of this word – the capacity to re-link with our innermost spiritual self. For, only in that way can we *knowingly* relate to and re-link with the innermost self of other individuals.

Gnosticism – an Unacknowledged World Religion

Far from being reducible to a set of obscure ancient sects or doctrines that sprang up in the Near East at the turn of the first millennium, gnosticism was and remains an *unrecognised world religion* – the only world religion that is not a sectarian cult, reliant on institutional structures. Gnosticism has become an unrecognised world religion because it is the underground stream of spiritual knowing or gnosis from which all religions spring. There has always been a gap between individual spiritual awareness and the symbols provided for it by institutionalised religions. Today this gap grows ever wider, leading to ever more desperate and fanatical attempts to bring the individuals back into the fold of dogmatic communal fundamentalisms. It remains an underground world religion because it is not a communal ‘faith’ but a form of spirituality that gives precedence to individual spiritual awareness – an awareness that is above all an awareness *of* our own spiritual individuality. Gnostic spirituality *is* ‘gnosis’ – a knowing awareness of our own innermost spiritual identity. This spiritual identity is both individual and inviolable – eternal. And yet it is capable of infinite expansion. For, it is not an unconscious ‘part’ of the everyday self we identify with in this life, but the very source of that self and of countless selves and countless lives. The life of our innermost spiritual being is not bounded by birth and death but is the source of such boundless potentialities of being as can never be fully embodied in any one life. It is the self that is never fully born or ‘actualised’. A self that is already ‘dead’ – for it has never ceased to dwell in the spiritual world. It is the self that is “in the world but not of the world”. *Gnosticism* is a form of spirituality that can be named in a word but not ‘defined’ in words. It cannot be defined, because its basis is *gnosis* – the wordless inner knowing that links each individual to their innermost spiritual being.

The World in the Light of Gnosticism

Together with ancient gnostic mythologies are long surviving myths regarding gnosticism. The ancient mythologies spoke of the material world and its god as a spiritual abomination. In this mythology Sophia gave birth to Ialdabaoth, the world creator or ‘demiurge’, and was distressed when her infantile offspring arrogantly denied there were other gods before him – denying, like an infantile human ego, its source in the womb of a larger self and the larger spiritual world. The mythology regarding gnosticism has it that the gnostics rejected the material world. In fact what they rejected was the identification of reality with an artefact of the demiurge – a ‘world’ posited and projected, manufactured and materialised by the ego. We know this ‘world’ all too well today – the artificial world of the global media and global markets. In this modern world it is no longer the gods but material commodities that are imbued with human qualities (“real

chocolate, real feeling”). Hindu and Buddhist religious philosophers saw the material world as ‘maya’ – a spiritual illusion. Only the gnostics recognised that spiritual illusions can take on a worldly material reality of their own. In the past all authentic human qualities were projected on and personified by the gods. Today they are not projected onto but *materialised as* commodities – “Real chocolate. Real feeling”. In the past, relations between human beings were seen as dominated by relationships between the gods or by cosmic bodies. Global capitalism, as Marx anticipated, would replace such fatalism with something far more fatal. Human beings would become subservient to their own *material products*. Relations between beings would become dominated by relationships between things – global markets and consumer commodities. Technology has created a ‘virtual’ world of media images, designed to sustain, through clever marketing, the *idolisation* of the commodity. The global media construct a ‘world’ in which images substitute for immediate lived experience. Instead of astrologers seeking ‘signs’ in the movements of the planets and stars, shareholders look for ‘signs’ in movements of market prices in the stock exchanges of the world.

Science, having supposedly vanquished superstition, has become the servant of global corporations all of which have the basic character and structure of *religious cults*, each with its own spurious corporate ‘cultures’, ‘philosophies’ and ‘values’. None of this can disguise the fact that within these corporate sects all the real human *qualities* of the employee are valued only in so far as they generate purely *quantitative* values. Valued only as *a means to an end*, all individual qualities are fundamentally *devalued* – valued only to the extent that they can be *materialised* as material commodities and measurable economic values – profit. The aim is not individual value fulfilment but “maximising the value of human capital”. In place of the Invisible Spirit of the gnostics is the invisible hand of the Market. In place of the gospel of *gnosis*, of inner self-discovery, we have the gospel of the marketeers: “Rediscover the real you with Radox”.

Gnosis and Globalisation

In the beginning God created human beings. Now, however human beings are creating God. Such is the way of this world – humans invent gods and worship their creations. It would be better for such gods to worship humans.

These are not the words of the ‘atheist’ Karl Marx, but come from the Gospel of Phillip. By ‘world’ the early gnostics did not mean the natural world but the social world fashioned by the human ego. Like the ancient ‘world’ of the gnostics, the modern ‘world’ of global capitalist society is identical neither with the earth and natural world, nor the world of soul and spirit. ‘World’ today means only the worldwide, global market. The earth and its beings have been reduced to a worldwide stock of raw materials and exploitable ‘resources – human and animal, vegetable and mineral. The sea is seen as no more

than a vast fish farm; animals are herded into concentration camps for processing into food; trees are merely raw materials for the timber industry. Human beings themselves are disposed of as a stock of human 'resources', of exploitable skills and labour power. The work of human beings in capitalist society consists in creating purely quantitative material values rather than giving creative expression to their innermost qualitative spiritual values – their innermost soul qualities. The values of global capitalism are purely symbolic values – brand values, monetary value and market value. It is not beings but brands that are honestly regarded as having 'souls' by marketeers. Everything of deep spiritual value in the soul life of human beings, and all deeply valued human soul qualities are perverted by advertising into hollow, flat-screen images of themselves – identified with material commodities which serve as empty symbols of those soul qualities. As Marx pointed out, the defining character of capitalism is the way in which relationships between human beings become transformed into relationships between things – commodities. All the *unique inner qualities* that individuals materialise in their creative labour are put into the service of producing standardised commodities – and valued only according to the market value of those commodities. This society is not 'secular' in any way – its basis is a religious idolatry of the commodity. Marx recognised in capitalism an imperial and inherently self-globalising economic culture – one in which all ethical values would be subsumed by 'market values', all relationships between human beings would be dominated by relationships between things – commodities and their prices – and in which obligatory wage slavery would be sanctified by the owners of capital as the highest form of social 'freedom'. The following citation is not from the Communist Manifesto or the writings of the anarchist Bakunin but from the gnostic Epiphanes, son of Carpocrates:

All beings beget and give birth alike, having received by justice an innate equality. The Creator and father of all with his own justice appointed this, just as he gave equally the eye to all to enable them to see. He did not make a distinction between female and male, rational and irrational, nor between anything else at all; rather he shared out sight equally and universally...The ideas of Mine and Thine crept in through the laws which cause the earth, money, and even marriage no longer to bring forth fruit of common use. God made all things to be common property. He brought the female to be with the male in common and in the same way united all the animals. He thus showed righteousness to be a universal sharing along with equality.

Read: **DEEP SOCIALISM**

A New Manifesto of Marxist Ethics and Economics

Religion and the Old Gnostic Heresy

And then a voice – of the cosmocrat – came to the angels. *I am God and there is no other beside me.* But I laughed joyfully when I examined his empty glory.

The Second Treatise of the Great Seth

The gnostic gospels teach that the *cosmos* was, as the root meaning of this word already suggests, ‘cosmetic’ – the camouflage *adornment* of a more fundamental reality. It was not the direct creation of an actual being but emerged through a complex series of stages from a primordial field of potentiality known as the The Fullness or *pleroma*. The *pleroma* was made up of spheres of awareness or *aeons*, each of which was associated with certain fundamental qualitative dimensions of awareness – named by such words as the Abyss, The Depth, The Silence and Wisdom (*Sophia*). Gnostic teachings claimed the possibility of direct subjective knowledge of a deeper spiritual reality behind the known *cosmos* and its assumed ‘creator’. Their spiritual heresy consisted in challenging the identification of God with a cosmic creator being – or ‘cosmocrat’. They recognised in the creator God of the Old Testament – and its ‘divinely’ appointed political or religious rulers or *archons* – a reflection of an infantile human ego – an ego which sought to rule over man’s ‘unruly’ body and soul in the same way as this God ruled man and commanded man to rule nature.

