

*The Return of the Feminine*  
*∞*  
*the World Soul*



*a collection of writings by*  
LLEWELLYN VAUGHAN-LEE

**BOOK EXCERPT FOR REVIEW**

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## *Foreword*

I met Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee in 2005. Since then I have been following Llewellyn's writing on the divine feminine, and as a woman and a practitioner of shamanism, I find that his work speaks to my heart. I have found that although we have ridden different waves we tend to land on the same shore.

Indigenous teachings embrace the divine feminine in a way that is crucial for healing ourselves and the earth. For thousands of years it has been known that everything that exists in this world is alive and has a spirit. We are connected to a web of life that is impacted by the behavior of all that is alive. This ancient understanding of the divine feminine, the interconnected oneness of all creation, is a central theme in Llewellyn's writings. As he writes, when we speak to the soul of the trees, rocks, rivers, etc., we speak to the divine within creation.

In shamanism there is a practice that comes from different traditions called deep listening. Through deep listening we know how to avoid destroying the world once again. The answers lie in nature—nature is always sharing her teachings with us. The

answers also lie in our own internal nature/inner wisdom. We must move the energy from our heads to our hearts. We must remember what we love about life and what brings us to a place of awe and wonder, reigniting our passion. We must remember how to honor and respect life with each breath, step, word, and thought. What you bless blesses you in return.

We can use the practice of deep inner listening to go beyond what our ordinary ears can hear, back into the reaches of the invisible, the feminine light and knowing, and the love that connects us all. To be of ultimate service to the planet we must reconnect to that innate feminine knowing that teaches us of the power of change that comes from being rather than doing.

In *The Return of the Feminine and the World Soul* Llewellyn addresses all these principles and more in a unique way. Llewellyn's gift in writing goes beyond a mere intellectual approach. His true gift is that he finds the words that go deep into your cells like a flower soaking up the life-giving light of the sun after a strong cleansing rain. In this way he creates the space beyond thinking, allowing you to come in contact with the forgotten and neglected place of that sacred knowing and to live the teachings.

I have read all of Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee's books and have been inspired by each one of them. In this book Llewellyn puts together his teachings on the feminine, which he stresses again and again is central in working with global healing and transformation and life's regeneration. In these writings he reminds us of the primal secrets of creation that belong to the feminine. He emphasizes how this deep knowledge is by nature an inseparable part of the woman's body and her inner knowing, and how it is especially needed in this time

of great crisis to revitalize life as it is meant to be lived. He also reminds us of our ancient understanding of the *anima mundi*, the soul of the world, and how vital her presence is at this time. It is time for us to bring back the soul of the world by once again honoring this life-giving force.

I know everyone reading this book will be inspired. So please read on.

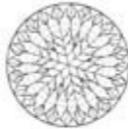
—SANDRA INGERMAN

AUTHOR OF

*Medicine for the Earth*

AND *How to Heal Toxic Thoughts*

*The following introduction is essential for the reader  
to understand the reason for this compilation of  
materials, and its contribution at  
this moment in time.*



# *Introduction*

*The assembly is filled with fragrance  
at the mention of her,  
and every tongue utters her name.*

IBN 'ARABI<sup>1</sup>

The following chapters are a compilation of my writings on the feminine from 1991 until 2008. Over these years I have written, lectured, and given interviews on the subject of the feminine principle, the sacred feminine. My earliest writings concern my own experience of the feminine from a psychological perspective, the *anima* or soul figure within my own psyche as she expressed herself in dreams and images, her darkness and light, her power and beauty. From this inner reconnection with a feminine that has only too often been rejected, misunderstood and mistreated, I began to value and understand the role of the feminine on the spiritual quest, the importance of listening, receptivity, and sacred space that is needed for spiritual rebirth and living the longing of the soul.

These feminine qualities belong to both men and women, and they draw us into the depths within us, into the mysteries of the soul whose wisdom is called Sophia. They also reconnect us with the primal pain of the feminine that has been so abused by our masculine culture. We come to experience her tears and wounds, her pain which is also the pain of our own

soul. In the realm of the feminine everything is connected, nothing is excluded. And working with people, especially women, listening to their dreams and stories, I began to see how this pain, this denial, is a wound in each of us that needs to be understood and forgiven if we are to reclaim our true spiritual heritage, the innate knowledge of the feminine and the wisdom of the earth.

My own journey took me beyond my individual quest into the drama of the whole, feeling the suffering of the earth and its longing to reawaken from this nightmare of exploitation and patriarchal greed. Here I experienced the pressing need to reclaim the wisdom and power of the goddess, her healing and transformative potential. And I glimpsed how this energy is especially present within women, and how women have a crucial role to play in redeeming the sacred feminine and learning once again how to work with her. Although the feminine is an important part of a man's psyche, women carry her wisdom and power in every cell of their body, and they have a responsibility in reawakening her potential.

In the story of our relationship to the earth I was drawn further, back to the ancient understanding of the *anima mundi*, the soul of the world, the divine principle within creation. Throughout history, in different times and cultures, there has been a relationship with the *anima mundi*, and ways to work with her, to bring her into daily life, particularly through art and the imagination. This feminine consciousness within all of life needs our attention in order to redeem our civilization and our world. Her cry needs to be heard, her knowing brought into our consciousness.

My own spiritual journey has followed the Sufi path of love, whose mysteries of the heart have always had a central place for

the feminine. For the Sufi wayfarer it is love's feminine quality of longing that draws us back to our Beloved. The mystic lover waits in a deep space of feminine receptivity and unknowing for the Beloved to reveal Himself. This inner love affair of the soul with God has taught me much about the relationship with the feminine, and the Sufi tradition of images and mystical poetry has helped me to articulate some of her mystery. The fragrance of this tradition of lovers will be present in these pages.

Although this material comes from my own personal journey, I have stressed how the work of the feminine belongs to the healing and transformation of the whole. The book begins with chapters that focus on our need to revalue the feminine, to understand how she has a central part to play in the work of global healing and transformation. Her natural consciousness holds a deep understanding of the interconnections of life, how all the different parts relate together: how her awakening oneness can unfold. And every woman has in her spiritual centers the sacred substance of creation that is necessary for life's regeneration. Without the full participation of the feminine nothing new can be born. The reader is then taken into the dimension of the *anima mundi*, whose ancient wisdom and understanding of life's oneness is needed if the world is to be redeemed. I have included as an appendix a psychological and spiritual perspective on the feminine that began this exploration, how the journey to the soul of the world began with my own soul.

Part of the difficulty of understanding and describing the feminine is her very elusive nature, the veils that surround her, as well as our patriarchal repression and denial of her wisdom and power. Also the ancient feminine mysteries, her initiations and teachings, were never written down. She is not easily fixed

and defined, but is mysterious in her continual movement and change. She belongs to the silvery light of the moon and its many reflections rather than the harsh glare of masculine sunshine and its rational constructs. She is more easily alluded to and hinted at, expressing the mystery and matrix of creation that is always a wonder rather than something to be explained. So these chapters do not attempt a rational, linear explanation of the feminine, but are more facets of a mirror reflecting different feminine qualities and ways of being. In this gathered material there are many repetitions, as each chapter treats a repeated theme from a slightly different perspective, and so over the whole book a more rounded and complete picture of the repeated theme subtly emerges. This is also part of the mystery of the feminine, whose creation is an eternal round of evolving repetition. Each moment the same divine wonder is expressed in a slightly different way.

