

RITE OF PASSAGE

As the curtain rises on the next act of the human drama, we see an adolescent culture undergoing a rite of passage to adulthood. The challenges that face us as a species are the initiating factors of our rite: global warming, environmental destruction, government corruption, escalating warfare, peak oil, potential epidemics, social injustice, economic instability – we know the litany. The message of initiation is written on our many walls: *transform or die*.

For the first time in history, we are being asked to become adults.

Birthered from the primal womb of Nature, we have risen out of Stone Age infancy to crawl across the land in teeming toddlerhood, rocked in the cradle of civilization, only to enter 5,000 years of sibling rivalry, forging ever larger empires from the blood of soldiers and the sweat of slaves. Upon this foundation, we have trudged through the middle ages of childhood into the smoky fog of industrialism to emerge today as adolescents with our hands on the dials of the future.

It's been a long journey. Paradigms have changed many times: from the primal Mother Goddess, to the ancient partnership, to the domination of the Father God. What they all have in common is that they reflect a parent-child relationship. The gods set forth the rules and the children obey. If we follow the rules, we have faith the gods will protect us and grant us favors, either in this life or the next. Whether the rules come from Nature, the sword, the written word, or the dollar—the rules we follow today are based on a parental/imperial system that rules the many and favors the few. The dominant paradigm has been a submissive paradigm, where there are more people submitting than dominating. For children, parental control is appropriate, but this is a holdover from an earlier time.

As these eras have waxed and waned, we have been steadily maturing. We have learned to read and write. We have unmasked the secrets of nature. We have created machines to do our work, computers to think and a global network through which to communicate. We have created democracies and overthrown oppression to claim our individuality and personal rights. We are discovering the inner world of personal spirituality. We are *almost* adults. Yet we still live in a parent-child paradigm of power and obedience. And we still lack the maturity to live wisely.

No parental figure is going to save us this time. The Mother Goddess was sent to the underworld millennia ago and mostly forgotten. Her once abundant cupboards of oceans and forests are depleted. Big Daddy at the helm is dangerously flawed, as well as the “trusted officials” that surround him. Rampant corruption runs through the system. Corruption is a sign of decay. The parental system is getting ready to fall. Are we ready to take the reins?

Evolution is the gods' way of making more gods. We have the power of Gods, but are still lacking in vision. We can influence the climate, alter the gene pool, render species extinct or exterminate life on Earth. We can also fly to the moon, transplant limbs and hearts, and connect billions of people into an awakening group mind. In our movies and media, we can create any reality we can imagine – from political spin to fantasy films. We are the architects of the next age. What do we want to create?

The organizing principle of the parental paradigm is based on power, maintained through the threat or use of force. Power flows down from the top, and if we obey fully and work hard enough, we just might reap the rewards of gaining a little power for ourselves. Individuals try to carve out their own domain, through which they might have some sense of sovereignty. But this individualism is fragmenting our world and wasting resources in conflict and competition. The use of force as an organizing principle creates warfare, oppression, and suffering.

Society has grown too complex to be ruled by a single man at the top. Even an intelligent leader would be like a dinosaur brain ruling an unwieldy beast – simply too small for the job. The old system need not be violently overthrown – we can simply outgrow it.

It is time at last for a paradigm based on the power of love. The mature masculine and mature feminine can shed their assigned roles and come together in equal partnership – as budding adults, in a co-creative endeavor to save our precious world. Each crisis of the past has required larger numbers of people to work together to solve it. The scale of today's challenges require global cooperation to be solved. But how do we organize such a colossally complex system?

New systems of self-organization can out-perform the old systems of control. We are discovering that evolution favors cooperation over competition. We know that peace saves resources squandered in destruction, that networks out-perform markets. In the understanding of human systems, we have learned that rigidity creates instability, and flexibility creates resilience. Stress forces a system to evolve. The stress of global convergence is calling for an awakening of the global heart.

The next organizing principle will be based on networks of relationships rather than chains of command. Conformity forges many fibers into a single rope – strong, yes, but the more fibers you have, the less flexible the rope becomes. By contrast, networks form a web of diversity, with each node doing its unique part, yet woven together as one. Webs can grow large enough to encompass the world, yet they maintain their flexibility and diversity.

Each of us is a node in the web of consciousness that blankets this world. Each of us is being asked to go through the rite of passage and help awaken the global heart. This is our initiation into adulthood and the beginnings of godhood. From the love of power to the power of love, this is the transformation of our time.

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Adapted from the book, *Waking the Global Heart: Humanity's Rite of Passage from the Love of Power to the Power of Love*, Elite Books, June, 2006. Early copies can be ordered at: www.wakingtheglobalheart.com