**THE GODDESS ARCHETYPE AND THE ALCHEMY OF PEACE**

We are today on the cusp of a major civilizational and planetary transformation. The nature of this transformation is embodied in the rise of the goddess archetype and the global impact of the Women’s Liberation Movement.

Our contemporary civilizational break-down is also a break-*through* into what C. G. Jung called “The New Age,” also called “The Age of Aquarius.” This breakdown-breakthrough event is captured in “The New Age Movement,” also named “The Human Potential Movement.” This transitional history is a paradigm shift, exhibited in the phrase: “Global Mind Change.” The rise of the goddess archetype in The Renaissance – embodied, for example, in Botticelli’s “The Birth of Venus” – was a prelude to the task we now face.

The Renaissance offered the West a chance to regain its balance. But that opportunity was squandered when the West subsequently worshipped a new god called science, and excessively embraced empiricism, capitalism and imperialism.

We swung from one extreme to another: from Church dogmatism to militarism, materialism and greed. The New Age movement, with appreciation for feminine values, offers the West and the world a new opportunity to achieve sanity and common-sense. Hence I call The New Age, Global Mind Change, Paradigm Shift: *The Renaissance of The Renaissance*.

Let’s backtrack to ancient history to trace the worship, banishment, and re-emergence of the goddess archetype. Ancient history is fraught with ambiguity. What I say here is merely suggestive. I borrow mostly from archeologist Maria Gimbutas, psychologist Julian Jaynes, and anthropologist Raphael Patai.

From about 2500 to 800 BC, the matriarchal civilizations of India and Greece were subject to a series of invasions by the patriarchal Aryans streaming out of the Russian high plains of Central Asia. The word Aryan means “noble”. The Aryan conquerors are also known as Indo-Europeans. The pre-Arayan civilization of India is called Dravidian. What I say about the Dravidians also approximates the pre-Arayan culture of ancient Greece.

Dravidian culture was matriarchal, animistic, and polytheistic. That is to say: 1) divinity was conceived as primarily female, and, therefore, the clan or tribal leader was a woman, with the final say in all important matters; 2) divine forces were conceived as immanent in nature; 3) divine forces were conceived as multiple, manifesting in various forms. In short, Dravidian culture was essentially matriarchal and nature-worshipping. And, although polytheistic, it had a sense of the ultimate mystery – the ultimate divine force permeating the universe – as a goddess, corresponding to the Mother Archetype.

The Aryan transformation of Dravidian culture brought three major changes: patriarchy, monotheism, and transcendence. That is to say: 1) divinity was conceived as primarily male, and, therefore, clans and tribes came to be dominated by male leaders, with a consequent sense of masculine superiority and the subjugation of women at all levels of society; 2) while retaining a polytheistic flavor, a monotheistic divinity gradually assumed rulership of the universe; and 3) God was conceived as transcendent, beyond nature rather immanent in it: a creator God giving birth to the universe and ultimately standing outside of it.

This tripartite transformation was simultaneously paralleled in the founding and development of Judaism, its transcendent, monotheistic God and patriarchal hierarchy having a lasting and tragic influence on Christianity and Islam, which also trace their origin to Abraham. Indeed, the transformation of divinity, with its consequent impact on social structure and morality, into a God that is singular, male and transcendent, is more pronounced in the Judeo-Christian-Islamic tradition than in the cultures of Greece and India, where animistic and polytheistic sensibilities remained important threads in the cultural tapestry.

Such is the historical background to the main points I wish to make. These points are implicit in the title of this talk: “The Goddess Archetype and the Alchemy of Peace.”

Using the Tao sign as a guide, we can characterize Dravidian culture as primarily Yin; the last two millennia of patriarchal culture as excessively Yang; and the Age of Aquarius into which we are moving as a Yin-Yang Balance. The women’s liberation and environmental movements are absolutely integral to this transformative, civilizational transition.

Although, for example, Athena and Artemis are Greek goddesses committed to virginity, the Goddess Archetype in general is rightly associated with Motherhood. Today – recalling the Greek notion of Gaia – we still refer to: Mother Earth. Accordingly, the world-wide ecology movement is also called The Gaia Movement.

Toward the end of the 19th century, Chief Seattle said: “What we do to the earth, we do to ourselves.” A little more than half a century later, Buckminster Fuller said: “There are no passengers on spaceship earth; we are all members of the crew.”

Let us now briefly sketch the goddess archetype in history. She represents what I call “The Alchemy of Peace.” Gaia is the ancient Greek name for Mother Earth as a living organism, in contrast to the Cartesian, Newtonian, scientific worldview, which sees matter as mere lifeless stuff. Einstein’s translation of matter into energy, and the post-quantum translation of energy into information, throws the door open to a meeting of science and spirituality, wherein matter is perceived as infused with life and intelligence.