But what sort is this God? First he maliciously refused Adam from eating of the tree of knowledge, and, secondly, he said "Adam, where are you?" God does not have foreknowledge? Would he not know from the beginning? And afterwards, he said, ‘Let us cast him out of this place, lest he eat of the tree of life and live forever.’ Surely, he has shown himself to be a malicious grudger! And what kind of God is this?

The Testimony of Truth

New Gnostic Theology

In gnostic theology neither *theism* nor *atheism* is an option, for it is not a question of believing or disbelieving in God’s reality as an *actual* being. *Monotheisms* of the sort that would have us believe in the *One God* as an actual being, are actually a disguised form of *polytheisms* since they imply the possibility of other gods.

I am a jealous god and there is no other god beside me. But by making this announcement he suggested to the angels that there is another god. For if there were no other God, of whom would he be jealous?

The Secret Book of John

Any ‘monotheistic’ god that is seen as one actual being reduces God to one being *among* others. Such a god cannot be a ‘true’ God – the divine source of *all* beings. *Theisms* that would have us believe in God as an actual being are thus also a form of disguised *atheisms*. In gnostic theology, *a-gnosticism* is not an option either. The term ‘agnosticism’ has come to refer to the belief that the existence of God can neither be proved nor disproved. *Gnosis* makes the question of God’s existence or non-existence irrelevant. The fact that God does not ‘exist’ as an actual being in no way means that God lacks *reality*. Reality is not actual existence, for all actualities and all actual beings have their source in an infinite field of potentiality. This field of potentiality was known by the gnostics of the past as The Fullness or *pleroma*. For God’s ‘non-actuality’ or ‘non-being’ is no mere void or empty lack of being. Instead it is an unimaginable fullness, consisting of limitless potentialities of being and infinite potential beings. *Potential reality* by its very nature is nothing actual or objectively verifiable. Potentialities have reality only *subjectively*, in awareness. Gnostic theology is no arrogant claim to ‘know’ God’s reality as an actual being. It is the understanding that *God is gnosis* – a *knowing awareness* of potentiality that is not the awareness *of* any actual being but the source of all actual beings. For, this knowing awareness of potentiality consists of those infinite potentialities *of* awareness which are actualised as individualised consciousnesses or souls.

God, Energy and Geo-Politics

It was Aristotle who first asserted the primacy of the actual over the potential, of being over becoming:

Obviously then, actuality (*energeia*) is prior to both potency (*dynamis*) and to every principle of change.

In his essay entitled *Dynamis vs Energeia*, Jonathon Tennenbaum of the Schiller Institute has exposed the scientific and geo-political consequences of this philosophical principle – a principle which obscured the very essence of energy (*energeia*) as self-actualising potentiality or power (*dynamis*).

Aristotle denies the possibility of a self-developing, or self-actualising potential that which Nicholas of Cusa later called the *posse-est* (posse corresponding to Plato’s *dynamis*).

The principle of the *posse-est* posits the *reality* of a domain of *unbounded potentiality*. *Energeia* is the *self-actualisation* of this domain – the principle of formative and transformative *activity* through which all things undergo continuous creation and are changed. Since Aristotle however, *energeia* has been identified only with ‘actuality’. The result is that what science now calls ‘energy’ is itself seen as an actual ‘thing’ or as a product of such actual things (for

example oil). Seen as a product of the actual, 'energy' is necessarily limited by the 'laws' of thermodynamics and is therefore treated as a scarce resource to be fought over through geo-political wars.

Tennenbaum recounts how, in the lead-up to the American Civil War, along with the advent of materialism "a scientific cult was launched by Lord Kelvin and the Thomas-Huxley-Herbert Spencer 'X-club' circles..." Around the turn of the nineteenth century this found expression in the "Energeticist Movement" of Willhelm Ostwald, which "advocated a World Government based on the use of 'energy' as the universal, unifying concept not only for all the physical sciences, but also for economics, psychology, sociology and the arts." The so-called 'laws of thermodynamics' are in essence a theo-physical construct which represents the cosmos as a closed system comparable to a machine. This 'dynamics' negates the very essence of *dynamis* as the dynamic self-actualisation or 'emanation' (*hypostasis*) of an open and unbounded realm of potentiality (*dynamis*) – the *pleroma* of the gnostics.

Dynamis – the autonomous self-actualisation of this realm – is not the working or effect of a pre-existing agent or 'cause' of action. The attachment of the Catholic Church to Aristotelian doctrine was necessary to justify the idea of God as a pre-existing agent of action in the form of a single actual being. The conceptual reduction of *dynamis* to *energeia*, of potentiality to actuality, went hand in hand with the scientific reduction of the cosmos to a closed system of 'energies', and the religious reduction of God to an actual being – a *person* or 'trinity' of persons.

Gnosticism as Spiritual Anarchism

New gnostic theosophy distinguishes between the realm of non-being or potentiality – that which the ancient gnostics called the *pleroma* – and the realm of being or actuality – known as the *kenoma*. At the same time it is non-Aristotelian - for it acknowledges the primacy of *dynamis* over *energeia*, the potential over the actual. It recognises all actualities as the *autonomous self-actualisation* of a primordial field of potentialities – the *pleroma*. From this point of view, action itself is essentially autonomous – it has no 'first cause'. The Greek word *arche*, translated into Latin as *causus* – implied something independent of action that can be an initial starting point or 'cause' of action, and that therefore dominates and rules action. The notion of *arche* is an expression of human ego-identity, the ego being that part of us that experiences itself as independent cause or initiator of action, whilst not *knowing* itself as one expression of action. This is an illusion, since all identifiable events or phenomena – all identities – consist of structures or patterns of action, and are the autonomous self-actualisation of a primordial field of potentiality. Since all action is self-multiplying, creating further possibilities of action, all structures or patterns of action – all identities – are inherently mutable and

subject to transformation. The Greek verb *archein* means to rule or dominate, and the term *archon* is used frequently in the gnostic gospels to denote dominant political, social and spiritual powers – powers which seek to rule human action through laws and structures whilst regarding themselves as ‘first causes’ that are some way above action and above the very laws and structures they impose – laws and structures designed to preserve the status quo. Ancient gnosticism on the other hand was political, social and spiritual *an-archism* – opposing the self-arrogated power of the archons and worship of an *archigenitor*. That is because gnosis undermines the very principle of *arche* – rejecting the idea of a ‘first cause’ of action, and rejecting all theologies which gave God the attributes of an *archon* and *archigenitor* – a supreme ruling power and ‘first cause’. In place of this Archigenitor they spoke of *Autogenes*, a name which suggests the principle of autonomously self-generating action or *autogenesis* – the ‘self-begetting’ and ‘self-begotten God’.

From Archons to Archetypes – Jungian Agnosticism

The human ego is that aspect of our consciousness which experiences itself as an *archon* - a pre-existing subject, agent or ‘cause’ of action, whose identity remains unchanged by its actions. The psychoanalyst Carl Jung saw in gnostic mythology a symbolic representation of the complex relationship between man’s ego (the arrogant god *Ialdabaoth*), its source in a deeper feminine level of the soul or *psyche* (the *aeon* known as *Sophia*) and the *pleroma* itself. Whilst acknowledging and identifying with the *psychological* insights of the gnostics, in particular their understanding of the way the ego denied its own source in man’s inner knowing and inner being, he recognised no truly trans-human or trans-physical dimension to the inner human being. For Jung the *pleroma* was simply a symbol of the human unconscious, the aeons and archons of the gnostics a symbol of psychological archetypes belonging to that unconscious – *ego and self, anima and animus, persona and shadow*. Jung’s psychological fascination and identification with gnosticism transformed it through psychoanalysis, from a path of *spiritual* knowing freed of symbols and focussed on the divine essence of the individual self into a path of *psychological* ‘self-knowledge’ represented in symbols. Salvation through direct inner knowing becomes in Jung a path of salvation through the symbolisation of inner knowing and knowledge of symbolism. The human unconscious and its archetypes take the role of the archons – first causes and dominant powers. Reducing the *pleroma* to a collective human psychological unconscious, Jung descends into outright *a-gnosticism*, denying the divine trans-human source of all consciousness, human and non-human.