Also repetition in itself has a value: after such a long time and such a deep conditioning of neglect and forgetting of the nature and quality and value of the feminine in our culture, there is a need to bring her back into consciousness. In a culture that is so steeped in masculine values as ours is, articulating these long-forgotten themes only once may not be enough. There is a need to emphasize her again and again until her qualities once again become part of our relationship to life. The more we are reminded of her, the better she will find a foothold again in our individual consciousness and in our collective culture.

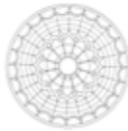
The feminine belongs to the inner worlds as much as to the outer world of creation. She is part of the mystery of the soul, of the womb of the world. Our masculine culture has focused on an external, definable and measurable world, but the feminine knows a different dimension—what is hidden within, often in

the darkness. Much of these writings belong to the inner worlds, which are traditionally the home of the mystic and shaman, the poet, the priestess, and the seer. These realms, often rich in symbols, feelings, and images, accessed through visions and the imagination, are not well known in our culture, and our language is ill equipped to describe them, just as our language itself belongs to a masculine, rational culture, one that likes things to be defined rather than just alluded to. In reading this book it is important to recognize the limitations of language, and allow what is beyond the words to speak to you.

Rather than explain the role of the feminine in a logical, linear manner, these chapters attempt to draw the reader into her wisdom and mystery. There is no single definition of the feminine, but there can be an awakening to her ways, to her qualities and powers. Sometimes I have called her “the divine,” or “the goddess” or “the feminine principle” or the “*anima mundi*.” The feminine does not like to be caught in any single name or fixed explanation. She is a way of relating to life and to oneself and to the divine.

It is also important to remember that the divine feminine is not in any contrast or opposition to the masculine. Within her sacred wholeness everything is included. And when I refer to the unknowable aspect of the divine that is beyond all form or knowing as He, It has no gender: that “He” is not masculine as opposed to feminine. Although we may live in a culture dominated by separation, the divine is beyond any division. Yet the feminine has her own fragrance, her particular magic. Hopefully in these pages something of her true nature will come into consciousness. She will reveal some of her qualities, lift some of her veils.

*Because humanity has a central function  
in the whole of creation, what we deny to ourself  
we deny to all of life. In denying the feminine her sacred  
power and purpose we have impoverished life in ways  
we do not understand. We have denied life its sacred  
source of meaning and divine purpose,  
which was understood by the  
ancient priestesses.*



# *Reclaiming the Feminine Mystery of Creation*

*“Then creation recognized its Creator in its own forms  
and appearances. For in the beginning, when God said, ‘Let it be!’  
and it came to pass, the means and the Matrix of creation  
was Love, because all creation was formed through  
Her as in the twinkling of an eye.”*

THE HOLY SPIRIT AS SAPIENTIA ST. HILDEGARD VON BINGEN<sup>1</sup>

## THE MATRIX OF CREATION

The feminine is the matrix of creation. This truth is something profound and elemental, and every woman knows it in the cells of her body, in her instinctual depths. Out of the substance of her very being life comes forth. She can conceive and give birth, participate in the greatest mystery of bringing a soul into life. And yet we have forgotten, or been denied, the depths of this mystery, of how the divine light of the soul creates a body in the womb of a woman, and how the mother shares in this wonder, giving her own blood, her own body, to what will be born. Our culture’s focus on a disembodied, transcendent God has left women bereft, denying them the sacredness of this simple mystery of divine love.

What we do not realize is that this patriarchal denial affects not only every woman, but also life itself. When we deny the divine mystery of the feminine we also deny something fundamental to life. We separate life from its sacred core, from the matrix that nourishes all of creation. We cut our world off from

the source that alone can heal, nourish, and transform it. The same sacred source that gave birth to each of us is needed to give meaning to our life, to nourish it with what is real, and to reveal to us the mystery, the divine purpose to being alive.

Because humanity has a central function in the whole of creation, what we deny to ourself we deny to all of life. In denying the feminine her sacred power and purpose we have impoverished life in ways we do not understand. We have denied life its sacred source of meaning and divine purpose, which was understood by the ancient priestesses. We may think that their fertility rites and other ceremonies belonged only to the need for procreation or a successful harvest. In our contemporary culture we cannot understand how a deeper mystery was enacted, one that consciously connected life to its source in the inner worlds, a source that held the wholeness of life as an embodiment of the divine, allowing the wonder of the divine to be present in every moment.

The days of the priestesses, their temples and ceremonies are over, and because the wisdom of the feminine was not written down but transmitted orally (*logos* is a masculine principle), this sacred knowledge is lost. We cannot reclaim the past, but we can witness a world without her presence, a world which we exploit for greed and power, which we rape and pollute without real concern. And then we can begin the work of welcoming her back, of reconnecting with the divine that is at the core of creation, and learning once again how to work with the sacred principles of life. Without the intercession of the divine feminine we will remain in this physical and spiritual wasteland we have created, passing on to our children a diseased and desecrated world.

The choice is simple. Can we remember the wholeness that is within us, the wholeness that unites spirit and matter? Or will we continue walking down this road that has abandoned the divine feminine, that has cut women off from their sacred power and knowledge? If we choose the former we can begin to reclaim the world, not with masculine plans, but with the wisdom of the feminine, the wisdom that belongs to life itself. If we choose the latter we may attempt some surface solutions with new technology. We may combat global warming and pollution with scientific plans. But there will be no real change. A world that is not connected to its soul cannot heal. Without the participation of the divine feminine nothing new can be born.

#### RECLAIMING HER SACRED WISDOM

If the knowledge of the sacred feminine has been lost, how can we know what to do? Part of the wisdom of the feminine is to wait, to listen, to be receptive. A woman does not consciously know how to bring the light of a soul into her womb and help it to form a body. And yet this mystery takes place within her. Nor does she consciously know how to nourish this light with her own light, in the same way that she gives her blood to help the body to grow. She is the mystery of light being born into matter, and her pregnancy is a time of receptivity, waiting, listening and feeling what is happening within her. She and the Great Mother are one being, and if she listens within she is given the knowledge she needs.

We may have forsaken this simple feminine wisdom of listening, and in this information age awash with so many words it is easy to undervalue an instinctual knowledge that

comes from within. But the sacred principles of life have never been written down: they belong to the heartbeat, to the rhythm of the breath and the flow of blood. They are alive like the rain and the rivers, the waxing and waning of the moon. If we learn to listen we will discover that life, the Great Mother, is speaking to us, telling us what we need to know. We are present at a time when the world is dying and waiting to be reborn, and all the words in our libraries and on the Internet will not tell us what to do. But the sacred feminine can share with us her secrets, tell us how to be, how to midwife her rebirth. And because we are her children she can speak to each of us, if we have the humility to listen.