A variation on Gaia is the Canaanite-Hebrew goddess Asherah, and the Phoenician goddess Astarte. Astarte was a goddess of fertility, love and war.

Over the course of time, Astarte was merged with the Egyptian goddess Isis (wife of Osiris and mother of Horus), and with the Egyptian cow-goddess Hathor. Astarte worship was carried by the Phoenicians throughout the Mediterranean and Europe, and as far as Cornwall in England. Astarte was merged with, and is considered another name for, the Babylonian goddess Ishtar and the Canaanite-Hebrew goddess Asherah.

Astarte, Ishtar, Isis and Asherah overlap linguistically. This linguistic overlap provides evidence for their archetypal unity.

Asherah was revered as the consort and beloved of Yahweh, indicating a Judaic notion of God as similar to the Tao, uniting yin and yang in a single, unitary, cosmic, divine, Mother-Father force of creation

Before being essentially banished from Hebrew orthodoxy in the sixth and fifth centuries BC, Asherah was revered as a sea-goddess. Asherah was also revered as a forest goddess. Asherah was thus often depicted has having a wooden pole – a snake entwined staff which later became known as the Caduceus, the universal medical symbol. The Caduceus is a variation on the Egyptian Ankh, and reappears mythically in Greece as the Wand of Hermes. The Hermetic Staff traces back to Asherah as well as to the Egyptian god Thoth, and is carried forward mythically into the hand of the Roman god Mercury. As primal carrier of the Hermetic Staff, Asherah is also a healer, hence goddess of healing. Her Buddhist counterpart is the Buddhist Bodhisattva Kwan Yin.

Asherah worship, like that of Astarte, included the *hieros gamos*, the sacred marriage of male and female in copulation. Asherah was also equated with the Shekinah, the immediate and female presence of divinity on earth, especially in temples, Asherah poles, and sacred artifacts like the Arc of the Covenant. The destruction of Asherah’s shrines, and the slaughter of her priests and priestesses by gynophobic rabbis and kings, urged on by prophets like Elijah and Jeremiah, could not, however, banish her presence in Hebraic ritual and iconography. The Sabbath is still defined as the holy bride; and the Star of David remains a symbol of the *hieros gamos*. The Jewish star – whose very name evokes Ishtar and Astarte – is made of two interlacing triangles, indicating erotic union.

Now, in Tarot card symbolism, three trumps signify the major stages of the feminine: The High Priestess, The Empress, and The Star.

The High Priestess (trump 2) is virginal, and may be associated with Athena, Artemis, and the Greek moon goddess Celene. Athena is goddess of war, justice, and weaving. Artemis is a huntress; she likes to hunt by the light of the moon.

Athena also carries a spear, which is an archetypal reappearance of the Asherah pole.

Athena’s spear may also be associated with the thyrsus: the acorn-tipped rod connected to the Greek Eleusinian mysteries, devoted to the mother goddess Demeter, the secrets of vegetation, and sacred rites of initiation.

Athena, of course, also wears a chest mantle containing the snake-haired head of Medusa. Frightening and powerful, Medusa’s head embodies the famous maxim: “Hell hath no fury like a woman’s scorn.” This calls to mind Hesiod’s mythic tale of Pandora. Pandora’s box lets loose upon the world the intensity and omnipresence of human suffering. Hesiod’s blaming woman for the ills of man reflects the biblical story of the Garden of Eden, where Eve is blamed for Adam’s sin.

Tarot trump #3 is called The Empress. She indicates marriage and motherhood, and is the archetypal image of The Queen.

The Empress in Tarot is the Mother Archetype par excellence, associated with Gaia, Asherah, Astarte, Isis, Demeter, Sophia, and the Olympian hearth goddess Hestia.

Tarot trump #17 is The Star, signifying the post-motherhood maturity of womanhood. She is ageless wisdom personified. As a goddess archetype, The Star is the female counterpart to the Jungian archetype of The Wise Old Man.

“Star” of course is root of the words Ishtar and Astarte, and means glowing and luminous. In mysticism, tantric yoga and Oriental medicine, we encounter the “astral body,” also known as the “subtle body.” In Toltec philosophy, humans are called “luminous eggs.” In the words of a modern physicist: “We are all made of star stuff.”