Gnosis and Religious Language

The naming word inherently tends to split reality into paired polar opposites such as light and darkness, father and son – concealing the nameless reality which underlies and transcends those opposites. Gnostics themselves were well aware that the word or symbol and its inner meaning or sense needed to be distinguished from one another. Without awareness of this fundamental distinction, words derived from worldly things can easily distort the expression of wordless inner understanding, and empty symbols become deceiving substitutes for the direct perception of spiritual reality ('the Aeon'). That reality, being nameless, wears countless names, none of which can therefore be counted as a holy or sacred name above all names. The seemingly pious may use names as God, Father and Son without in any way questioning what it is that these words essentially name, let alone seeking to *know* what they name through direct awareness or gnosis. Instead they hear in them only what they want to hear, or want others to hear, identifying *gnosis* with their naming words and wordy 'knowledge'

Light and darkness, life and death, right and left, are brothers of one another. They are inseparable. Because of this neither are the good good, nor evil evil, nor is life life, nor death death. For this reason each one will dissolve into its original nature. But those who are exalted above the world are indissoluble, eternal. Names given to worldly things are very deceptive for they divert our thoughts from what is correct to what is incorrect. Thus one who hears the word *God* does not perceive what is correct, but perceives what is incorrect. So also with *the Father* and *the Son* and *Holy Spirit* and *life* and *light* and *resurrection* and *the Church (Ekklesia)* and all the rest - people do not perceive what is correct. The names which are heard in the world ...deceive. If they were in the Aeon, they would at no time be used as names in the world...They have an end in the Aeon.

One single name is not uttered in the world, the name which the Father gave to the Son, the name above all things; the name of the Father. For the Son would not become Father unless he wears the name of the Father. Those who have this name know it, but they do not speak it. But those who do not have it do not know it.

But truth brought names into existence in the world because it is not possible to teach without names. Truth is one single thing and it is also many things for our sakes who learn this one thing in love through many things. The powers wanted to deceive man, since they saw that he had kinship with those that are truly good. They took the name of those that are good and gave it to those who are not good, so that through the names they might deceive him and bind them to those that are not good. And afterward, if they do them a favour, they will be made to remove them from those that are not good and place them

among those that are good. These things they knew, for they wanted to take the free man and make him a slave to them forever.

The Gospel of Phillip

Gnosis and Allegory

The notion of a “wordless knowledge within the word” has an ancient and venerable history. It has its beginning in the idea of magical words or god-spells (whence the term gospel), oracular utterances and ‘gnomic’ expressions which communicated more than what appeared on the surface. The word *gnosis* and *gnome* (a maxim or expression) share a common root – the word *gnomon* referring to an erudite man or man of knowledge. Another example is the sayings of the Greek sage and initiate Heraclitus (c.500 BC) which themselves refer to a speech or *logos* which men “fail to comprehend, both before hearing it and after they have heard.” The Greek Stoic philosophers distinguished between the outer word or *logos prophorikos* and the inner word *logos endiatheros*, a distinction taken up by Augustine (354-430AD) as that of *signum* and *verbum*, (outer) sign and (inner) sense. The Greeks were familiar with a communicative culture of *hyponoia* – saying one thing to mean another. And it was already in the first century AD that the Greek grammarian Pseudo-Heraclitus coined the term *allegoria* to mean something ‘other’ (*allos*) than what is *publicly* spoken (*agoreuein*). ‘Other’ meant also secret, esoteric mysteries hidden in the word and understandable only to those with the keys to inner knowing or gnosis. As literary works the Gnostic Gospels are highly complex *allegories*. But it was above all the Jewish exegete Philo of Alexandria (c20BC-AD50) who first systematised the practice of allegoresis – the *allegorical* or ‘metaphorical’ interpretation of holy scripture, comparing the relation between its *literal* and *metaphorical* levels of meaning to that of *body and soul*.

Following Philo, Origen (1st century AD) distinguished three levels of meaning to scripture corresponding to *body, soul and spirit* respectively. For Philo and Augustine the purpose of allegoresis was *apologetic* – to understand apparent contradiction in the literal word of holy scripture by recourse to allegorical interpretation. For Pseudo-Heraclitus, however the purpose of *allegoresis* was gnostic – to act as an antidote (*antipharmakon*) to ignorant impiety of the sort promoted by literalistic interpretations of scripture, the paradox being that literalistic ‘fundamentalism’ concealed what was most fundamental of all – “the wordless knowledge within the word”.

Philo’s inauguration of a deep philological understanding of scripture as a *living body of knowledge*, one with its own wordless inner soul and spirit, is central to the gnostic tradition, old *and* new. At the heart of early gnosticism was an understanding that the spiritual realities behind religious languages needed to be experienced or known *directly* for that language to be correctly understood. The authors of the Gnostic Gospels were imaginative and ‘creative

writers', taking as their mission the re-ensoulment of the word with their own direct spiritual experience, thus turning it once again into a living vehicle for the expression of *gnosis*. If the 'old' gnosis was founded on an understanding of the word or logos as a *living body* of inner knowledge, then the New Gnosis is founded on an understanding of the *living body* as word – a living biological language of the inner human being. Both the outwardness of the word and the outwardness of the flesh are but the surface of an inner world of meaning (soul) and of beings (spirit). *Bridging* the old gnosis and the new is the esoteric message of Christianity – of the 'word become flesh'. The 'old gnosis' recognised the need for direct experience of the soul-spiritual inwardness of the word. The new gnosis recognises the need for direct experience of the soul-spiritual inwardness of our own bodies. For the "wordless knowledge within the word" is something we sense and resonate with in a bodily way. Gnosis is something we access through our own inwardly sensed body and not through the mind alone. That is why the hermetic secrets of the Gnostic Gospels are inaccessible to even the most sophisticated scholarly 'hermeneutics' of theological interpretation.

New Gnostic Spirituality

Gnosticism understands all holy scriptures as translations and symbolic expressions of inner knowing or *gnosis*. Nothing is a greater travesty of *gnostic spirituality* than the attempt to transform old gnostic scriptures into the canonical basis of a new church with its own ritualistic practices and priests, one which once again bestows authority on *archons* such as bishops and deacons. Any New Gnosis cannot be founded on *archaic* rites but must be a return to the fundamental essence of religiosity as *gnosis* itself, a re-linking to our own wordless inner knowing. Gnostic 'faith' is not faith in scripture or dogmas, orthodox or heretical, but faith in each individual's access to this inner knowing. But it is of fundamental importance to this gnostic faith to distinguish inner knowing from what we ordinarily understand as "knowledge". Each of us bears within, a wordless inner knowing or *gnosis* that is our link with the knowing awareness or *gnosis* that *is* God. For the pleroma of *divine gnosis* is not only the *source* of all beings but is also a *gnosis* shared by all beings – each of which are not only conscious of their own actuality, but imbued with a knowing awareness of their own unbounded inner *potentialities*. Knowledge is ordinarily understood as knowledge of or about some actually present or existing thing or being. From this point of view existence or being precedes knowing. But if knowing is understood as gnosis – a knowing awareness of potentiality, then *knowing precedes being*. Gnosis, as knowing awareness of potentiality, is a type of knowing of the sort that fills each moment of our lives, allowing us to begin a sentence even though it is not yet fully actualised and we do not 'know' where it will end. For, we possess a wordless knowing awareness of different potential ways of expressing ourselves, and it is

out of this field of potentiality that our actual words arise. Our actual words themselves however, continue to *resonate* with all the potential words we might have chosen and the different senses they would convey. Their deeper sense has to do with these different senses and this inner resonance. Similarly, our own deeper self has to do with our own sensed potentialities of being. The inner self is a knowing awareness of these potentialities of being – which take the form of meaningful potentialities *of* awareness. Each of us bears within us a wordless inner knowing that is our link with the divine *gnosis* that *is* God.

Science and the New Gnostic Heresy

But if the Gnostics were destroyed, the Gnosis, based on the secret science of sciences, still lives.

Blavatsky

Science *is* the new religion.

Martin Heidegger

The word ‘science’, like the word ‘gnosis’ means knowledge – deriving from the Latin *scire* – to know. Unlike both religion and science, gnosis questions all accounts of fundamental reality that seek to explain all actually existing things or beings as a product of some other thing or being – whether a Big Bang or Supreme Being. All such accounts deny the true nature of the ‘One’ God’ or God’s ‘Oneness’ – for the nature of this Oneness transcends that of a single being and transcends all worlds in which the existence of one thing is conditional upon others.