How can we listen to what we do not know? How can we reclaim what we have lost so long ago? Every moment is new. The present moment is not just a progression of past moments, but is alive in its own way, complete and perfect. And it is the moment that demands our attention. Only in the moment can we be fully awake and respond to the real need. Only in the present moment can we be fully attentive. Only in the present moment can the divine come into existence. Men may make plans, but a mother attentive to her children knows the real need of the moment. She feels in her being the interconnectedness of all of life in a way that is veiled from the masculine. She knows one cannot make plans when there are so many variables, but one can respond with the wisdom that includes the whole and all of its connections. The divine feminine is asking us to be present in life in all of its wholeness, without judgment or plans. Then she can speak to us, reveal the mystery of her rebirth.

And because this is a birth, the feminine has to be present, not just as an idea but as a living presence within us, within

both men and women; because although woman most fully embodies the divine feminine, part of her secret is also shared with men, just as a son carries part of his mother in a way hidden from her daughters. Yet to live the feminine is something we have almost forgotten: our patriarchal culture has denied her power and real wisdom, has sanitized her as much as it has divorced her from her magic that belongs to the rhythms of creation. But we need her, more than we dare realize.

However, to fully encounter the divine feminine, the creative principle of life, we must be prepared for her anger, for the pain that has come from her abuse. For centuries our masculine culture has repressed her natural power, has burnt her temples, killed her priestesses. Through his drive for mastery, and his fear of the feminine, of what he cannot understand or control, the patriarchy has not just neglected her, but deliberately tortured and destroyed. He has not just raped her, but torn the very fabric of life, the primal wholeness of which she is always the guardian. And the feminine is angry, even if her anger has been repressed along with her magic.

To welcome the feminine is to acknowledge and accept her pain and anger, and the part we have played in this desecration. Women too have often colluded with the masculine, denied their own power and natural magic, and instead accepted masculine values and ways of thinking. They have betrayed their own deepest self. But we must also be careful not to become caught in this darkness, in the dynamics of abuse, the anger and betrayal.

It is especially easy for women to become identified with the suffering of the feminine, her treatment by the masculine, to project their own pain and anger onto men. Then we are caught even more securely in this web that denies us any

transformation. If we identify with the pain of the feminine we easily become an agent of her anger, rather than going deeper into the mystery of suffering, into the light that is always hidden in the darkness. Because in the depths of the feminine there is a deep knowledge that the abuse is also part of the cycle of creation. The Great Mother embodies a wholeness that contains even the denial of Herself, and we need Her wholeness if we are to survive and be reborn.

Real transformation, like any birth, needs the darkness as much as the light. We know that the feminine has been abused, just as the planet continues to be polluted. But the woman who has experienced the pain of childbirth, who knows the blood that belongs to birth, is always initiated in the darkness; she knows the cycles of creation in ways that are hidden to the masculine. She needs to give herself and her knowing to this present cycle of death and rebirth, and in so doing honor the pain she has suffered. Then she will discover that her magic and power are also being reborn in a new way, are being returned to her in ways that can no longer be contaminated by the masculine and its power drive. But without her full participation there is the danger of a stillbirth; then this present cycle of creation will not realize its potential.

First we need to acknowledge the suffering of the feminine, of the earth itself, or the light within the feminine will be hidden from us. We have to pay the price of our desires to dominate nature, of our acts of hubris. We are not separate from life, from the winds and the weather. We are a part of creation and we have to ask her forgiveness, to take responsibility for our attitude and actions. We need to go consciously into the next era, recognizing our mistakes. Only then can we fully honor and hear her. But there is always the possibility that we will not take

this step. That like defiant children we will not acknowledge the pain we have done to our mother, and will not reclaim the wholeness that she embodies. Then we will remain within the darkness that is beginning to devour our souls: the empty promises of materialism, the fractured world of fanaticism. To take a step into maturity is always to acknowledge our mistakes, the wrongs we have done.

#### GIVING BIRTH TO OUR OWN WHOLENESS

It is a real challenge to step into this matrix of the feminine, to honor something so sacred and simple as the real wisdom of life. But as we stand at the edge of our present global abyss we need this wisdom more than we realize. How many times has this world been brought to the edge of extinction, how many times in its millions of years has it faced disaster? Now we have created our own disaster with our ignorance and greed, and the first step is to ask for the help of our mother and to listen to her wisdom. Then we will find ourself in a very different environment from the one we presently imagine. We will discover that there are changes happening in the depths of creation of which we are a part, and that the pollution and pain we have caused are part of a cycle of life that involves its own apparent destruction. We are not isolated, even in our mistakes. We are part of the whole of creation even as we have denied the whole. In our hubris we have separated ourself from life, and yet we can never be separate. That is just an illusion of masculine thinking. There is no such thing as separation. It is just a myth created by the ego.

Everything is part of the whole, even in its mistakes and disasters. Once we return to this simple awareness we will

discover that there are changes taking place that demand our participation, that need us to be present. We will see that the axis of creation is shifting and something is coming alive in a new way. We are being reborn, not in any separate sense but as a complete whole. We do not have images in our masculine consciousness to think what this could be like, but this does not mean it is not happening. Something within us knows that the present era is over, that our time of separation is coming to an end. At present we sense it most apparently in the negative, knowing that the images of life no longer sustain us, that consumerism is killing our soul as well as the planet. And yet there is also something just beyond the horizon, like a dawn that we can sense even if we cannot see.

And this dawn carries a light, and this light is calling to us, calling to our souls if not yet to our minds. And it is asking for us to welcome it, to bring it into being. And if we dare to do this, to say “yes” to this dawn, we will discover that this light is within us, and that something within each of us is being brought into being. We are part of a shared mystery: we are the light hidden within matter that is being awakened.

For too many centuries we have been caught in the myth of separation, until we have become isolated from each other and from the energies of creation that sustain us. But now there is a growing light that carries the knowing of oneness, the oneness that is alive with the imprint of the divine. This is what is being given back to us. This is the light that is awakening. The light of oneness is a reflection of the divine oneness of life, and we are each a direct expression of this oneness. And this oneness is not a metaphysical idea but something so simple and ordinary. It is in every breath, in the wing-beat of every butterfly, in every piece of garbage left on city streets. This oneness is life, life no

longer experienced solely through the fragmented vision of the ego, but known within the heart, felt in the soul. This oneness is the heartbeat of life. It is creation's recognition of its Creator. In this oneness life celebrates itself and its divine origin.

The feminine knows this oneness. She feels it in her body, in her instinctual wisdom. She knows its interconnectedness just as she knows how to nourish her own children. And yet until now this knowing has not carried the bright light of masculine consciousness. It has remained hidden within her, in the darkness of her instinctual self. And part of her pain has been that she has not known how to use her knowing in the rational and scientific world we inhabit. Instead of valuing her own knowledge she has played the games of the masculine, imitating his thinking, putting aside her knowledge of relationships and her sense of the patterns that belong to creation.<sup>2</sup>

Now it is time for this wisdom of the feminine to be combined with masculine consciousness, so that a new understanding of the wholeness of life can be used to help us to heal our world. Our present scientific solutions come from the masculine tools of analysis, the very mind-set of separation that has caused the problems. We cannot afford to isolate ourselves from the whole any more, and the fact that our problems are global illustrate this. Global warming is not just a scientific image or concept but a dramatic reality. Combining masculine and feminine wisdom we can come to understand the relationships between the parts and the whole, and if we listen we can hear life telling us how to redress this imbalance.