Another goddess archetype is that of the Sorceress, who also goes by the name: Alchemistress. Sorcery is a form of alchemy, also called magic. In Tarot, the Sorceress-Alchemistress is associated with both High Priestess (the female counterpart to The Magus) and The Star (female counterpart to The Hierophant). The Sorceress-Alchemistress goddess archetype is, once again, symbolized by Astarte and Asherah, and may rightly be connected to Athena, Demeter, Persephone, and Celene.

In female demigod form, the Sorceress archetype appears more vividly in Greek literature – epic and tragedy – as, for example, Calypso, Circe, Medusa and Medea. A variation on the Sorceress archetype is the prophetic priestess, the many variants of which are subsumed under the umbrella name Sibyl. Two of the most famous sibyls in archaic Greek culture are Cassandra and the Pythian priestess at the Oracle of Delphi. Cassandra’s fate was to have her prescient predictions disbelieved.

The Sorceress archetype is origin of the pagan movement called Wicca, which has both European and Native American roots. Wicca literally means “to bend.”

The idea here is that a Wicca practitioner, attuned to the magic and mysteries of nature, can bend the laws of science, penetrate the impenetrable, do the seemingly impossible, and thereby cause what are normally called “magical effects.” In its female form, sorcery is called witchcraft. Wicca is the root of the word witch; and both have been tragically misunderstood and persecuted by insecure, superstitious, fearful, religiously dogmatic males throughout history.

The contemporary rise of the goddess archetype holds the promise of healing this tragic history, allowing for a new appreciation of the instinctive intelligence and power of the feminine.

Allow me to pause for a moment to make three important points. First: Women are gifted with the power to give birth. They are innately – that is to say, intimately and biologically – connected to the mystery of life itself; the cosmic mystery; the creative and holistic intelligence of the universe. Immature men are fearful and jealous of this cosmic power as embodied in women. Women do what men cannot.

Men compensate for their jealousy and sense of inferiority by claiming that women are inferior, and by formalizing patriarchal oppression of women in social institutions, most vehemently and enduringly in religious institutions. Needless to say, the time is long overdue for men to grow up – emotionally, mentally and spiritually – and to treat women not only as equals, but as keepers of the deepest mysteries of life.

Second: In the Toltec tradition – as exemplified in the writings of Carlos Castaneda and Lynn Andrews, and reflected in the writings of Shirley MacClaine – women are recognized as the ultimate warriors on the path of knowledge. Women are, ultimately, more powerful than men; they are the supreme practitioners of magic and multi-world travel. I here speak of woman at her best; at her most courageous and most impeccable; at the fullest flowering of her potential.

Third: The quantum revolution in physics is causing a paradigm shift in scientific thinking which opens the door to recognizing that Wicca – the power to bend the normal frameworks of space, time, matter and causality – was right all along. After all, Moses, Jesus, Buddha, Pythagoras, Empedocles, Zoroaster, Quetzalcoatl – they were all “magicians,” which is merely to say that they were male practitioners of Wicca: supremely competent shamans, able to negotiate what physicists today call “the quantum field,” shattering the scientific presuppositions of Aristotle and Newton.

Let’s now take a look at Kwan Yin. In Buddhist metaphysics, Amitabha Buddha – a celestial Buddha of wisdom and light (note the word enlightenment) – was traveling the space-time cosmic matrix, when he suddenly shot forth from his right eye a stream of light.

From this beam of light emerged Avalokiteshvara, the supreme Bodhisattva of Compassion: multi-headed, with long, drooping ears, and with a thousand arms and hands.

In the palm of each hand is an eye, symbolically parallel to the crucifixional marks in the palms of Jesus, Jesus being of course an archetype of unconditional love and compassion. Standing on the beam of light, Avalokitshvara surveyed the cosmos. Glancing down, he perceived planet earth. He saw the agony of humanity, and heard the ceaseless wails of human suffering.

This unrelenting chorus of pain broke Avalokiteshvara’s heart. Again, this is symbolically parallel to the crucifixion of the Christ figure, and, more specifically, the spear-penetration of the heart of Jesus on the cross. Avalokitshvara and Jesus symbolize the truth of the maxim: A broken heart is an open heart. This is a cognitive-emotive version of the idea that death leads to resurrection. That is to say, we ourselves, with luck and courage, are existentially reborn from the death-like agony of our most traumatic experiences, becoming stronger, wiser, more humble, generous and tolerant.

Avalokiteshvara’s empathic broken-heartedness caused his eyes to fill with tears of compassion. One such tear, coursing down his cheek, fell into space and drifted toward earth, landing in Tibet.

The Christian parallel here is, of course, the descent of The Holy Spirit, not only toward humanity, but specifically into the womb of Mary.