The One is a sovereign that has nothing over it. It is God and Father of all, the Invisible One that is over all, that is imperishable, that is pure light no eye can see. It is the invisible Spirit. One should not think of it as a god, or like a god. For it is greater than a god, because it has nothing over it and no lord above it...It is not one among many things that are in existence: it is much greater. Not that it is actually greater. Rather, as it is in itself, it is not a part of the world or of time, for whatever is part of a world was once produced by something else. Time was not allotted to it, since it receives nothing from anyone.

The Secret Book of John

In the type of modern ‘cosmology’ offered today by *orthodox* scientists such as Stephen Hawking, profound scientific questions regarding the fundamental nature and origins of the cosmos are asked

and answered in the most philosophically naive and superficial manner conceivable. In this cosmology, awareness itself is seen as the inexplicable by-product of a fundamentally unaware universe of matter and energy. In the *cosmos* of the physicists and mathematicians there is no place for God. The quantum ‘void’ and ‘virtual’ particle serve as hollow symbols of the divine fullness or *pleroma*. The old gnostics challenged the orthodoxies of traditional religion with its ‘heresies’. But as Heidegger points out “Science is the new religion.” The New Gnosis challenges the orthodoxies of modern ‘science’ with its own profoundly heretical propositions.

- 1) All knowledge is essentially *subjective*. The basic ‘fact’ on which knowledge or science rests is not the ‘objective’ existence of a cosmos ‘out there’ but our subjective *awareness* of that cosmos.
- 2) Awareness (Greek *nous*) is not something shapeless, insubstantial or incorporeal, lacking any sensual qualities. It possesses its own intrinsic sensual qualities, its own intrinsic dimensions of spatiality and temporality.
- 3) Bodily shape and substantiality are *not*, in the first place, properties of *matter* but intrinsic dimensions of awareness as such.
- 4) Fundamental reality is not objective but essentially *subjective* in nature. All the outward sensory qualities of phenomena are the expression of intrinsic soul qualities of subjectivity or awareness as such.
- 5) We get to truly know reality through *resonance* between inner soul qualities or *qualia* and outer sensory qualities manifest in phenomena.

To explain these propositions, we need only consider what it means to ‘know’ a piece of music, for example. Knowing a piece of music means more than just knowing ‘about’ it, however knowledgeable we are in musical matters. It also means more than just ‘hearing’ the ‘objective’ sensory qualities of the music. To know the music means to resonate with the soundless feeling tones or soul tones that re-sound within it. These soul tones are not the private property of a person or persons – whether the composer, a performing musician, or an appreciative listener. They are the very medium of their soul-spiritual resonance as beings. That is why the space of our felt inner resonance with a piece of music has nothing to do with the physical space in which sound travels as ‘energy’ in the form of vibrations of air molecules. It is an unbounded inner soul space linking us spiritually with other beings.

Read: **The QUALIA REVOLUTION**
From Quantum Physics to Cosmic Qualia Science

New Gnosis versus ‘New Age’

Gnosis is subjective knowledge of an inner universe made up not of matter, energy, space or time but of countless qualitative spheres or ‘planes’ of awareness – a knowledge obtained directly through inter-subjective resonance. It is the *subjective science* of this inner universe. The New Gnosis challenges not only modern scientific materialism in its new guise of ‘energeticism’ but also New Age pseudo-science, which reduces everything to the workings of a universal ‘life energy’. No better example can be given of the difference between New Gnosis and this New Age pseudo-science than so-called ‘energy medicine’ – the belief that illness is reducible to energy blocks or imbalances, and can be cured by ‘working’ with a person’s ‘energy’ or by directing sound or light waves of specific vibrational frequencies at a patient’s body. Mankind has indeed long recognised the healing effect of light, sound and colour – in the form of music and art. The healing power of music and art however, works through the soul, not through impersonal healing ‘energies’. The fact that our bodies themselves vibrate in resonance with different frequencies of audible sound, for example through music blasted from a loudspeaker, is no guarantee that our souls are in resonance with the music or experience its healing potential. New Age talk of healing ‘vibrations’ misses the essential difference between energetic vibration and inner resonance. To do so we need to actively resonate with the music, bringing our own inner soul tones into resonance with the sensory tones of the music. Only through this resonance between soul tones and sensory tones does sound heal. The same applies to light and colour. Just bombarding the body with light of a certain colour frequency brings no more healing than simply gazing at a colourful painting or sunset. The healing comes through our capacity to resonate with the colourations of mood or feeling tone that shine through the colours of the painting and the light of the sunset.

The whole New Age concept of ‘energy medicine’ does not scientifically enrich our understanding of the spiritual qualities of sensory phenomena such as light and sound, colour and tone. On the contrary, it sacrifices the innate spirituality of the sensory experience – its deeper meaning or sense – at the altar of modern science and technology. The purpose of New Age ‘alternative’ medicine is to gain respectability for its own pseudo-scientific theories and practices by donning the authoritative mantle of modern science – mimicking its soul-less terminological jargons and technological practices. New Age ‘energy medicine’ does not imbue these terminologies and technologies with deeper spiritual meaning or sense. On the contrary, it merely defers to and reinforces the false authority that they already wield. New Age nostrums find ready consumers in the growing market for holistic health products and the ever-increasing range of new ‘therapies’ and health fads. New Gnosis – a new science of subjective knowing – or ‘New Age’ ‘spirituality’ parading as objective science and cloaked in its terms? That is the old choice facing our new age.

Modern Agnosticism

Gnosticism understands the task of humanity not as the overcoming of ‘evil’ but as overcoming spiritual ignorance and its rationalisation – *a-gnosis* and *a-gnosticism*. The major modern and post-modern forms of *a-gnosticism* are *materialism* and *energeticism*, *biologism* and *geneticism*, *psychologism* and *linguisticism* in its two main forms *constructivism* and *deconstructionism*. Energetic reductionism has replaced the dogmas of old-fashioned materialism, identifying fundamental reality not with material but with energetic units or *quanta*, and reducing consciousness itself to manifestation of quantum dynamics or the quantum void. *Energeticism* is also the pseudo-scientific ideology of New Age spirituality – an ideology that identifies fundamental reality with an impersonal cosmic ‘life energy’, reducing the inner body to an ‘energy body’, and healing to ‘energy medicine’. *Genetic reductionism* is the foundation of *biologism*. It regards the human body as a *product* of its genetic alphabet and vocabulary – rather than understanding this molecular alphabet and vocabulary as a living biological *language* of the inner human *being*. The latest ‘post-modern’ form of a-gnosticism is *linguisticism*. Instead of recognising the “wordless knowledge within the word” it sees all knowledge as a ‘construct’ of language and signs. Linguisticism and ‘narrative’ constructivism reduces the meaning of life to indirectly *signified* or *verbalised* sense. It has no place for *gnosis* as directly ‘felt sense’, nor any understanding of how pre-verbal, bodily sensing or the ‘sixth sense’ puts us in touch with as-yet unsignified depths of meaning or sense. Like the ‘orthodox’ cults of the major world religions, neo-paganism and New Age spirituality are all *degenerate* forms of *gnosis*, relying as they do on second-hand spiritual knowledge transmitted through verbal symbols and scriptures.

The Eight Forms of Spiritual Ignorance

The heresiologists were right in defining gnosticism as a doctrine of redemption through knowledge for it recognises the inner human being as inherently godly and ‘good’ rather than sinful, and ‘evil’ as a result of ignorance or *a-gnosis*. Out of touch with their inner being - or finding no acknowledgement for it in our secular, materialistic world - individuals are driven to violence in a desperate attempt to penetrate to the inner being of others by violating their outer being. Such violence is both unforgivable and inevitable in a culture which denies any recognition of man’s inner being and is ignorant of its spiritual nature. Gnosticism understands ‘evil’ not as an inherent *part* of man’s soul-spiritual nature but as an expression of spiritual ignorance or *a-gnosis*. What we call ‘evil’ is a desperate and misguided attempt to overcome the spiritual ignorance or a-gnosis promoted by our *a-gnostic* culture. Through acts of inhumanity the individual attempts to

affirm their own trans-physical, trans-personal, trans-human and trans-physical self in an entirely negative way - by stripping themselves or others of their bodyhood, personhood and humanity.