There is a light within life, known to the alchemists as the *lumen naturae*, that can speak to us, speak to the light of our own awareness. There is a primal dialogue of light to light, which is

known to every healer as she listens to the body of her patient and allows it to communicate with her, allows its light to speak to the light within her. Through this dialogue of light she comes to know where to place her hands, the herbs that are needed, the pressure points to be touched. This direct communication is combined with the knowledge of healing she has learned, allowing an alchemy to take place that can re-awaken energy within the patient, realign the body and soul. This is how real healing happens, and what is true for the individual is also true for the world, except that we are both the patient and the healer. The world's wounds and imbalance are our wounds and imbalance, and we have within us the knowledge and understanding to realign ourselves and the world. This is part of the mystery of life's wholeness.

The feminine can give us an understanding of how all the diverse parts of life relate together, their patterns of relationship, the interconnections that nourish life. She can help us to see consciously what she knows instinctively, that all is part of a living, organic whole, in which all the parts of creation communicate together, and that each cell of creation expresses the whole in a unique way. An understanding of the organic wholeness of life belongs to the instinctual knowing of the feminine, but combined with masculine consciousness this can be communicated in words, not just feelings. We can combine the science of the mind and the senses with inner knowing. We can be given a blueprint of the planet that will enable us to live in creative harmony with all of life.

A NEW MAGIC IS PRESENT

What does it mean to reclaim the feminine? It means to honor our sacred connection to life that is present in every moment. It means to realize that life is one whole and begin to recognize the interconnections that form the web of life. It means to realize that everything, every act, even every thought, affects the whole. And it also means to allow life to speak to us. We are constantly bombarded by so many impressions, by so much media and advertising, that it is not easy to hear the simple voice of life itself. But it is present, even within the mirage of our fears and desires, our anxieties and expectations. And life is waiting for us to listen: it just needs us to be present and attentive. It is trying to communicate to us the secrets of creation so that we can participate in the wonder that is being born.

We have been exiled from our own home, sold a barren landscape full of soulless fantasies. It is time to return home, to claim what belongs to us, the sacred life of which we are a part. This is what is waiting for us, and its signs are appearing around us. They are not just in our discontent, in our sense that we have been exploited and lied to. They are in a quality of magic that is beginning to appear, like the wing-beats of angels we cannot see but can feel. We are being reminded of what we really are, of the divine presence that is within ourselves and within life. We long for this magic, for a life that unites the inner and outer worlds. And this other is already with us in ways we would not expect. We just have to be open and receptive, to say “yes” to what we cannot see or touch, but can feel and respond to. And for each of us this meeting of the worlds will be different, unique, because we are each different, unique. It is the sacred

within life speaking to us in our own language. Maybe for the gardener it speaks in the magic of plants, for the mother in something unexpected in the ways of her children—always it is something glimpsed but not yet known—a promise we know we have been waiting for. Children themselves feel it first, but for them it is not so unusual; it is part of the air they breathe, the light they live in. They have not yet been completely banished, and maybe they will grow into a world in which this magic remains.

The mystery of the divine feminine speaks to us from within her creation. She is not a distant god in heaven, but a presence that is here with us, needing our response. She is the divine returning to claim her creation, the real wonder of what it means to be alive. We have forgotten her, just as we have forgotten so much of what is sacred, and yet she is always part of us. But now she needs to be known again, not just as a myth, as a spiritual image, but as something that belongs to the blood and the breath. She can awaken us to an expectancy in the air, to an ancient memory coming alive in a new way. She can help us to give birth to the divine that is within us, to the oneness that is all around us. She can help us to remember our real nature.

*... the first step is to acknowledge that the world is a spiritual being, just as you acknowledge for yourself that you are a spiritual being. And the next is to recognize the mysterious relationship between the individual and the world, known traditionally as microcosm and macrocosm, in which every human being is the microcosm of the whole.*



*... we have a problem now. The world is dying. It is not supposed to be like this. I am convinced that human beings are not meant to sit looking at a flickering screen ten hours a day pressing buttons. Human beings are so extraordinary! They are full of light; they have this divine intelligence. They are meant to live in a sacred way, not spend their life looking at a flickering television or computer screen. That is not what we were created for.*

## *Invoking the World Soul*

*Transcript of a talk given May, 2007  
in Seattle, Washington*

What I want to talk about this evening is the *anima mundi*—the soul of the world. This is the living spirit of creation, the divine consciousness within matter. In fact I don't want to just talk about the *anima mundi*; I want to see if we can invoke Her presence.

I will begin by just giving a little history of the *anima mundi* in our Western culture. In the East, the *anima mundi* is very evident. The Tao, for example—it's the same thing—is the divine within creation; Taoism is really a constant relationship to that living spirit in nature, in which one aligns one's whole life, one's whole way of being, one's whole understanding of life, in relationship to this living spirit. In the West we have a more conceptual understanding of it. This is the tradition of what we call now the Gaia Principle—the understanding that the Earth is a living being. And all I would add at the beginning in order to understand this and to relate to it is that it is a living *spiritual* being. And just as *we* are a physical body with a soul, so is the world a physical body with a soul, and that soul *is* its

spiritual essence. And as far as I can understand, unless you make a relationship to the soul of creation, the *anima mundi*, you are just scratching the surface of life, just as somebody who relates to you purely physically is just scratching your surface, not relating to you as a living breathing spiritual being, a soul incarnate in this world.

One can go back, for example, to Plato who understood the cosmos as a single living creature that contains all living creatures within it. So at the very origins of our Western civilization there is this deep understanding that the Earth is a living spiritual being. Later there were the alchemists who regarded the World Soul as a pure ethereal spirit diffused throughout all nature, the divine essence that infuses and energizes all life in the universe. So the *anima mundi* is this living spiritual—not just principle, but substance, within creation. One of the great tragedies of our Western culture is that this tradition was, in many ways, exorcised by the Catholic Church. It was there in the Church in the very early days, with the Gnostics and some of their teachings, and it has reappeared for brief moments throughout the history of the West. There was a beautiful expression of it in the Gothic movement in the twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and those of you who have been to the great Gothic cathedrals in Europe, like Chartres, will have seen that the cathedral itself represents the universe in microcosm, and in its sculptures and stained glass windows are imaged all of the aspects of creation, not just biblical figures and saints but also the cycles of the zodiac, living creatures and plants. And the whole esoteric design behind it is that all of creation is contained within the cathedral's geometric forms, which reflect the divine ordering principle within creation. In the Medieval Era, if you were someone really interested

in the depths of spiritual understanding, you could explore that relationship, that understanding of the divine ordering principle within creation as it was expressed in microcosm in the Gothic cathedrals.

