

Looking Glass World View

Yet, despite its estrangement from the natural world, the history of the Dream Animal is a history of questing and searching for meaning within the world, as a part of that world. Despite its best efforts, the Dream Animal has never strayed far from the natural world. The various forces of nature, be they earthquake, flood, heat, cold, are a constant reminder of its ever-present influence. Food, clothing and shelter have always been ultimately derived from nature, though perhaps acknowledged less so today. Nature touches everyone directly, found at each juncture in the life of an individual Dream Animal – birth, nurturance, growth and death.

While the act of symbolizing at once separates, it also facilitates a return to and a participation with the world. Through an ability to symbolize, the Dream Animal is given an opportunity to observe, learn about and grow in the ways of the world. Lessons, literal, metaphoric and anagogic in meaning, are offered. And it has been in the solitudes of the natural world that the Dream Animal has always found the great spiritual and aesthetic meanings to life. The quest has been to the mountain and to the *axis mundi*, and to the beginnings of time and of creation. The quest continues, and the Dream Animal yearns to return to the place of origins.

In the Looking Glass world view, like the Glass Pane world view, six elemental and interrelated values are given life and can be identified in the Dream Animal's cultural story of "questing to be a part of the world." These are subjectification, equalization, qualitation, transcendation, replication and participation. Unlike the Glass Pane values, these six values are readily apparent throughout all of the history of the Dream Animal, from the earliest times to the most recent. Each of the six values can be seen embedded in the various story texts of this workbook.

As with the Glass Pane world view, these six Looking Glass values pervade all aspects of the cultural story: the social, ideological, psychological and ecological domains, the ethos and persona. As with the Glass Pane, the actual expression of the Looking Glass values varies from individual to individual and society to society. And finally, these values also refer to the desirable, an ideal to be sought, and not necessarily what is. Judgements and actions are influenced by these values. People strive to actualize them in their lives. But, any given individual or group is capable of falling short of their ideals and values.

The particular configuration of values I have isolated represents a binary typology. The six values identified with the "setting apart" can be paired, representing opposite meanings, with the six values identified with the "questing to be a part." Each of the paired values is thus the antithesis of the other: objectification/subjectification, gradation/equalization, quantitation/qualitation, secularization/transcendation, progression/replication, and reduction/participation.

This antithetical relation does not preclude the possibility that expressions of both Looking Glass and Glass Pane values can be found in the same community or even in a given individual. In fact, strands of both world views are interwoven throughout our contemporary Euro-American society. Both are essential to and help bring forth the world you and I depend upon. As was suggested previously, despite the tendency for consistency, a particular configuration of values can integrate, however seemingly awkward, disparate and often mutually contradictory values. To embrace one world view does not automatically preclude the incorporation of the other. While the Looking Glass and Glass Pane values presuppose contrast,

as threads woven throughout an entire societal system or within an individual personality, they do not necessarily presuppose exclusivity.

Subjectification refers to the process of presupposing and establishing the view that all things are connected into a singular, unified whole. Animal, plant, humanity, physical, spirit, while overtly differentiated, are ultimately linked as an indivisible whole. All "peoples," animal, bird, human and spirit are part of an all-inclusive "kinship," the world of the *Alcheringa*, the "driftwood lodging" and the "wagon wheel," the world of "Mind" and "cybernetic pathways." There is little room for compartmentalization or for autonomous segments, separate from the whole. "Individualism" can not be rooted in subjectification. The philosophy of Descartes and the assertions of Cartesian Dualism separating mind and body, each as non-reducible to the "other," is incompatible with subjectification. And there can be no areas set aside, set apart from the world, as "wilderness areas." All phenomena are intrinsically interconnected – "Mind" and body as one.¹

Equalization refers to the view that acknowledges differentiation manifested throughout the whole, and that the differentiations are understood as all fundamentally equal to each other. A plant can be overtly distinguished by its physical form and attributes, its "cell membrane or skin," from an animal and from a human, but as each is intrinsically interconnected with the whole, each has an ultimate equality with the others. This is perhaps best expressed in the imagery of the "wagon wheel." Kinship, rather than class distinction, predominates – all "spokes" are of equal value. No one kinsman should be subordinate to another – no one "spoke" can dominate if the wheel is to continue turning. There is no hierarchical relationship among the entities. All phenomena, plant, animal, rock and human are inherently equal with the others. As among the Inuit, a simple "stone" can hold the secrets of life and release the power necessary to assure success in the seal hunt. One listens to even the smallest of creatures, the ant. A forest of trees is the home of animal and bird "peoples," of "brothers" and "sisters." There can be no "wildness" in nature.