The early gnostics saw the human body, mind and soul as something that had become distorted through the rule of an all-dominating ego and its god, a god that says "I am I", but knows no *other*. At the heart of gnostic spirituality is the understanding that the inner human being is a being fundamentally *other* than the outer human being - the ego and the personal, human self that we think we know. The outer human being is but one human face or persona, one human embodiment or incarnation of the inner human being. It is our historic cultural alienation from our inner being that led us to treat it as a dangerous or demonic force. The word 'demon' comes from the Greek *daemon*, which referred to a being neither human nor divine but a guiding spirit or inner voice. Today we hear of murderers being impelled by inner voices; yet these are not the voice of the *daemon* but of an alter ego that has taken the place of an individual's sense of their own inner being.

Gnosticism challenges all forms of spiritual and scientific ignorance that deny the fundamental distinctness or 'otherness' of the inner human being - its *trans-personal*, *trans-physical* and *trans-human* nature. In our spiritual ignorance we either *reduce* the inner human being to some aspect of the outer human being or fail to acknowledge it as our own essential *individuality* - identifying it instead with something or someone entirely *other-than self*. Gnosticism remains a challenge to all forms of spiritual and scientific ignorance or *agnosticism* which either *de-individualise* the inner human being or identify it instead with a single individual such as Jesus or Mohammed. Among the major forms that spiritual ignorance or *agnosticism* takes are therefore the following:

1. The ignorance that denies the *trans-personal* nature of our inner being and identifies it instead with a divine or semi-divine *person* - a *personified* god, prophet or saviour. This is the ignorance of *traditional religion*.
2. The ignorance that confuses the *trans-personal* dimension of our inner being with an *impersonal energy* or universal life force. This is the ignorance of New Age energy medicine and the ideology of *energeticism*.
3. The ignorance that reduces the inner human *being* to the human *body* and *brain*. This is the ignorance of materialistic science and biological medicine, now expressed in the ideology of *geneticism*.

4. The ignorance that perceives the *trans-human* dimension of our inner being as an *inhuman being* – an evil or demonic force, or an extra-terrestrial or *alien being*. This is the ignorance of Satanism, UFO-ism and Alien-style science fiction.
5. The ignorance that *opposes* the trans-personal and trans-human self to our personal, human self - attempting to affirm the former by violating or sacrificing the latter. This is the ignorance of *spiritual martyrdom*.
6. The ignorance that identifies the inner human being with a set of cognitive patterns or an internalised parent figure, a set of unconscious instinctual drives or the mythological archetypes of a ‘collective’ unconscious. This is the ignorance of *psychologism* and *psychoanalysis*.
7. The ignorance that identifies the inner human being with the outer ego (the ignorance of the ‘normal’ person) or with the inner voice of some super-ego or alter ego (the ignorance of the ‘schizophrenic’). Normality and schizophrenia are thus two expressions of the same spiritual ignorance.
8. The ignorance that does not recognise the individual nature of our inner being or inner self, but identifies it instead with the symbols and collective ‘spirit’ of a particular ethnic group, religious cult or national culture. This is the dangerous spiritual ignorance of *racism and nationalism*.

Gnostic ‘Dualism’ and the Meaning of Religion

The root meaning of religion is to re-link or re-connect (*re-ligare*). Without duality there can be no relationality and no re-ligion, for there would be no *other* to relate or re-link to. How can we renew our link with our inner selves and with others, with God and with other human beings, unless we recognise them in their otherness – as something distinct from the self we ordinarily identify with. Gnosis as religious experience is founded on the principle that only through getting to know another self and other selves within us can we truly get to know the inner selves of others. Conversely, inner knowing or gnosis is the very bond of *inner connectedness* re-linking us with our inner being and other beings. Our inner connection to things and people is a reality. It is also the source of *inner knowing*. In our age, however, people are no longer deeply aware of inner connections, except with those close to them. Nor are they in touch with their *inner knowing*.

As people's *awareness* of deep inner connection with the world and other people declines they feel inwardly alone and spiritually empty. Religions offer symbols of inner knowing. Initiation in the gnostic sense is the re-awakening of inner knowing through inner connection with an initiate. An initiate is someone who can *knowingly connect* with others on a deep inner level and in this way reawaken their sense of inner connectedness with themselves and others. Through our own withinness, we are all *inwardly* connected with one another - and connected also to the withinness of all the things we perceive around us. Awareness of inner connection is an expression of *inner knowing* or *gnosis*. That is because inner knowing is intrinsically relational – an aware relation to our inner being and other beings. Through inner knowing we can recognise that all the outwardly perceived qualities of things and people are the sensory expression of inner soul qualities. We become aware of an entire *world* of soul linking us spiritually to the *aware withinness* of everyone and everything around us.

The Duality of Outer and Inner Ego

The relation that constitutes the human being is a relation between the outer and inner human being, what Seth calls the 'outer ego' and 'inner ego'. The outer ego is the outer 'eye' and "I" of the inner ego – looking outwards into physical reality. The inner ego is the "I" and inner eye of the outer ego - looking inwards into non-physical dimensions of reality. The outer ego experiences itself as an identity separate and *apart from* the world it looks out onto. The inner ego knows itself as *a part of* all other beings, inwardly connected to them through the inner world of soul. The inner ego is not a part of the outer ego. Instead it is the other way round, the outer ego is just a part of the inner ego – one expression of its own larger awareness and identity. The inner ego is not an 'unconscious' part of the self. It is experienced as unconscious only to the extent that the outer ego remains unconscious of it, and does not know it as that other, inner self that is its own source. Yet, as Seth reminds us:

The outer ego does not want to meet the inner ego. The outer ego does not want to admit the existence of the inner ego. As the eye cannot see its own pupil without a mirror, so the outer ego could not even see itself, were it not that the inner ego hides in the depths of all reflections.

Seth

The gaze of the outer ego is one which reduces the world to an 'It' - a world of external objects. It applies this same objectifying gaze to its inner world, which then appears to it as a world of 'internal objects' such as sensations, emotions and thoughts. Its fundamental relation to both its outer and inner world is what Martin Buber called the 'I-It' relation rather than an 'I-You' relation - a relation to *things* or objects

of consciousness rather than to other *beings* or subjects of consciousness.

The child that calls to his mother and the child that watches his mother - or to give a more exact example, the child that silently speaks to his mother through nothing other than looking into her eyes, and the same child that looks at something on the mother as at any other object - show the twofoldness in which man stands and remains standing.

The character of a person's gaze is strongly influenced by their experience, as infants, of the mother's face and the maternal gaze. The psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott recognised that when the mother looks into the baby's eyes, "what she looks like is related to what she sees there." In infancy the baby's outer ego is undeveloped, but its inner being is *not*. If the mother looks at the baby either as an appendage to her own being or as a mere bodily object the baby's own inner being will find no reflection in the mother's gaze. Nor will it experience the *mutual gaze* as a potential medium of deep inner connectedness to its mother - or to any other.

...perception takes the place of apperception...of that which might have been the beginning of a significant exchange with the world, a two-way exchange in which self-enrichment alternates with the discovering of meaning in the world of seen things.

It is in this way that the face of the other, like that of the mother for the baby, is a mere object or 'It' - something that needs to be studied and analysed in order to predict *a pattern of behaviour*. Before the baby or child even knows the meaning of the word science, the baby has become a precocious *scientist* - studying the face of the mother in order to gauge her mood and predict her behaviour and discover its pattern. The adult will be forced to rely on traditional religious beliefs to secure its *faith* that *it is not alone* - to feel a sense of inner connectedness with other beings. Or else it will look for some 'scientific' proof that as human beings "we are not alone" in the universe - that there is 'something out there'. But what or who? It is with our inner eye and inner 'I' that we look into an inner universe composed of trans-physical planes and spheres of awareness, just as our outer eye and outer 'I' looks outward on our physical planet and the astral cosmos beyond. Science-fiction images of "first contact" with extra-terrestrial beings are a metaphor of our capacity to reconnect with the *alien within* - our own innermost being and the inner being of others. The eyes figure large in images of extra-terrestrials as does the delicacy of their hand and touch. The alien eye and hand symbolise our capacity for inner connectedness with others, a connectedness achieved through the inner gaze and inner touch.