And it is significant that Chartres Cathedral, which was the ideal Gothic cathedral—there was an esoteric school at Chartres as many of you know—is actually built on a site sacred to the Black Madonna. Which is, again, the Earth spirit—the feminine divine Earth spirit that gave birth to this understanding of the mystery of matter, the divine expressing itself within creation.

The Gothic movement lasted for a while, like many spiritual flowerings that come from the soul of the world. But within the patriarchal structure of the church there was no understanding of the divine feminine—of Sophia—or of the divine principle within creation. One aspect of the church's patriarchal oppression was to split heaven and earth, to put God in heaven and to see everything on earth as sinful. The Earth itself was seen as a dark prison that trapped the soul of man rather than a place of divine expression. And so the *anima mundi* was lost again. But like many true spiritual understandings, it went underground, like a hidden stream, and it reappeared in the Renaissance.

This understanding of the Earth as a living spiritual being of course went back to Plato, back to the sacred teachings of Greece and further East. And, as some of you know, there is a tradition that the whole of the Renaissance was started by a master who came from Constantinople on a donkey to northern Italy. There he founded the esoteric school that Michelangelo and Leonardo and others attended. And he brought with him this esoteric knowledge of the divine within creation: of how that works, how She manifests Herself, how She holds the

divine proportions. You see it, for example, in Leonardo's Man (his famous drawing of a man uniting a circle and a square), in which heaven and earth are brought together—and in the whole esoteric understanding of that relationship that informs the work of those Renaissance masters.

In the Renaissance, once again the World Soul was understood to animate and form nature according to divine proportions. And once again the garden of the world was enchanted with magical power and transcendent meaning that was implicit in every part of nature, and the wonderful relationship between the imagination and the creative principle in life flourished. It was an extraordinary flowering that really came from the divine feminine within the imagination, and within life, and it was celebrated. Once again the garden of the soul was here in this world. It wasn't just after you died, in heaven, in paradise; it was *here*, in the art that the Renaissance masters created. And this is why, for some of us, the Renaissance touches the soul so deeply now and why there has been a revival of understanding of what happened in the Renaissance. Because it had to do with the divine feminine and the divine feminine within life and that really is an expression of the *anima mundi*. She once again expressed Herself in the West in that beautiful artistic flowering that touches us so much.

But then of course the Church repressed it again, sometimes quite brutally. And the only tradition that was left carrying that understanding, after the tradition of sacred geometry became lost, was the alchemical tradition, which was rediscovered for us in the last century by Carl Jung.<sup>1</sup>

In the alchemical tradition the *anima mundi* is the divine spark in matter. While the Church looked upwards towards heaven, towards the ethereal world, the alchemists looked into

matter. And part of their work was to discover how to liberate this spark, how to liberate the light hidden within matter, which is the secret within creation. This divine spark is in every cell of creation. And really, the mystery of turning lead into gold is about revealing what is hidden within the darkness of matter. And so they kept alive, in this underground stream, the principle of the *anima mundi*, the soul of the world. They understood that there is a direct relationship between our individual soul and the soul of the world. In fact, our individual soul is a spark in the *anima mundi*, a spark of light in the soul of the world. It is not just our own individual soul; it is part of the soul of the world. One of the great tragedies is that we forgot this—that, as Jung said, “Man himself has ceased to be the microcosm and his anima is no longer the consubstantial *scintilla* or spark of the *Anima Mundi*, the World Soul.”

With the reign of rationalism we have forgotten our place in the world. We have forgotten that our soul, this spark within us, has a direct relationship to the soul of the world. And out of that, I think, came a lot of the impoverishment—soul impoverishment—that we have today. Because once we lose that relationship to the divine within matter, within creation—once we say the divine is only in heaven or can only be found in deep meditation—we’ve lost something fundamental. And we’ve lost it for both ourselves and the world.

So humanity became more and more separated, or veiled itself more and more, from the soul of creation. Now as many of you know, if you separate yourself from the light of your own soul your life becomes emptier and darker, more and more meaningless. People would say that is one of the many reasons there is so much addiction in our Western culture: we have lost our connection with anything that truly nourishes

us. We get addicted to drugs, or sex, or shopping—whatever it is—because there is nothing that nourishes us. We have lost this relationship to what is present within the soul of creation. We have lost relationship to our own soul and to the soul of creation.

And just to complete this picture, I want to explain something that Jung understood, which has to do with the light of the divine. The light of the divine has two aspects. One is what is traditionally known as the *lumen dei*—the light of God—which is really the divine light of one's higher Self. It is a very, very beautiful light. It is very clear, very simple; it just *is*. It is the light of God as you can see it as a human being. Of course, the *real* light of God you cannot see. You become blinded by it. It is said He has 70,000 veils of light and 70,000 veils of darkness to separate us from experiencing the true light of the divine, which would burn you away. But there is this *lumen dei* that we have within us—our divine light. And when you pray to God your light rises up to God. When you really pray to God there is a light, a spark. You can see it, in a way, from outer space, this spark that rises up to God from the heart of the human being. It is very beautiful. If you go into deep meditation, you discover that divine light within you. It is like a diamond; very clear, very pure, very beautiful.

But that is only half of the way the divine expresses Itself. The other aspect is what Jung found in alchemy called the *lumen naturae*—the divine light within nature. One could say that the *lumen dei* is the masculine expression of the divine while the *lumen naturae* is the feminine. It is the light in nature, the light that is present. As a culture we have completely forgotten how to relate to this feminine light. I think for a lot of traditional cultures, ritual—whether dance or song, music, chanting or

any sacred act—was a way of being with this light in nature. Through this light you can speak to the soul of an animal, the soul of a mountain, the soul of a tree or plant. It is how you work with the divine within creation. In previous cultures you wouldn't try to live without it. How would you know what to do? How would you know where to hunt? How would you know about the healing properties of herbs? About what is poisonous, what heals what ailments? It was in this communication of light with light—a communion with creation. It was when the world was *alive*. And we have forgotten the world is alive.

I had a beautiful experience the other day, which really moved me somehow. I was trying to understand something and I was taken back in time, to how things were in the early days before this cloud of forgetfulness came. I was walking along a path and I suddenly realized that in those days the path told you where it was going. I had read about the Aboriginal Time when the songlines guided the Aboriginals across the desert. But I never realized that a path could actually speak to you and tell you where it is going. But you can see it echoed in some of the songs of Tolkien.<sup>2</sup> He had access to those ancient memories. He was also a medieval English scholar and knew the stories from those very early times when the path came to meet you and told you beyond what hills it would take you.

And this very different relationship of light to light—our own divine light to the light in matter—is very sacred; it is how we learn how to walk, how to live, in a sacred manner. Because it respects the divine within creation. In the West it has been erased from our collective consciousness. And of course, this country was founded on the terrible tragedy that the Europeans, quite brutally, killed off the people who had this understanding. And those who survived were no longer allowed to speak

their native language. So that sacred language was almost erased and together with it went the understanding of how to talk to the magic that is within creation, this relationship of light to light.

