

THE CURTAIN RISES

The Drama of Our Time

“The only myth that is going to be worth talking about in the immediate future is one that is talking about the planet, not this city, not these people, but the planet and everybody on it. And what it will have to deal with will be exactly what all myths have dealt with—the maturation of the individual, from dependency through adulthood, through maturity, and then to the exit; and then how to relate this society to the world of nature and the cosmos... And until that gets going, you don’t have anything.”

—Joseph Campbell

The human drama is nearing its denouement. The great unveiling is approaching, a time when the power structures of the world begin to crumble and people of the heart sing out a new truth. Many voices are joining the chorus, many feet are walking the path, many minds are dreaming possibilities for a magnificent future. For beneath the crises that are looming at every level of civilization, the global heart is awakening, beating out the rhythm of a new and glorious dance, calling us to a better way of living.

You who are dreamers and poets, executives and laborers, healers and teachers, artists and visionaries, parents and lovers—each of you plays a part in bringing forth the new dawn. You are the ones who will be leading humanity’s rite of passage into the next age. For the awakening of the global heart occurs as each of its many cells opens to



the power of love in its own heart and joins together to pump life and breath into every corner of the globe. Physically, the heart is an organ that keeps us alive through a coordinated network of cells beating together. Spiritually, the heart is the center of love, the primordial force that calls things into relationship, the force that makes our lives worthwhile. Globally, the heart is a symbol of a new organizing principle for how to live together on this finite jewel of a planet.

The cultural transformation from the *love of power* to the *power of love* is the drama of our time. Ours is an era that future historians will look back upon, marveling at the magnitude of the challenges and changes we are now experiencing. They will call it a time of Great Awakening, a time when the best and the worst of humanity played their parts in the fate of human evolution. But if future generations are alive to tell this story, it will only be because the best of humanity prevailed and pulled together with a love so profound that the seemingly impossible was achieved.

Human consciousness is being drawn inexorably toward the same issues, the gaze of collective attention focused like never before. Center stage is now everywhere, broadcast from living rooms, automobiles, airports, and cell phones, from radios, newspapers, magazines, and the Internet. Increasing numbers of people watch the unfolding events with bated breath. Some have been watching for quite some time, with growing concern. Others are just waking up, rubbing their eyes in confusion. Still others prefer to remain asleep, doing their best to ignore the signs that point to an impending and massive shift at every level of civilization.

As we meet for coffee, for dinner, for business meetings, or for romantic dates, the conversation buzzes like an audience murmuring between acts. Where's it all going? What will happen next? What's wrong? Who's right? What should we do? What *can* we do? And most frightening of all—especially among the youth today—are those who wonder if we will even survive into the next age. For the emerging generation is watching in despair as the adults in charge recklessly spend their inheritance with little regard for the future.

In the theatre of our world, we are simultaneously audience and

cast, playing to an instantaneous feedback system that continually shows us our reflection. But rather than the image of a single character, we are witness to a global tapestry, weaving itself into a new picture. Its threads were spun from archaic forces long ago, woven together by the myths, legends, and heroic deeds of our ancestors. To weave a new picture, we must engage with these forces and take them into our own hands—with maturity, with consciousness, and most of all, *with heart*. For we who are alive at this time—whether we like it or not—are entering *a rite of passage into the future*. This rite is both personal and collective. We are no longer separate strands in the web of life, but the very weavers of the web that holds us all.

We stand at the dawn of a new era. Immersed in technology, yet hungry for the sacred, there is deep longing for a story that balances masculine and feminine, progress and sustainability, order and freedom, power and love. The stories we tell ourselves shape our world. They guide our relationships to each other, to the environment, and to the future. Life in the twenty-first century is spinning a new myth. It is time to listen to the growing chorus of voices that make up this story. Together, we are discovering and inventing a way to the future.

To weave a new story, we must inquire into the essential questions asked by myths and legends of all ages: *Who are we? Where do we come from? Where are we going?* It is these questions that give meaning to the drama, and define the parts that each of us has to play. It is to these questions, wrapped around the unfolding human mystery play, that this book is addressed. Here we find guidance for the mythic journey, not only as individuals, but also for the emerging story of what we are becoming together.

WHO ARE WE?

In the drama thus far, humans have become an astounding species unlike any other. Birthed from the primal womb of nature, billions of years in gestation, we have risen out of Stone Age infancy, crawled

across the land in teeming toddlerhood, and labored through thousands of years of sibling rivalry, to arrive at the present time—in the tumultuous throes of adolescence. Some are just entering this adolescent period, others are right in the middle of it, while an increasing number are transitioning to adulthood, undergoing the rite of passage from power to love.