Read: **MODERN MESMERISM**
The Yoga of the Inner Gaze

Psychotherapy as Substitute Gnosis

“In the beginning was the Word”. The gnostics however, recognised that Silence was the womb of the Word or *logos*, just as listening is the midwife of speech. When the Greek sage Heraclitus wrote ‘Listen not to me but to the *logos*’, the ‘word’ he referred to was not the spoken word but its wordless inner resonance – that which constituted the unbounded depths of the *psyche*. The wisdom of silence, understood as the womb and resonant interiority of the word or Logos, was named in gnostic terminology as the feminine principle Sophia – a name related to the Greek words *sophos*, meaning wise, and *philosophiein* – the love of wisdom.

The ‘wisdom’ of psychoanalysis and psychotherapy – the so-called ‘talking cure’ - is one in which silence and authentic listening has no place. Socrates spoke of himself as a midwife to truth and of listening to the voice of his innermost guiding spirit or *daemon*. Today, there is no longer any understanding that we cannot truly hear and heed the Words of another without listening inwardly to what the gnostic Marcus called the “womb and recipient of Silence”.

The German word *sein* means ‘being’. *Da* means both ‘here’ and ‘there’. Listening is no mere natural ability or technical communication skill. It is a basic modality of what Heidegger called our human *Da-sein* – our capacity to be fully present to ourselves and others, to be truly with ourselves in our ‘here’ whilst at the same time being fully ‘there’ with another. Listening is the very midwife of *gnosis* – the capacity to *bear with* ourselves and others in pregnant silence and in doing so give birth to a new *inner bearing* – a new inner relationship to our inner being and that of others. Listening is the capacity to *bear* and *bear with* the dis-ease we sense in ourselves. *Bearing* is not passive ‘suffering’ but suffering experienced as responsible activity - the labour of giving birth from it to a new and deeper sense of self. *Bearing with* is not simply empathy but the ability to be penetrated and impregnated by the suffering or *pathos* of others - becoming pregnant through it.

Listening as *bearing* and *bearing with* is the very *midwife* of *gnosis* achieved through the *baptism* of silence – submersion in the womb of our *body’s* own wordless inner knowing. In psychotherapy the word is used only to give birth to emotional and intellectual insight. But to find *gnosis* is not to ‘cure’ oneself of suffering through the word. It is to find rebirth in a new inner bearing – a new way of *listening* to and *bearing with* oneself and others. Psychotherapy ignores the generalised pathology of our times – the inability to transform suffering into *gnosis* through bearing. This transformation cannot take place through the word or speech alone but only by listening into the silent womb of our inwardly sensed body. Such listening alone can re-link us to our innermost being. Heidegger affirmed this message when he wrote: “You cannot cure a single human being, not even with

psychotherapy, unless you first of all restore their relation with Being.”

Read: **THE THERAPIST AS LISTENER**

Heidegger and the Missing Dimension of Psychotherapy

The New Gnosis of Harold Garfinkel

Psychotherapies which attempt to ‘make sense’ of people’s feelings by labelling or verbalising them are simply attaching symbols to them – attempting to signify this sense. Signifying the meaning or sense of something in words or symbols is one thing. Directly sensing its significance is quite another. Gendlin’s work implicitly reaffirms a basic distinction between *signified sense* and directly *sensed significance* – what Gendlin calls ‘felt sense’ or ‘bodily sensing’. This distinction was acknowledged in the work of Harald Garfinkel, the tutor of Carlos Castaneda, who studied the ways in which people constantly seek to make sense of their experiences by fitting them into already established *patterns of significance*. A doctor ‘makes sense’ of a patient’s symptoms for example by interpreting them as *signs*, and ‘diagnosis’ consists in fitting these signs into an already established pattern of disease pathology. But ‘diagnosis’ of this sort is not true gnosis. A doctor working ‘through gnosis’ (*dia-gnosis*) would not seek to make sense of the patient’s symptoms by merely incorporating them in his own body of medical knowledge – assigning them a place in an already established pattern of significance. He would use his own body to directly *sense* the significance of the patient’s symptoms – to get to know them in an intimate bodily way as the patient’s way of expressing an underlying sense of *dis-ease*.

Read: **FROM PSYCHO-SOMATICS TO SOMA-SEMIOTICS,**

**Bodily Sensing and the Sensed Body
in Medicine and Psychotherapy**

The New Gnosis of Eugene Gendlin

The experiential psychology and therapeutic practice of ‘focusing’ developed by Eugene Gendlin emphasises the importance of attending to our felt bodily sense of different states of being, noting where and how we feel them in our bodies.

As Gendlin puts it:

A felt sense is not just an emotion. Fear, anger, joy, sadness – these are emotions. A felt sense is different...It is a bodily quality like heavy, sticky, jumpy, fluttery, tight...A felt sense is unmistakably meaningful and yet we don’t know what it is.

What it is that Gendlin is referring to are not simply qualities of bodily *sensations* that tend to go together with particular emotions or that we label with emotion words, but something far deeper – the felt meaning or *sense* of those qualitative sensations as an expression of something we know in a wordless, intimate bodily way. The *gnostic* dimension of Gendlin’s work lies in affirming that meaning or sense is not a property of words or symbols alone but is something that can be directly felt or sensed in a bodily way. What Gendlin calls ‘bodily sensing’ is a type of deep bodily *knowing*. Our surface sensations, emotions and thoughts, on the other hand, are more or less distorted interpretations of this bodily knowing. What Gendlin calls ‘focusing’ is our capacity to follow our felt bodily sense of verbally named emotions back to their source in *gnosis*, understood as our body’s own wordless inner knowing. Bodily knowing is a knowing which puts us in touch with our innermost potentialities of being. None of us can fully *embody* these potentials in any one life. The gnostics believed in the truth of reincarnation rather than physical resurrection of the dead. Yet when St. Paul spoke of a *soma-pneumatikos* or ‘spiritual body’, he was echoing the *gnostic* understanding that in any given life we can each ‘rise in the flesh’.

Beyond 'Body, Mind and Spirit'

Today the term 'body, mind and spirit' has become the epitome of hackneyed New Age phraseology. Notwithstanding all the repetitive talk of ‘holistic’ approaches to medicine, 'body', 'mind' and 'spirit' are still thought of as referring to three separable ‘parts’ of the ‘whole’ human being. Mind and body are understood without reference to soul and spirit. Yet long before ‘body’ and ‘soul’, ‘mind’ and ‘spirit’ were conceived as separate ‘things’, there was a felt understanding of the intimate inner relation between the flow and circulation of *air* in and around our bodies, and the flow and circulation of *awareness*. Flows of awareness were felt to possess their own *spiritual substantiality*, constituting a medium which, like air, linked the inwardly sensed inner spaces of our bodies into which we draw breath, with the sensory world around us, in which this air circulates as wind or *pneuma*. There was, therefore, a felt sense of ‘spirit’ as a medium of meaningful interconnectedness between the aware inwardness of all beings – their soul or *psyche*. This understanding was and is confirmed by the fact that all living beings *breathe*, and that human beings, in particular, express themselves through those shaped and toned flows of breath that constitute *speech*. It was in this sense that the human body itself could be understood as the fleshly ‘word’ or ‘speech’ (*logos*) of the spirit. It was in this sense too, that *spirit* was understood as that which, like the breath we draw in, quite literally *ensouls* the body – allowing the human being to breathe in and vitalise their *awareness* of themselves and the world.

In Homeric Greek the word *soma* originally referred simply to a lifeless corpse devoid of *psyche* or ‘life-breath’. Only later did the word *soma* come to refer to the living body of the human being, and

the word *psyche* to its sensed interiority or 'soul-space'. Today the very term *psychology* has become a contradiction in terms, referring to a 'science' in which soul or *psyche* has no place, or in which it is identified with the mind or brain. Its connection with the individual's inwardly sensed body is completely ignored. The human body, like a book, is not *just* a material body but also a *body of meaning* - composed of sensual tissues, tonalities and textures of awareness with their own felt meaning or sense. As we know however, huge numbers of people today suffer from a type of *meaning loss* which they experience as anxiety or depression or express through a whole variety of 'disorders' or 'diseases'. Medicine and psychiatry classify these as either 'mental', 'physical' or 'psychosomatic'. But the essential nature of human *dis-ease* has nothing to do with 'mind and body', 'psyche' and 'soma' as these words are ordinarily understood. Paradoxically, what is thought of as 'psychosomatic' illness is in essence the expression of a complete loss of contact with the *somatic* and *psychical* dimensions of both 'mind' and 'body' - a type of soul-spiritual amnesia in which we no longer experience our own inwardly sensed body - the *soma* - as a psychical space of inwardly sensed meaning - the essential *soul space* in which we dwell as beings. Nor do we experience our own inwardly sensed body as a distinct inner body in its own right - a body of soul and spirit.