In a way, what the alchemists were doing in their crucibles many native cultures did in their daily life—talking to the light in nature. Whether you call it the Great Spirit or the *anima mundi*, it is the same—it is this living divine principle within creation. And I am completely convinced that we cannot solve the problems in the world, the ecological problems for example, without invoking this light, this magic, this wisdom, this knowledge—this *presence* within nature. How can you heal yourself if you treat yourself just as a physical body? Yes, Western medicine does that, and for some things it's good, like healing a broken arm or taking out an appendix, but, as most of us here know, that isn't really the complete answer. We are trying to solve this environmental catastrophe purely on the physical plane, which is missing the whole point. It means we are trying to solve the problem in the same way the problem has been created, which is cutting everything off from its sacred source, cutting everything off from its root.

Fortunately, the transition or transformation that is needed—and I have looked at this very carefully—does not have to happen on the level of mass collective consciousness. My feeling is that the collective consciousness in the West, which is now a *global* West (the whole world has become McDonaldized), is caught in a dream, a nightmare of consumerism. I saw that the energy required to take the whole collective out of that dream would be colossal. There would have to come some mega-disaster, or an enormous influx of grace, or ... I don't know what. But traditionally, in the past, changes have always started

just within small groups. They never happened first on the collective level. Just as, interestingly, when a change happens within you, when you wake up to something, it is usually just a little spark within you. A small part of you shifts—ah! Suddenly there is light. Something changes. Part of our Western spiritual childishness is that we think when that illumination happens our whole life is going to change. And we are really disappointed to wake up and find we still have the same problems with our partner or job. We don't realize that you have to work with that light, you have to nurture it; you have to bring that light into your life. And this takes time, and patience.

If we can just bring back an awareness of Her presence, that divine being that is the Earth, the soul of creation—if we can just bring Her back, then we create a space where the light can come back into Her world. It's really just a matter of accepting this mystery within creation. It's not something very complicated. Just as there is this moment when you allow your own soul into your life, when you say “yes” to this inner part of you. This is simply to take that to the next step, to acknowledge that the world is a sacred being. I always find it strange that somehow we are very keen on working with *ourselves* as a sacred being but we don't realize that this sacred being that is ourselves is part of a much bigger sacred being that is the world, that is creation.

Human beings have a very pivotal role to play. For example, until human beings welcome them in, certain *devas* and angels are often not allowed to participate directly in our life. They are here; sometimes one can see them waiting—very, very beautiful, very powerful nature *devas*, earth *devas*, and angels—and they are waiting on the sidelines. They are waiting, while we tear up the world, because they need to be

welcomed in. The Earth was given to humanity so we could evolve together, so we could have this relationship between the light of our soul and the light of creation, this alchemical interaction of light upon light. That was what life was always about, for thousands and thousands of years. That's what the mystery of creation was about.

Now when we look at past civilizations like the Egyptians and see the pyramids or other sacred buildings, for example Stonehenge, we don't understand the real meaning behind them. They were being used to bring in that light, to focus that light, to focus those energies so the priests, the initiates, could work with them. So that the lights from above and the lights that come from creation could work together. In Egypt they did it through building the pyramids. In this country they had other ways of working, like the Sun Dance, or for the Hopi the Serpent Dance, ways of weaving together the energies within creation and the energies that are part of a human being. And there are certain very powerful words, given only to initiates, to be spoken only at certain times, that speak to the soul of the world, to the magic in creation. Certain incantations that begin to awaken the energies in the Earth—because that's what human beings were about.

The purpose of being human is not going to Wal-Mart and getting more stuff. The whole of life was about making that creative relationship, that spiritual relationship. Yes, there was the concern with survival, there was often famine and sickness, but underneath there was always a relationship to this divine intelligence within creation. But then Western man was given too much power. And rather than working with nature, he decided to control nature. And so he developed technologies to control nature, whether to build a house that was completely insulated

or to manufacture chemicals to make the plants grow quicker. We wanted to control nature—which is really the masculine power drive—to control the feminine. And part of that control, from the very beginning, was to deny the sacred within nature. In the same way, the Catholic Church denied the sacred within women—how many women were burned as witches, women who understood healing and plants, who were midwives? You deny the sacred in the feminine and then you can more easily have power over her.

And now we are trying to redeem this ecological crisis with the same tools of oppression, rather than going back to what caused it. That would mean for each of us to take the spark of our own soul and make this relationship again with the spark of the World Soul. It's very simple. Spiritual things are very, very simple.

The World Soul is still alive. If the World Soul had died, or humanity had completely cut itself off from the World Soul, humanity would start to regress, as happens when you are completely cut off from your own soul: you go back to a previous era of your own evolution, to more primitive behavior. You are often drawn back into the destructive aspect of the instinctual world. If we had completely cut off the World Soul, if we had killed Her, then a certain life on this planet would be over. Life might continue on a purely physical level, but a certain magic within creation would be gone; a certain spiritual meaning in life would no longer be accessible to us. You can actually see signs of that already, because for many, many people there is no longer any spiritual meaning in life. They have substituted for that their addictions, or what they can get at the malls. Life is no longer seen as an expression of the divine. If that were to cover everything then the world would be over. It could not

regenerate itself, in the same way that a human being cannot regenerate herself without the energy of her soul, without the divine within.

So really, the first step is to acknowledge that the world is a spiritual being, just as you acknowledge for yourself that you are a spiritual being. And the next is to recognize the mysterious relationship between the individual and the world, known traditionally as microcosm and macrocosm, in which every human being is the microcosm of the whole. It is reflected in the Sufi tradition of the perfect man, the *qutb* (the pole). The *qutb* is the one human being alive on the planet at any one time who lives the real potential of what it means to be a human being. And he carries this truth, this potential for the whole of creation. If he weren't here, creation could not rise up to its potential. It's a very important principle in Sufism.<sup>3</sup>

But each of us is in our own way the microcosm of the whole. And what that means is that we each have a direct relationship to the powers within creation. This knowledge has been systematically erased from our consciousness. We read in history about the burning of the books—for example how the library in Alexandria that contained so many of the esoteric traditions of hundreds of years was destroyed, burnt. We hear how the Chinese systematically burnt the libraries of the Tibetans. The Tibetans did extraordinary work having to do with magic, with the powers in creation, and most of their teachings have been lost. There are enormous amounts of esoteric teachings that have been lost. And in the West the Catholic Church got rid of this tradition of the power within creation and how to work with it. The Inquisition did its part in this, and it was very, very systematic.