With technological power that far surpasses our maturity, our species stands poised between epic creation and potential annihilation, equally capable of either. Whether through genius or lunacy, our actions today affect the future of us all. Issues of power and love, war and peace, poverty and prosperity, tyranny and freedom, individual rights and community needs hang unresolved in our story thus far. In the past, these issues were local affairs—but now they have global proportions. Though our time is one of unprecedented change, major players in this drama still read from outdated scripts that fail to address the needs of the present, let alone those of the future. The next act has not yet been written. It is about to begin.

ADOLESCENT INITIATION

As the curtain rises, we see an adolescent culture entering into a monumental rite of passage into adulthood. The elders who have been in charge are no longer showing us the way—for the way is so different, they truly don't know what it is. They can only go along the roads they know best, even when these roads appear to be leading us in the wrong direction. Those roads took us to where we are now and they have formed a deep groove in the collective psyche. Yet their linear routes have taken us so far from the center that they are now leading us astray. The old maps can't tell us how to get to the future.

In this rite of passage, then, there are no figureheads to lead the way, no authority figures who will solve the big problems for us. For the task of initiation is to awaken our own authority. Where most previous religions have posited a Mother Goddess or Father God, the current trend in spirituality is to awaken the divinity found within,

through practices that open a direct connection to higher and deeper states of consciousness. Not only are we “on our own” in terms of parental guidance, we are simultaneously the first few generations saddled with the responsibility of saving the entire world. Our ancestors worked to save their tribe, expand their empire, or defend their country. Now the protection of the planet itself is at stake.

Power no longer resides outside of ourselves, but awakens when we speak the truth within our own hearts. The root of the word *authority* is *author*, which means that we are all writing this story together through the collective speaking of our truth. Gandhi used the term *satyagraha*, from the Sanskrit word meaning “force of truth.” This force has the power to change the world.

Duane Elgin reports that in his questioning of people across cultures—from India to Japan, England to Brazil—over two-thirds agree that humanity is in its adolescence.² It's easy to see why. We need only turn on the television to see adolescent behavior raging through all ages, races, creeds, and genders. Creative but disrespectful, powerful but reckless, narcissistically obsessed with our looks, and bursting with teenage libido, we are sorely lacking in social and environmental conscience. We are fascinated by flashy gadgets and fast changes. We are driven by the whimsy of our desires. Like teenagers thoughtlessly cleaning out the refrigerator while entertaining their friends, human populations are insatiably consuming the once vast cupboards of oceans and forests in the attempt to satisfy their voracious appetites.

And why not? Hasn't Mother Nature always kept the cupboards well stocked in the past, free to her children, just for the asking? Hasn't our sole responsibility been to take in resources, to grow and to learn? Did we ever think it was possible that Mom's cupboards could run out?

Adolescence is a time when physical growth comes to a halt. It's the time when we take that prodigious life force and learn to grow in a new dimension. At best, this dimension is spiritual, growing towards deeper understanding of ourselves and our world. But if this passage is blocked, adolescents act out recklessly, often harming themselves and

their environment—even before they know what they are losing.

To become adults, adolescents who have previously been nurtured, cared for, and educated by elders must learn to provide for themselves, and others in turn. They must learn about the meaning of life, the structure and order of the world, and their purpose within it. Yet they are also compelled—by the unique life force within them—to question and change that structure as they grow into it. It is a tumultuous time, as any parent knows, and there are days when we may look at our teenagers with exasperation and wonder if they will ever grow up. Yet we have no choice but to move forward as best we can, and hold a container for their process.

Just as adolescence marks the end of physical growth, *our human population has grown to its adult size and can no longer continue to expand in a physical dimension.* We have reached (if not surpassed) the carrying capacity of our biosphere. World population has doubled in the last half-century, climbing from 2.5 billion in 1950 to 6.3 billion in 2005.³ Just for perspective, this means there has been more population growth in the last half-century than in the four million years since the earliest humans walked on their hind legs! If not checked, this number could double again in the next fifty years. From the depletion of top soil and underground aquifers used to grow our food, to the diminishing oil reserves that bring our groceries to the table; from the disappearing forests and the creatures who live there, to the greenhouse gases that are raising global temperatures; from urban smog, to waste disposal; from the billions who live in poverty to the epidemic diseases that threaten life—every facet of human and non-human society is impacted by our unchecked population growth. What Malthus predicted back in 1798 is now a reality:

