

TRANS-CONSCIOUSNESS

Psychosynthesis of Left and Right Hemispheres

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. (Genesis 1v1)

IN THE BEGINNING

In the beginning, the universe was without form and void. The universe was no more than a speck, poised to fill the encircling void over billions of years. I, or rather the universe, shall deal with God later.

In its first 13.7 billion years the universe has evolved ever more complex forms, each new form built from what already exists; **evolution means that the universe is Self Creative**¹. It has created life, a myriad flora and fauna, human beings. Throughout 13.7 billion years, beyond everything the universe has created, there remains the void.

Humankind evolved 3.2 million years ago, *Australopithecus afarensis*, called affectionally Lucy² when unearthed. Lucy-kind had a small brain, and beyond it a void that evolution gradually filled for 2.8 million years, to create *Homo sapiens* around 400,000 years ago. Since then, something amazing and unique occurred: **the human species has come to embody the creative capacity inherent in the universe**, beginning simply with the creation of tools; the ground of human creativity is an ability not only to act instinctively but also thoughtfully, to have an ability to think, and to do so creatively.

Hominid evolution was about brain capacity until *Homo sapiens* emerged, since when it has been more about brain capability, the ability of the mind to expand its creative intelligence, not only about making things but also about seeking to understand life, the universe, and everything, a creative process greatly enhanced by the evolution in humans of a conscious mind.

THE CREATIVE CONSCIOUS MIND

We see a flowering of creative consciousness in literature, art, architecture, engineering, science—astronomy reaching ever deeper into the origins of the universe—and in philosophical, psychological, and religious thought. We need also to mark, millennia of conflict, slaughter, heartless cruelty, slavery, forced migrations, xenophobia, domination, and misogyny, as products of the conscious mind.

From earliest times, with our capacity to think, we have reflected about the world we see about us. Then something wonderful happens, over time there emerge myths about natural phenomena and the powers that control them, about gods and creation of the world. Ancient communities

¹ The Evolution of the Universe, Scientific American
<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/the-evolution-of-the-universe/>

² Australopithecus Afarensis, Lucy's Species, Natural History Museum
<https://www.nhm.ac.uk/discover/australopithecus-afarensis-lucy-species.html>

conceived their own creation myths to describe the earliest beginnings of the world³. Thus, ‘creator’ and ‘god’ are ideas conceived by the human mind to explain the meaning of the world and its earliest beginnings. We can argue till the end of time about whether God exists, but the only inescapable fact is, **‘God’ is a product of the human mind, itself a product of evolution.**

“Well, that about wraps it up for God.” (Douglas Adams, 1979, *The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy*)

Not so!

LOVE

Now, as much as in ancient times, humans need to hold on to ideas that serve to explain the meaning of the world, its earliest beginnings, and the cycle of death and rebirth, a need that is met by religious thought. Putting aside the—often divisive—differences in dogma, what religions have in common is a belief in the power and importance of love. **Love is present in diverse religious texts:** love your neighbour as yourself; love is a gift of one’s innermost soul to another so both can be whole; “Love is patient; love is kind and envies no one. Love is never boastful, nor conceited, nor rude; never selfish, not quick to take offence. Love keeps no score of wrongs; does not gloat over other men’s sins, but delights in the truth. *There is nothing love cannot face; there is no limit to its faith, its hope, and its endurance.*”⁴

Love is a product of the human mind, both head and heart, a profoundly significant psychological product of evolution. Whatever we may or may not believe about God, we can unite in a belief in the power of Love. Love is the essence of godliness.

For my part, I have struggled with a dilemma: I don’t believe in God, yet I feel reluctant to call myself an atheist. Writing this paragraph, I have found a resolution, apprehending God not as a being, but as a lived experience of Love.

In his role as Guest Editor, in response to this paper, Svante Björklund makes a significant, serious point, “I think Love is greater than just being a product of the human mind. In my reading of Assagioli I understand that he means Love to be of a more cosmic character together with Universal Will.” I agree. I would say—putting aside metaphysics—the universe is self-evidently universal; evolution of a self-creative universe can be seen as expressing a universal will; this is a cosmic process that has yielded a species that knows itself to be personal as well as knowing itself to be part of the universe and product of that universal will; a species with the personal power to exercise Will and to show and experience Love; a species with an awesome, cosmic responsibility, which is what this paper is about.