Landing in Tibet, Avalokiteshvara’s tear-drop blossomed into the Tibetan goddess Tara, female goddess of compassion, worshipped in Tibet in two forms: Green Tara and White Tara. As Buddhism moved east into China, Tara became known in Chinese as Kwan Yin. As Buddhism migrated from China to Japan, Kwan Yin became known in Japanese as Kannon (also called Kanzeon and Kanjizai). Thus, in Buddhism, the male, celestial Bodhisattva of Compassion, Avalokiteshvara, embodies on earth as Tara, Kwan Yin, and Kannon.

Avalokitshvara, Tara, Kwan Yin, Kannon – these are four names for the same, indicating the unity of Yin and Yang, the synthesis of male and female.

In Jungian psychology, each of us is to be understood as a person first, and only secondarily as male or female. For Jung, becoming a whole and complete person, fully self-realized, means that the male has to recognize, respect and integrate his female side (called anima), and a woman has to recognize, respect and integrate her masculine side (called animus). This synthesis – this psychological alchemy – is essential to the self-actualizing process Jung calls “individuation.” This process is an individualistic mirror, a microcosmic version, of the macrocosmic, civilizational challenge which now confronts us. Social peace, and individual peacefulness, go together, inextricably.

Let’s now take a look at the word philosophy. Its Greek roots are Philos-Sophia. Philos means love (and is the root of our words family and familial). Sophos – or Sophia – means wisdom. Philosophy is usually translated as “the love of wisdom.” I prefer to drop the “of.”

The real meaning of philosophy is Love-Wisdom. Love and wisdom are two names for the same. To be loving is to be wise; to be wise is to be loving. In short: Philosophy is the journey from the love of wisdom to the wisdom of love.

Before his words were chopped and edited by the Church, Jesus made frequent reference to the goddess Sophia: the Wisdom that embodies and expresses the primal, erotic, creative force of Love.

In the three hundred years immediately after the death of Jesus, the Judeo-Christian communes that sprinkled the eastern parts of the Mediterranean landscape worshipped the goddess Sophia, and lived in a communitarian fashion in which men and women were equal, and all belongings were shared.

In Jung’s sense of the term, these communities were Gnostic (the Greek term “gnosis” being the root of our term “knowledge”).

Church bishops and philosophers have defined Gnosticism as radically dualistic, ascetic, and other-worldly. But this a distortion equal to their distortion of the spirit and message of Buddhism.

The original, authentic, Judeo-Christian, Gnostic communes treasured the gift of life, revered nature, transcended egotism in communitarian egalitarianism and sexual equality, and considered the goddess Sophia as simply another and necessary name for Christ as Logos.

Now, the two wings of Buddhism are wisdom and compassion: prajna and karuna. Prajna equals Sophos, wisdom; and karuna equals Philos, love. Karuna-Prajna is Love-Wisdom; and is thus a Buddhist version of the root meaning of the Greek term “philosophy.” In one sense, love and wisdom are the yin and yang of the Tao. They go together. At the heart of yin there is a yang dot. At the heart of yang is a yin dot.

Pythagoras, Jesus, Buddha, Lao Tzu – they all taught the same message: humility, frugality, community, reverence, respect, compassion; what Kant called “human dignity,” and the Jewish philosopher Martin Buber called “I and Thou.”

No discussion of the goddess archetype would be complete without reference to Sophia; and no discussion of Sophia – Wisdom – would be complete without reference to her essential message, which is Love.

We are all brothers and sisters in the human family, and we are all children of Mother Earth. The Gaia movement reminds us of our ecological and spiritual brother-sisterhood. Gaia is Sophia incarnate. And one thing is for sure: humanity will never be allowed to reach the stars until we learn to love each other ***and*** our mother.

As I bring this discourse to a close, kindly allow me to mention two of my favorite Greek goddesses: Eos and Iris. Eos is the goddess of dawn. Iris is the goddess of rainbows.

I see Eos – the bringer of dawn and sister of Helios, the sun god – as the goddess of hope. As she sprinkles dew across the land, she causes the first rays of dawn to sparkle.

You may often see rainbows shining in the dew-drops of dawn. Because of these dew-embodied rainbows, I see Eos and Iris as soul-sisters.

Dawn is a time of hope; the promise of a new day; a successful journey through the dark hours of the night. That Eos is the goddess of hope is reflected in Hemingway’s borrowing from the Bible the title for his first novel: *The Sun Also Rises*. (I have a paranormal story about that book; and if we have time for discussion afterwards, and if you remind me, I will be happy to share it.)

Iris is a messenger goddess, the female counterpart to Hermes. In her most scintillating form, Iris rides rainbows in order to bridge earth and heaven, carrying messages from the gods to humanity.