Viewed from the outside, self and body are both seen as something bounded by our own skins, and separated from others by an empty space filled only by air. But there is a deep reason why the root meaning of the Greek word *psyche* was 'life-breath', and why the words 'spirit', 'inspiration', 'aspiration' and 'respiration' have a common derivation from the Latin *spirare* - to breathe. *Psyche*, the Greek word for soul meant 'life breath'. *Pneuma*, the Greek word for spirit, meant also wind - the air around us. At what point does the air around us, the air we breathe in or 'inspire', become part of us - of who we are? At what point does the air we expire cease to be a part of us, becoming simply 'air'? The question cannot be answered except by suspending our ordinary notions of self and bodyhood. Our soul-spiritual body has no physical boundaries but is composed of 'spiritus' - the tangible substantiality of *awareness* that, like air *around* us, flows both *within* us and *between* us and the world. That is why gnostic traditions of both East and West have long connected our spirit with respiration, and our *awareness of breathing* with something akin to a *breathing of awareness*.

The Resurrection Body

What 'body' is it with which we breathe in, digest and metabolise our own awareness of the world? What 'body' is it with which we experience, express and embody different inner *states of being*. What body is it with which we feel 'warmth' or 'coolness', 'closeness' or more 'distance' to another *being* - and do so quite independently of our physical temperature and physical distance from them? What 'body' are we referring to when we speak of being 'touched' by

someone without any physical contact, of moving ‘closer’ to them or ‘distancing’ ourselves from them, of feeling ‘uplifted’ or ‘carried away’? Are these phrases merely emotional metaphors derived from motions in physical space, or are the emotions themselves expressions of basic *motions* of awareness belonging to an inner body of awareness – that body which Winnicott referred to as the *psyche-soma*, and Jung as the ‘subtle body’? What body and what organs are we referring to when we speak of someone being ‘warm-hearted’ or ‘heartless’, ‘thick-skinned’ or ‘thin-skinned’, ‘stable’ or ‘unstable’, ‘balanced’ or ‘imbalanced’, ‘solid’ or ‘mercurial’, ‘stable’ or ‘volatile’? Are we simply using bodily ‘metaphors’ to describe disembodied mental or emotional states? Or are we describing felt states of a distinct inner body – a ‘higher’ soul-spiritual body with its own spiritual shape and substantiality; a body composed not of flesh and blood but of *tissues of thought and flows of awareness* that are no less tangible?

...perhaps the entire evolution of the spirit is a question of the body; it is the history of the emergence of a higher body that emerges into our sensibility.

These words of Nietzsche, that self-proclaimed philosophical ‘anti-Christ’, mirror the mystical essence of Christian spirituality – the resurrection of a spiritual body (*soma-pneumatikos*) that can bring fresh life to our body-soul (*soma-psychikos*). In the Greek language of the New Testament however, we find traces of the important distinction between the flesh (*sarx*) and the body or *soma*. The literal meaning of *sarx* is ‘skin’ – related to the outer form or aspect (*eidos*) under which any body appeared. But as the New Testament states: “Life is more than meat and the *soma* more than its raiment” Luke 12.23. *Psyche* or soul is the very inwardness of *soma* - an inwardness not to be understood in an ordinary spatial sense but as something akin to the inwardness of the *word* – its felt inner sense or ‘resonance’. The flesh or *sarx*, like the word, is a surface *skin* of meaning with its own resonant interiority. The world of *soul*, on the other hand is a world of resonant inner meaning linking us *spiritually* with other beings.

New Gnosis and the New Yoga

What we call ‘spirituality’ is our capacity to *resonate* with the qualitative spiritual essence or quintessence of things and people – their beingness. Just as it makes a difference whether we see an object as ‘red’ or attend and attune to the unique *tone* of the object’s redness, so it makes all the difference whether we perceive an object as a ‘book’ or attune to the unique overall tonality of all its sensual qualities. By doing so, we bring ourselves into inner *somatic* resonance with its spiritual individuality or *beingness*. The ‘New Yoga’ is the cultivation of *soma-spirituality* - the capacity to sense and resonate with another person’s outward state of being - mental, emotional or physical - in an inner-bodily way, thus experiencing

them as the expression of subtle *inner-body states*. Again it must be emphasised that when we speak of someone feeling ‘fragmented’, ‘frozen’ in panic, ‘hollow’ or ‘empty’ inside, walled in ‘up to the neck’, ‘volatile’ or about to ‘burst’ etc. these are not simply emotional metaphors but literal expressions of *inner body* states. These felt states are also *field states* of awareness which we can sense through somatic field resonance with our own inner soul-spiritual body.

The New Yoga is the yoga of this inner soul-spiritual body. Its aim is the re-ensoulment and re-spiritualisation of our bodily self awareness – deepening our felt bodily sense of our own innermost self and of our *inner* soul-spiritual connectedness to others. In the New Yoga, spiritual healing transcends the artificial separation of physical and ‘mental’ illness in somatic medicine and psychotherapy. Physical body functions such as respiration, digestion and metabolism are understood as the expression of basic functions of our inner soul-spiritual body – for example our capacity to inhale, digest and metabolise our *awareness* of the world and other people. Both physical and mental illness are the expression of inner body states. Physical illness is the expression of disturbed inner-body functions – the respiration, circulation, digestion and metabolism of awareness. So-called ‘mental’ illness is an expression of a disturbed relation to the inwardly sensed body and self. This disturbed relation however, is invariably felt both as a self state and as an *inner body* state. States of anxiety, depression, dissociation or depersonalisation for example are all felt in a bodily way and in this way affect the individual’s bodily sense of self.

As Julian Jaynes has shown, in the language of Homer there was no word for either the ‘body’ or the ‘self’ as a bounded whole, something separate from the world around it. Selfhood was experienced as an ever-changing assemblage of different *qualities of psychological awareness* such as clarity, courage or quivering anticipation – qualities personified in the gods and manifest in the sensory world. Bodyhood was experienced as an assemblage of different *qualities of somatic awareness* that allowed the individual to literally *embody* different psychological qualities – to sense and personify the will of the gods. In Greek tradition, the seat of consciousness is not the brain (*encephalos*) but the heart or *kradie*. Here however, we need to be cautious with regard to language. Though the Greek *kradie* is translated as ‘heart’ and is the word from which we derive such medical terms as ‘cardiac’, in its original sense it did not merely denote a sense-perceptible organ of the body. Instead, as Julian Jaynes has shown, like other Greek words such as *thumos*, *phrenes* and *etor*, the word *kradie* referred originally only to a specific *quality* of bodily sensation. *Thumos* did not mean ‘thymus gland’ but denoted a bodily sense of vigour. *Etor* did not refer to the intestines but meant something like the *gut feeling* or any sensation felt in the belly or abdomen – a sinking feeling for example. *Phrenes* referred to the way in which we feel events affect our breathing – for example the sense of catching our breath with excitement, holding our breath in fear, or letting it mount up and release itself in sounds of grief and anger.

“Why has grief come upon your *phrenes*? Speak, conceal not in *nous*, so that we may both know.” (Thetis to a sobbing Achilles). *Kradia*, then, did not mean ‘heart’, but a felt sense of one’s heartbeat. More essentially, it meant a felt sense of oscillation or *quivering*. All these forms of inner bodily *sensation*, however, were experienced as inner counterparts of the body’s senses - ways of inwardly sensing the outer world of sight, hearing and touch. They implied no hard and fast distinction between our bodily self-sensation, our sensory experience of the world and other people, and the felt meaning or *sense* of outer phenomena and events

Gnosis and Spiritual Health

When people feel their bodies imbued with an entirely new ‘spirit’ after undergoing and overcoming a serious illness, they bear testament to the fact that a spiritual ‘resurrection’ of the flesh is something that can be achieved within this life. It does not require illness for us to ‘rise again’ in the flesh - only a willingness to fully embody our own innermost states of being, whether these be states of ease or of *dis-ease*. Medical science looks for the causes and cures of illness, making no distinction between clinical diagnosed disease pathologies and the *felt* dis-ease or *pathos* which they embody and express. Spiritual health does not come from transcending the body in life or in death but from ‘focusing’ – attending to the felt bodily sense we have of our state of being and actively *bodying* that state of being. A state of being is a self-state, a way of feeling ourselves. When we are ill, we do not ‘feel ourselves’ – our bodies themselves feel foreign to us. This is not simply the result of ‘foreign bodies’ such as viruses or tumorous cells – those so-called antigens or ‘non-self’ elements to which our immune system responds. Rather, this ‘not feeling ourselves’ is a pregnant shift in our *bodily sense of self* - one which, if followed, can allow us to quite literally *feel a new self*.