But there are places where that knowledge is still alive, and you can actually experience it in the land. I have a friend who went to India, to a place near Dharamsala called Tashi Jong, to see a friend of ours who is a nun there, Tenzin Palmo.<sup>4</sup> Tenzin Palmo is a Western woman from England who went to India many years ago and met her teacher there, a Tibetan master. She did the proper training, spent twelve years in a cave, and she is now making a little nunnery in the hills in Tashi Jong, hills where people have been meditating for hundreds of years. And the friend who went to see her there was amazed to find that the hills were alive. She'd never realized what it is to experience the land when it is alive and singing—you can feel the magic in the air when you can feel the *devas* present. For us this is like a myth, an ancient story that happened somewhere else. But there, people have been doing practices that welcome the sacred in the land. They have kept this relationship alive, so the land is alive. The soul of the world is full of all this magic, this creative potential, and it is waiting for us to relate to it, to welcome it back. And we can do this, because we each of us have within us a direct connection to that magic within creation.

The moment of crisis is always a moment of potential. The gates of grace open in a way they were not open before. It is a strange thing: when human beings reach a real crisis, we are given a grace we are not otherwise given. And so it is with the world. There is this grace available now, the energy to awaken the soul of the world before we kill everything, before everything is forgotten, buried so deeply under the Wal-Marts of the world that there is nothing left. When that happens, then the world will die. It's as simple as that. Because it cannot live without its soul.

Or the World Soul could express its dark side, like the Kali side of the feminine, and become incredibly destructive. That is a very real possibility. Because as we have forgotten the world is a living being, we have also forgotten the powers of creation can get angry. That forgetting belongs to the masculine myth of domination and control that says we can control nature. We believe that nothing too bad can happen, since, as we're told, nature is not really alive. But this is not so. This is why in ancient times the people were very careful in their relationship to nature and the spirits of nature, why they learned how to talk to nature and to be present within nature, and how to listen to it, how to make a living relationship with it. Now you go out on the freeways and the shopping malls and the TV channels and it isn't there; there isn't even a *memory* of it, let alone any sense of how to bring it alive. So how do we recreate that relationship with the *anima mundi*, the soul of the world, this living presence in creation?

My sense is it has to be done through simple things. Because you always go back to what is simple. It is like what Mother Teresa said: "Small things with great love. It's not what you do but the love you put into the doing." And there *is* a way to perform the simple acts of life, like making a meal, or even just having a bath, with a certain awareness, conscious of being in relationship with what you are actually doing. Remember, it used to be prescribed, although we have forgotten it. Bathing used to be a ritual. Cooking used to be a ritual; the women did it together. They used to sing when they pounded the grain together—they sang the songs of creation as they pounded the grain. It was all part of this very intricate relationship between the energies in creation. But we can't go back; we don't pound

the grain anymore. And we've forgotten the chants and the prayers that went with the ritual bath. Nobody is here to teach them to us anymore. They have been lost. And so we have to discover it each for ourselves, in our own way. In those simple acts we do we have to welcome the *anima mundi*, welcome Her soul, welcome Her presence back to us. And then, slowly, we will come back into relationship with Her.

We have to welcome Her in those simple acts first of all because we still have to do them—we still have to eat, to wash, to breathe. Most of us don't have to go into the fields anymore, so we don't sing the songs of planting and harvesting and grinding corn anymore—in the Sixties hippies tried to go back to doing that but it didn't work very well. But there are the *basic* things of life; we can always return to what is basic and simple in life. And time is not the issue; everybody is always very busy these days I know, but you still brush your teeth. But are you really present in that experience?

So the first step: to give a space. And I think it is easiest to give Her a space, as I say, in those simple, very necessary things that have to do with just being a human being. As Sufis, as in many spiritual paths, we also do it in awareness of breath. If you are really aware of your breath, the breath is extraordinary: with every breath you take, the energy comes down from the soul into creation and then goes back to the soul. If you were really aware of what happens in every cycle of your breath, you would be a liberated human being. With every breath you would come from the plane of the soul, from the clear light beyond this world, and you would bring that energy down into the physical world, into the magic of creation where that light nourishes your own body and communicates with and receives

communication back from the cells in your body and the light flowing in your body, and then you would return with that information to the plane of the soul. It's extraordinary.

That's why we do the *dhikr*, or do a *mantra*, with the breath—to awaken that consciousness. It is amazing: with every breath you take, the light of your soul comes down into this plane. And it speaks to this plane and it gathers information from this plane; it has experiences in this plane and it relates to the light in your body. And there is this extraordinary meeting of the light of your own soul and the light within your body. And then it goes back. And if you are really aware, at the end of every in-breath, when the soul goes back to its own plane, there is a moment of bliss. Just for a moment.... It is beautiful. And then with the out-breath it comes back again into creation. So you can make this simple awareness of the breath a spiritual practice, as with each breath your soul, the light of your nature, comes into creation and interacts with this world.

So to make a relationship with God you return to simple things, to what you cannot live without. It's always an interesting spiritual practice to see what you can live without. In the West we tend to accumulate, accumulate, and accumulate. We accumulate things we think are important—and not just things; we also accumulate ideas, thoughts, information. But when you go back to what is basic, you find that life is present. And life is this incredible sacred light, sacred energy, sacred substance. And it is waiting to be infused with the light of human consciousness—this is alchemy. This is the catalytic relationship in alchemy. This is part of the secret that the alchemists understood, the secret of creation: the way that the light of human consciousness is the catalyst for creation. Now, nobody knows what effect this catalyst can have, because we

have forgotten about it. We understand what a chemical catalyst can do, yes, but we have forgotten the secret of the alchemists: that this secret belongs to the whole of creation, that creation is also waiting to be catalyzed. It is waiting for this spark to go into it so it can wake up. It's as simple as that. So then creation can wake up. This is the secret of alchemy: releasing the light hidden in nature. Not just the divine light of God in heaven but the *lumen naturae*—the light in nature. This is the presence of God in this world. This is the light of the divine in this world, waiting to come out, waiting to be experienced—because the worst thing would be if it happened and nobody noticed it.

We are here to experience the divine in creation. You cannot know God as pure essence; it would destroy you. No one knows God but God. But you can know God in creation—not in some abstract sense, but in a *lived* relationship to this spark in the world. And although we have forgotten it, this spark *is* the divine intelligence within creation. It is both the Creator and the divine intelligence within creation. That's why in the medieval time, in the Gothic time, they tried to understand the divine ordering principles within creation. They found them in the magic of sacred geometry, the principles of divine proportion. And behind those principles is this spark, the divine spark, the spark within matter. This is the divine energy of creation itself. So, it's very potent, very, very powerful. It can change the world. *We* cannot; we don't know how to do it, we don't know what to do.

I was brought up as a child in the Christian faith. We used to read the Lord's Prayer every day. There is a line in the Lord's Prayer that stays with me now, more and more and more: "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." This affirms that the divine power be present in creation. Yet this was denied when

the Catholic Church chose political and worldly power over spiritual power. And now we have forgotten the real meaning of spiritual power. We have even forgotten that spiritual power exists. That's why a couple of years ago I wrote my book, *Spiritual Power*,<sup>5</sup> because I realized we have forgotten it. The Catholic Church brutally repressed it; the Cathars understood it and they were killed—quite ruthlessly. And when the Reformation came, the reformers didn't want to acknowledge it at all either. They allowed that one can work with the individual soul, but they did not acknowledge the soul of creation. They were also frightened of magic. And the soul of creation is where the magic is, where the power is; that is where the potency is.