In her most subtle form, Iris signifies the root meaning of the word “inspiration;” i.e., “spirit within,” whispering words of intuitive wisdom and artistic creativity.

We conclude, now, with Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of erotic passion, who, of course, becomes Venus in Roman mythology. Aphrodite is a variation of Ishtar, Astarte and Asherah. Ishtar, Astarte and Asherah: they signify the archetypal origin of the Arthurian notion of The Lady in the Lake. Hence Botticelli’s vision of “The Birth of Venus,” ascending from watery foam. Also: Ishtar-Astarte is queen of the night. The souls of the deceased ascend into the heavenly sphere and shine as stars. Ishtar-Astarte is the lunar disc, surrounded by her deceased but ever living children: the stars twinkling round about the moon.

Now, to paraphrase the opening of Hesiod’s *Theogony*: ‘In the beginning was the void; and from the void emerged earth, sky and love.’ Mother Earth and Father Sky make love to generate the rest of creation and all gods and goddesses to come. Earth and sky are separated; and Aphrodite brings them together.

Aphrodite, of course, is the mistress of both joy and madness. There is nothing quite like the ecstasy of being in love; and being in love, as most of us know, is a set-up for going crazy.

I have a twofold purpose in concluding with Aphrodite.

First: I wish to bow to her, after the fashion of Hesiod, as **the** cosmic impetus, driving creation forward on its evolutionary journey, and as the secret force behind all our desires, joys and pains.

Second: I wish to share with you a poem I wrote, called “Aphrodite’s Sting.”

It goes like this:

**APHRODITE’S STING**

Aphrodite’s sting

is the sweetest pain.

All the birds sing

and there’s no such thing

as love in vain,

as you fall

into your lover’s arms.

All their charms

on you they showered,

and now

you can hardly wait

to be devoured.

You freely followed

the route

to forbidden fruit.

So are you,

or are you not,

just another slut,

marching

toward the abyss

with eyes wide shut?

Thank you for allowing me to share with you that poetic, existential confession, to which I’m sure most of you can relate.

Let me now share my re-write of The Pledge of Allegiance. I call it “Planet Pledge,” but I think I should really call it: “Ode to Gaia.”

Imagine how different America would be, and how different America’s impact on the world would be, if we adopted this prose-poem as our national pledge.

It goes like this:

**PLANET PLEDGE: ODE TO GAIA**

I pledge allegiance

to the planet,

and to all the people

and creatures on her.

One ecosystem

universally sacred,

with nourishment and beauty

for all.

To complement this ode, let’s hear the opening verse of T. S. Eliot’s 1922 “The Waste Land”:

April is the cruelest month, breeding

Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing

Memory and desire, stirring

Dull roots with spring rain.

Winter kept us warm, covering

Earth in forgetful snow, feeding

A little life with dried tubers.

Note Eliot’s verbs: *breeding, mixing, stirring, feeding*.

Smell his *lilacs*.

Observe his call for *desire, memory* and *roots*.

Feel the seasons: *spring, winter, warm, snow*.

Eliot ends: *feeding a little life with dried tubers*.

Who is “the little life”?

Children, of course, and the child in us all, upon which the future depends.

The holistic, healing, reverential quality of Eliot’s poem is, I suggest, implicitly present in the almost equally famous poem by William Carlos Williams:

So much depends upon

a red wheelbarrow

glazed with rainwater

beside the white chickens.

The last item I wish to share is the Navajo prayer to Wahakantanka, The Great Spirit. This is my final bow to Aphrodite; and this too could rightly be called “Ode to Gaia.”

There is a Native American Renaissance integral to America’s New Age Movement; and the Navajo prayer to Wahakantanka could well be adopted as the mantra for the goddess-inspired transition to The Age of Aquarius. It goes like this:

**NAVAJO BEAUTY PRAYER:**

**ODE TO GAIA, PART TWO**

Beauty before me.

Beauty behind me.

Beauty above.

Beauty below.

Beauty … all around.

I walk … in beauty.

If, as Plato and William Blake believed, the infinite *is* in the finite, the universal in the particular, the eternal in the momentary, and if, as Blake said, “the paranormal *is* normal,” then ***enlightened*** *self-interest* suggests drinking from the cup of bliss every day.

Each day a rhythmic transporting into the transpersonal.

Cultivating the art of being in the world but not of it.

Making one’s life a work of art.

A splash of color.

Birds chirping in the trees.

Dappled sunlight through the leaves.

Beauty … is ever-present.

Thank you.

Om Shanti.

**Stefan Schindler**