Whilst pregnancy is not an illness, illness can be understood as a form of soma-spiritual pregnancy. If illness is a form of pregnancy however, bearing within it the seeds of a whole new *inner bearing* on life, then conventional medical intervention is tantamount to *termination* of this pregnancy designed only to ‘cure’ its outward symptoms. True healing, however means more than just removing bodily symptoms in order to recover our ‘old self’. It means giving birth to a new sense of self that we can actively *embody* in our whole bodily bearing and comportment.

When we wish to body a sense of determination we may grit our teeth. When we wish to body a sense of joy or grief we laugh or weep. When we wish to body a sense of pain we groan. When we wish to body a sense of burdensome weight, or the lifting of that weight we sigh. The body does not ‘have’ a language. It is a language. But the alphabet and vocabulary of most people’s body language is not mobile or broad enough to *body* the richness of their felt inner being in all its aspects. The spiritual health of the individual and of society is also inseparable from the health of human relations. Thus a secretary who

feels humiliated by an abusive and dominating boss develops an angry skin rash. This is not simply because she is unable to verbally express her feelings of anger and therefore ‘somatises’ them in the form of a localised skin rash. Rather it is because she is unable to fully face up to her anger and feel it with her whole body. Doing so would automatically strengthen her bodily sense of self, helping her to feel less vulnerable to her boss and to embody a new way of relating to him. Instead she goes to her physician, who treats her rash but ignores all relational dimensions of her inwardly felt dis-ease, and of her bodily sense of self. In the Seth books of Jane Roberts we are reminded that emotions are the surface of inner cognitions. According to an old Chinese saying “The finger points at the moon. The fool looks at the finger”. Our emotions are the pointing fingers. Analysing them or reacting from them does not help us to recognise what ‘moon’ it is that they are pointing to. If we react to events and other people emotionally our focus is on the finger of our own emotions, a finger we may point accusingly at ourselves or others. Transforming her emotional reactions into inner cognitions of this sort, the secretary in our example would begin to see through the behaviour of her boss, coming to know the inner dis-ease that finds expression in his bullying behaviour. Following our emotions inwardly, they lead us into deeper inner cognitions, not only of ourselves but of others, helping us to understand what lies *behind* the outer behaviour of those who provoke emotional reactions in us.

Read: **Health and Human Relations (HHR)**
A New Approach to Counselling in the Workplace

Gnostic Heresy and Male Hysteria

Quoting Hippolytus, Elaine Pagels explains that according to the Sethian gnostics “...heaven and earth have a shape similar to the womb”. The world of outer space and of the cosmic bodies within it (the Kingdom around us) was understood as something that opened up within the larger womb of the Heavens – the spiritual world. Corresponding and connecting us to it was the Kingdom inside us - the womblike inner space or psychical interiority of our own Earthly bodies. “I am he that formed thee in thy mother’s womb.” When we leave our mother’s womb we continue to dwell in the womb of our own soul-spiritual body, a body whose boundaries do not end at the boundaries of our skin. Our flesh is but a surface boundary or skin (*sarx*) between the inner and outer fields of our spatial awareness. Thus “the Kingdom is inside you and outside you” (*Gospel of Thomas*). This inside and outside is the unbounded spatiality of our being and of our soul-spiritual awareness.

The living symbol of the ‘kingdom within’ - the felt inner soul-space of our bodies - is the womb. *The Exegesis of the Soul* emphasises the important ‘turning the womb inwards’, a metaphor of our capacity to turn our gaze inwards from the sensed *inner* surface of our flesh or

sarx and re-enter the womb of its unbounded inner soul space. In this way “the soul will regain her proper character.” In contrast, orthodox religion and medicine are both founded on a type of misogyny which sees the womb only in its fleshly character, and then as a source of impurity or ill-health. The Greek medical diagnosis of *hysteria* was, as the word implies, an illness springing from the uterus - a ‘troubled womb’. The military metaphor of healing as a ‘war’ against illness has replaced the understanding of illness as soul-spiritual pregnancy, and of healing as *maieusis* or midwifery. Much of the ‘hysteria’ surrounding gnostic ‘heresy’ was a quintessentially male hysteria, expressing the need of an exaggeratedly masculine ego to distance itself from its fleshly *psychical* womb – the inwardly sensed body. The ‘Fear of the Lord’ was *his* fear of this womb. This male hysteria found its modern expression in Freud studies of female hysteria - the birth of psychoanalysis. Yet psychoanalysis and *psychologism* are but the last-ditch defences of a dying *agnosticism*. For, what all psychoanalytic and ‘psychodynamic’ interpretations of gnostic mythology fail to recognise is that the latter was not merely an expression of the ‘depth psychology’ of the human soul. Instead what the gnostics sought was a veritable Psychology of The Depth - sensing in the human soul the echo of a *divine* ‘psychodynamics’ with its source in the unfathomable womb of creation itself.

The Gnosis of Genesis

Nowhere does this ancient *theo-psychology* find better expression than in the new *Sethian* gnosis - in particular the description given by Seth of the “The Agony of All That Is” and recorded by Jane Roberts in her book *The Seth Material* (see *The Sethian Gnosis, Old and New*). Here Seth describes the agonising labour pains undergone by God (“All That Is”) as ‘he’ sensed the immense creative potentialities pregnant within ‘him’ expanding and multiplying to the point at which they became unbearable. His solution was to give birth – to quite literally and instantaneously *let go* of his own potentialities, to no longer *hold* them within the womb of ‘his’ own awareness but instead release them into their own free, independent, living and *creative* actuality. This ‘alpha event’ did not take place in time, but simultaneously gave birth to all *possible* pasts, presents and futures – and still does. It cannot be traced back in linear time to a Big Bang, but leaves its trace in all consciousness, pregnant as they are with their own boundless potentialities of being - and driven, like God, to release them into actuality.

In contrast we have the mythological figure of *Ialdaboath* – the name given to the god of Genesis, the god of the ego spurned by the gnostics. He did not give birth to life, as *Sophia* gave birth to him, through an act of *releasement*. Instead he sought to shape and mould a fixed and fully-finished world. Such a world could only end up half-finished, its god a ‘semi-creator’ or ‘demiurge’, its *creatures* devoid or divorced from that essential spark of the Godhead that is the tension and release of *autonomous creativity activity* as such.

A Sethian Prognosis for Humanity

There is nothing wrong with the concept of an egotistically based individual being: I am not suggesting, therefore, that your individuality is something to be lost, thrown away or superseded....I *am* saying that the individual self must become aware of *far more reality*; that it must allow its recognition of identity to expand so that it includes previously unconscious knowledge. To do this...man must move beyond the concepts of one god, one self, one body, one world, as these ideas are currently understood. You are poised, in your terms, on a threshold from which the race can go many ways. There are species of consciousness.

Your species is in a time of change. There are potentials, within the body's mechanisms, in your terms, not as yet used. Developed, they can immeasurably enrich the race, and bring it to levels of spiritual and psychic and physical fulfillment. If some changes are not made, the race *as such* will not endure. This does not mean that *you* will not endure, or that in *another probability*, the race will not endure – but that in your terms of historical sequence, the race will not endure.

Ego consciousness must now be *familiarised* with its roots, or it will turn into something else. You are in a position where your private experience of yourself does not correlate with what you are told by your societies, churches, sciences, archeologies, or other disciplines. Man's 'unconscious' knowledge is becoming more and more consciously apparent. This will be done under, and with *the direction of an enlightened and expanding egotistical awareness*, that can organise the heretofore neglected knowledge – *or it will be done at the expense of the reasoning intellect*, leading to the rebirth of supersition, chaos, and the *unnecessary* war between reason and intuitive knowledge.

The Unknown Reality Vol 1. Jane Roberts