So, we have a problem now. The world is dying. It is not supposed to be like this. I am convinced that human beings are not meant to sit looking at a flickering screen ten hours a day pressing buttons. Human beings are so extraordinary! They are full of light; they have this divine intelligence. They are meant to live in a sacred way, not spend their life looking at a flickering television or computer screen. That is not what we were created for. And there are powers within creation waiting to be woken up. And we can't take the next step until that happens, just as on a spiritual path you can't take a step really unless certain powers in *you* are woken up. You can't do it.

In the Eastern Orthodox Church some of this knowledge remained—they kept some of the esoteric practices that wake up some of those energies. And of course it is in the *chakra* system in India. It's also in Sufism; the Naqshbandi tradition works with the *latâ'if*—the chambers of the heart—to awaken certain energies. There are esoteric reasons why at some point you need a teacher who can wake up those energies within you—you can't change yourself without them. You can't change

yourself on the level of the mind; you can't even change yourself with good intentions. You need access to these energies. I always felt that it was really tough that the Catholic Church decided to make the priests remain celibate—but then never gave them the practices to transmute their sexuality! It was a real shame. Because there are basic practices for transmuting your sexuality. And if you've decided to follow that path of celibacy you practice them! I have been a monk in a past life in Tibet, and there, when you were a young monk, you were given those practices. And my Sheikh, Bhai Sahib, pointed out that the Hindu *Brahmacharins*—men who practice celibacy and are given the practices at the right time—have a little bump on the top of their head where that transmuted energy has gone to. These practices belong to humanity; they belong to the magical side of being a human being—they carry the knowledge of how to work with these energies. You can't do anything without them. You cannot progress. And that's why you do a *dhikr*, a *mantra*, why you do breathing exercises. They are designed to awaken certain energies within you. On our particular path of Sufism we do a heart meditation that spins the heart *chakra*. That takes you somewhere else, to a different level of reality. It's a science—it *works*. It's how a human being is actually meant to work.

And it is the same for this body, this being, called the Earth, this divine presence that we live in. It is meant to transform. At this moment in time it is meant to transform. I'm not the only person who says that. There's a Mayan prophecy that says that a fundamental change is going to happen in the year 2012<sup>6</sup>—we're going to wake up in a different world. It's the end of time; it's the beginning of time.

And maybe something is going to happen. There are signs that the world is waiting to transform. Just as there are signs in individuals when they are waiting to transform—they begin to get certain dreams; certain shifts begin to take place—just as there are signs in a caterpillar when it is waiting to enter its cocoon, to become a butterfly. And those signs are visible in the world now. And they're not just in the crises. I personally think that global communication and the Internet<sup>7</sup> are among the signs of the world waiting to transform, waiting to shift into a different level of consciousness.

But real transformation is a very precarious process. When certain energies are woken up in an individual, one can go crazy. When I was twenty-three and my Sheikh woke me up on the plane of the soul, it took me nine months to come back again. It was a very delicate time. That's why when you are really going to transform inside yourself often the energies get drawn inward. Jung used the alchemical term "brooding" for this process. The energy takes you in; you don't have the same energy you had to go out and do things, which is difficult in this very extrovert culture called America. You have to be much more attentive to signs, to how things are.

And that's exactly how it is now in the world. There are signs. And many of us have seen those signs. I wrote about it years ago when I said the magical unicorns that used to be deep in the forest can now be seen on street corners. I experienced it for myself on a very mundane level when a year ago I was driving on the freeway through Berkeley, in the Bay Area, and suddenly I saw a billboard on which was written my favorite Zen *koan* of all time: "The wild geese do not intend to cast their reflection, the water has no mind to receive their image." And

there it was on a billboard by the freeway. I mean, what could be more of a sign than that!

But most people are far too busy—this is just the accepted thing today, everybody is far too busy. I don't know what they are busy doing, but they are busy. Yes, life has speeded up, but there is also this American addiction, maybe a child of its Puritan heritage, that you've got to be busy. It's as if Americans are persecuted by time. We have this bizarre, sort of infantile relationship to time; it's very strange.

But there is real opportunity now for those who are actually awake or prepared to be awake, because there are certain things that are going to happen, and if you are awake when they're happening you can take part in them. If you are attentive to the World Soul, She is going to let you work with Her in ways you've never been able to work with Her. She is going to tell you how to help Her to wake up. It's like being invited to participate in a friend's birth. It's really, really amazing.

A few years ago I thought, wouldn't it be great if everyone woke up? Then I realized that was impossible. But *I* want to be here. I actually want to be here *now*—when the world is wanting to wake up, when the soul of the world is wanting us to work with it. And She is going to tell us what to do because She's been around a lot longer than we have. She'll have to tell us, because all of the books that could help us have been burnt. Yes, there were some books in Tibet—I have a memory of reading them a long time ago. And there were very ancient books in other libraries, but they're gone. You can't find it now in books because it isn't written; it's been got rid of. And the oral traditions of the Native American elders who understood it—they're mostly gone too. But you *can* be there when it happens. I don't know exactly when it's going to happen—there are

signs, but we don't know how to read the signs. That's part of the catch-22. Nobody can tell us how to read the signs anymore.

It is such an adventure, to be present with this energy, this power within creation, with the soul of the world. Which is *our* soul—we are part of it. It's not our mother, because if it's our mother we remain children and play the part of children and do not take our full responsibility, or too often become delinquent adolescents. Instead we need to make a mature relationship, what is called co-creation: working directly with the energy of creation, being present. The first thing you have to do is be present. And it's amazing how few people show up even in their own lives. They live other people's lives or how they have been told to live, and they forget they have a life of their own. We have to be present in our own life, the life of our soul and the life of the World Soul.

So you have to show up in your life and you have to show up in the life of the world. And the life of the world is not a shopping mall, or a problem to be solved by economists or scientists, because it's not *made* like that. It is not a computer-generated model. Just as *you're* not a computer-generated model. You're not a statistic. You are a mixture of heaven and earth, an incarnation of a divine spark. And the relationship with the world is a relationship of microcosm to macrocosm, a spark that goes from your consciousness, from your heart, to the heart of the world. It is so simple, so primary, just as everything in spiritual life is primary. It's like that moment in the human incarnation when you become aware of this spark within you, this awakening of your soul. It's an act of grace, a gift from the Higher Self. It's very beautiful how it's done. At a particular moment in your incarnation, the Higher Self is allowed to wake you to

your own soul, your divine nature. And after you're given this gift, this infusion of divine energy—you can call it grace—you are no longer the same person. Something in you is woken up. And suddenly your whole life changes. There is this light, there is this hope, there is this sunshine in the eyes—it's incredibly beautiful, the most precious moment. I know when it happened to me when I was 16, suddenly the whole world was there—as it had always been, but I had never seen it—full of light, full of beauty.

And all you have to do is to be present and to say “yes.” To be present in your life and in the life of the world, the life of the world as it belongs to the soul of the world. We have forgotten about Her for so long. But She is alive. She is here now. And She is waiting to wake up.