And within this network of kinship, all "peoples" share in a reciprocity with one another. If one is to receive a vision from the Eagle or the meat from a Seal or an Elk, a gift of value must be given. One offers *diakaashe*, sincerity, or closely follows a taboo and shows respect. The members of the Bandicoot and of the Kangaroo clans each dances for the spiritual well-being of its ancestral totem as well as for the physical well-being of the members of the other clan. And at its most elementary level, exchanges of information transpire between all the component parts of the "planetary ecology." Balance among all the "peoples," and the "ideas" must be maintained. Is not the offering of "thanks" an acknowledgment of the completed exchange of information flowing through the cybernetic circuits? Has the Elk offered itself up to the hunter, or was it taken? "Sedna is to be feared."

¹Phenomena are defined as inclusive of all entities knowable through the senses, thought, intuition and mystical revelation, and are not limited to sensual experience.

Qualitation refers to an understanding that the world participated in is a world oozing with meaning, with "informational ecology," with qualities of significance. The world offers archetypes to guide and to live by.² "Ideas" and "knowledge" are "inherent in all things." Seeing an eagle while one is on a long journey is not just a sighting of a large diurnal bird of prey, but the Eagle can signify that the journey's destination will be reached safely. The cross and the circle, originating out of a primordial past, have infused meaning into Christian and American Indian being. "Even the smallest ant may wish to communicate." The world is understood as being not only alive with meanings, but also emanates with a "life-force." This is the power of life and of healing, that which animates all things: plant, animal, human, and even rock or feather. Meaning and life abound throughout all phenomena. The world is neither meaningless, in a void, nor is it inanimate and dead.

It is a world that offers messages and lessons, patterns and models, life and health – if "one is attentive." Of course, one can always choose not to listen to its voice. It is a world of choice, and not of fatalism. To know the world is thus to be "attentive" to its voice, to listen with the "heart" and to "feel beauty" in the "stones, leaves, grass, brooks, and the birds and animals." To know the world is to be receptive to all the pathways of the cybernetic ecosystem. "All true wisdom is to be found far from the dwellings of men, in the great solitudes."

Transcendation envisions a world beyond the overt, material forms, a world inclusive and expansive of transcendent levels. The transcendent pervades and is within all phenomena. This is the realm of "Mind," the interconnecting pathways and messages of the cybernetic ecosystem. This is the realm of the divinity, the dwelling place of the souls, the souls of all "peoples" – human, animal, plant, rock. "The bear has a soul like ours." This is the realm of the intuition, the abode of inspiration. This is the realm of the meaningful and the life-force. From here, all ideas and thoughts are born. From here, a vision to live one's life emanates. From here, an inspiration for a poem or a painting is born. From here, the power to cure emerges. It was here that Burnt Face traveled and from here that he was transformed. To dance in the *Alcheringa* is to dance in the transcendent. The world is not to be reduced to its physical and literal expressions alone. A "flower" is "spiritual essence" "precipitated," its "inner forms" represented by the artist on the churinga board or in the poem.

This is not to suggest that the physical realm is not also acknowledged. The Dream Animal, living close to the natural world, has always been rather pragmatic. The thorn piercing the finger's tip is most assuredly felt. And the thorn is to be avoided. But the thorn, the finger and the pain, the lesson of avoidance are after all given their very existence out of the structures and animations emanating from the transcendent. In the Looking Glass world, the beauty and meaning of the flower cannot be reduced to its physical properties. Thus, as the physical is the overt manifestation of the inner transcendent meanings, the spiritual and aesthetic are always of primary concern. The physical is epiphenomenal of the transcendent.

²Archetype is defined as a primordial model of exemplary meaning occurring *in illo tempore*. Implied is the extension and replication of that model in the actions of humans. This usage of the term follows Mircea Eliade 1954 and not Carl Jung.

In "questing to be a part of the world," spiritual self-actualization necessarily precedes material actualization. When the soul is nourished first, so then will the body be given an opportunity to fully grow and prosper. This particular view may seem reversed from what we typically take for granted. But we must be cautious in our assumptions. While those assumptions may be appropriate within certain societal contexts, they may not be appropriate in assisting us in understanding all of the human condition. For instance, we must be cognizant of a dominant praxis premise within Euro-American society that assumes that ideas and a spiritual transcendent are epiphenomenal of the material conditions, e.g., the economic "modes of production" are primary and determinant of societal and religious values. In the example of Maslow's "hierarchy of needs," it is asserted that positive personal adjustment comes only after basic physiological needs such as food and shelter are first achieved. Such an assertion may be not only inappropriate but, in fact, may distort attempts at appreciating the Dream Animal and ourselves in our entirety.