³ Links to creation myths https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_creation_myths

⁴ 1 Corinthians 13 verses 4-6, New English Bible

THE FLAW IN THE CONSCIOUS MIND⁵

Neuroscience research shows that left and right hemispheres in humans have very different functions (Iain McGilchrist, 2009, *The Master and His Emissary: The Divided Brain*). Major motivational systems—attachment, fear, sexuality, play, shame, and disgust—are located in the right hemisphere. With its overall perspective, the right hemisphere is dominant for our: reception, expression, and communication of feelings and passions; ability to regulate stress; sense of self; relationships with others, empathy with others, compassion for others; sense of morality; understanding of metaphor; sense of humour; insight, intuition, and creativity. Everything, in fact, that marks the human spirit, the self-aware, living, feeling, relating, human being who is able to apprehend life in others within the context of the lived world. A world of individual, changing, evolving, interconnected, implicit, incarnate, living beings, but in the nature of things always in flux, never fully graspable, always imperfectly known.

In contrast, the left hemisphere is dependent upon language to name objects and understand their construction. It has the clarity, focus, and power to manipulate things that are known, fixed, static, isolated, taken out of context, explicit, disembodied, general in nature, but ultimately mechanical and lifeless. Everything in fact that has enabled the human species to dominate the world. McGilchrist states, “an increasingly mechanistic, fragmented, de-contextualised world, marked by unwarranted optimism mixed with paranoia and a feeling of emptiness, has come about, reflecting, I believe, the unopposed action of a dysfunctional left hemisphere.”

This is the evolutionary flaw in the human species, the left hemisphere is dominant over the right, worst case being the crushing of the human spirit. We see the global consequences, dehumanised cruelty and production-line extermination of millions of men, women, and children, and devastating wars, as well as the actual use of nuclear weapons, the ongoing threat of nuclear conflict.

FACING THE VOID

The future is a void. Evolution never stops, follows its own path. The difference now is that a species has evolved that embodies the creative capacity inherent in the universe:

We can participate in the unfolding of our own evolution.

Of course, there may be no future at all if we fail to tackle climate change. What might emerge if we leave it to others? The ultimate triumph of the left hemisphere: actual and aspiring despots, capable of marshalling the technical resources to crush the human spirit; big money financing human enhancement research might turn our species into robots; Artificial Intelligence—a topical issue—being developed by powerful corporations motivated by profit ahead of altruism, a technology widely feared as a threat to humanity.

Or else, we can envisage an advance in human psychology: the psychosynthesis of right and left hemispheres, with the functions of right and left having equal moment, human values being

⁵ This paragraph briefly summarises McGilchrist’s insight of the Divided Brain.

embraced by all, the needs of all people and planetary life being acknowledged, the articulation and planning of ways to fulfil those needs without regard for self-interest, disputes resolved with mutual respect and understanding, a synthesis of Love and Will. (Assagioli, 1974, pp100-103)

I call this advance in human psychology *trans-consciousness*, its realisation being based on three advances:

1. The human species embodies the creative capacity inherent in the universe.
2. Love is a product of the human mind, a profoundly significant psychological product of evolution.
3. There are in this world plenty of organisations of people who embrace human values, who express Goodwill and Love in serving many vital causes: saving the planet; caring for the environment, all creatures and species; the rights of women, ethnic minorities, workers, etc; the education, care, and protection of all children; enacting just laws; working in various fields of physical and mental health and spiritual wellbeing....

Nothing love cannot face! No limit to its faith, hope, endurance! Love is a sustained Act of Will! Love is a tough call. Love has not, so far, been the guiding principle in human affairs. Yet, it remains a demanding and radical foundation for human conduct: mutual respect, honesty and clarity, fairness and generosity, cooperation and conciliation.

What if all organisations of people of goodwill—'ironic points of light'—connect, seeing themselves as one, poised to fill the encircling void, evolution of human consciousness, with the light of Love? *Trans-consciousness*!

As psychosynthesis therapists, we are part of this psychospiritual challenge:

Defenceless under the night
Our world in stupor lies;
Yet, dotted everywhere,
Ironic points of light
Flash out wherever the Just
Exchange their messages:
May I, composed like them
Of Eros and of dust,
Beleaguered by the same
Negation and despair,
Show an affirming flame.
W. H. Auden (September 1, 1939)