Replication refers to the view that events and periods of time are continually reoccurring within a pattern of cyclical time. Implicit are the notions of cyclical time and of perennial archetype. Time is conceptualized as continually reoccurring cycles rather than as unique events occurring in a lineal progression, with a past, present and future. "What was" and "what will be" is "what is." It is the *Alcheringa*. And the ancestors continue to "live" among the living. In contrast, "history means disrespect for the ancestors." These reoccurring events and periods of time, in turn, are replications of the perennial archetypes originating out of the transcendent. The beauty of the flower now held in hand is a reflection of the perennial archetypal "flower." One dances the Dreamtime. And what is to be known is ultimately what is to be remembered that had been forgotten--anamnesis. To know is to return to the archetype, to the Dreamtime. For there is "nothing new under the Sun."

Participation refers to the process in which humanity partakes of an active role in helping bring forth the world. Are we not what we imagine? Is not imagination the "act of knowing and of feeling the life within all the world, and of participating in that life?" Is not the "vital act" the "act of participation?" And is not the universe "brought into being by the participation of those who participate?" Given the unity of all creation, and the meaning and animation that emanates through and from it, humanity, as a part of that creation, must necessarily emanate with that same meaning and animation. In turn, the participation of humanity in the world, expressed in symbolic actions, assists in the unfolding and creation of that world. The movement of an Eagle feather can knock over, and it can revive. A name can bring health or it can sicken. The Holy People think the world and then speak the world into being; and God said, "Let there be light." "That which comes through the mouth, words, has the power to effect the world," *dasshussua*. Symbols are creative.

But the human acts of creation are not random, but guided by *perennial, transcendent archetypes*. The animation and the meaningfulness of human symbols occur when the human is

in alignment as a microcosm of the world macrocosm, each mirroring the other.³ The transcendent, and the archetypal meaning and animation that emerge from it, must be equally shared by human and world alike. To receive a vision, one must listen to the animals speak and to one's own soul speak. To receive a poem, one must listen to the voices of the flowers and clouds and to one's own voice. During a vision or an inspiration, all voices are in harmony. To heal with the feathers of the eagle, the symbolic actions of the healer must replicate the archetypal meaning of health as defined in the transcendent and shared by patient, healer, Eagle and the world. To continue through life with meaning, humanity must continually replicate in its actions the archetypal meanings that emanate from the transcendent, in humanity itself and from the world. To ignore the archetypes is to be blinded and lost. Symbols are creative when the symbols replicate the transcendent archetypes. And the stone of Sedna was held in one hand and the harpoon in the other. "Then the seal comes forth for a breath of air . . . , and some fresh water!"

In "questing to be a part of the world," the Dream Animal thus seeks participation with the world. From the transcendent emerge the meanings that guide and the animation to give life to those meanings. The "stone," alive, "held in hand," reveals. But one must be "attentive" with the "heart." To know is to "feel beauty" within the world. And to represent that "beauty" is to attempt to convey the mystery of the "inner forms." To continue access to the meaningful and to life, the Dream Animal seeks to replicate, seeks to mirror, in its actions and deeds the transcendent archetypes that emanate from all of creation – human and animal alike. To look out into the world, to look into the "looking glass," is to see the world within. The quest is to the summit of the mountain, and once there, to continue to live under the shadow of that mountain. What then is to be feared most is to live other than under the shadow, to be estranged from the world and not to participate. What is to be feared is the possibility of "wilderness" itself. In turn, a "rich man" is measured in terms of relationship and reciprocity, and in what is given. The more given the richer the man. A "rich man" becomes a rich kinship, an integral and vital participant in the all-inclusive community of "people" – human, natural and divine. The "ideas" and moral rights of all "peoples" are affirmed. With the "community," so goes the welfare of the individual. The values of subjectification, equalization, qualification, transcendentation, replication and participation have helped define and in turn constitute the world as if seen through a "looking glass," the Looking Glass world view.

³Much is owed to Mircea Eliade 1954 for clarifying the process and significance of replicating and mirroring archetypes.