“...I say, that the power of population is indefinitely greater than the power in the earth to produce subsistence for man. Population, when unchecked, increases in a geometrical ratio. Subsistence increases only in an arithmetical ratio. A slight acquaintance with numbers will show the immensity of the first power in comparison of the second.”⁴

CHILDREN	ADOLESCENTS	ADULTS
Dependent	Independent	Interdependent
Continuous growth	Growth spurt	Growth stabilized
Lives in present	Rebels against past	Plans for future
Parents are Gods	Parents fall from grace	Become parents
Obedient	Rebellious	Cooperative
No power	Reckless power	Shared power
Needs help	Resists help	Gives help

It is not only population growth that must be curbed, but the way that we view progress and success. Ever since the Industrial Revolution, progress has been measured by growth. The success of a company is usually defined by its expansion, not its social contribution. Growth is measured in terms of more products, bigger markets, larger infrastructure, and ultimately greater profits. Whether that means building more housing developments, expanding roads and highways, infiltrating indigenous cultures with Western products and lifestyles, or simply crafting a way to make more with less—our “industrial growth society” must place its value on something other than growth before we exhaust our life support systems. That the word “downsizing” has entered our vernacular shows that much of this expansion is already reaching its limit. We are quickly discovering that growth-based futures have no sustainable future.

Yet, just like an adolescent, growth has been the driving force of our biology since its earliest beginnings. Prehistoric nomads focused on images pertaining to birth. The Bible tells us to go forth and multiply. In our earlier eras, this was entirely appropriate. Yet it created a force that has its own momentum. Like the infamous ship, *Titanic*, it’s not easy to turn such a colossal system around—even when we see the iceberg up ahead. In order to survive, we must harness that creative urge to multiply and point the evolutionary arrow in a new direction.

Let’s face it: Mother Nature is stressed out. Our days are numbered as innocent children living in the ever-abundant Garden of Eden, where divine parents supply every need and whim without replenishment. No longer can we be the semi-conscious parents of unlimited offspring, overpopulating the planet while remaining ourselves as indulged children in an illusory garden of delights. It’s time we outgrew our adolescent war games of sibling rivalry, where we leave Mother Nature to clean up the ravages of our destruction. No longer can we define ourselves as isolated individuals, seeing ourselves as uniquely entitled to take whatever we want from wherever we find it, while social malaise and growing poverty crawl in the shadows of the wealthy few—whom we regard as heroes.

The culmination of four billion years of evolution now rests in our hands. With the ability to permanently change climate through global warming, the potential of mass destruction through nuclear warfare, with gene-splicing and cloning occurring in our laboratories, we are the first race of creatures with the capacity to influence the direction of evolution and the future of life on this planet. Such potential has never occurred before in our evolutionary history. It signals an extraordinary need for responsibility and a driving imperative to wake up. At the very least, it requires the maturity of adult wisdom and behavior. But even more, it calls for an awakening of the heart. For love is the key to that which endures.

We are now facing a collective adolescent identity crisis. Our challenge is to foster a new identity, as elements of a larger matrix, and as parents of a new millennium. But we are not yet adults. We are, as Jean Houston has said, “people of the parentheses,”⁵ living in the nebulous ground between the old age and the new, neither child nor grown-up, undergoing the tremendous changes of adolescent transformation. In one way or another this transformation will eventually come to us all. We may resist the call and remain stubbornly attached to the old ways, or we can surrender to the transformation, and advance to the other side. We cannot remain the same and still survive.

GLOBAL RITE OF PASSAGE

A rite of passage is an initiation into an unknown world. The instigators of our current initiation are not individuals, but the combined results of human civilization. These initiating elements bring us into blinding paradox at every turn. They parade across television screens that bombard us with images of father figures granting the illusion of safety—while feeding the rise of terrorism through aggressive military actions. They come from the capacity to witness the birth of galaxies in the macrocosm, to the manipulation of tiny genes in the microcosm. Initiating factors appear as data that tell us our world

is in danger, and a news media that keeps us preoccupied with stories of mass distraction. They come from instantaneous access to the world's knowledge base—and gross ignorance about our collective reality. Both positive and negative, these factors are the by-products of the values that shape our society. They are the wake up call emanating from the possibility of environmental and economic collapse, epidemic diseases, nuclear disaster, and a technology that is loading real time Technicolor into the global brain and taking it to the stars.

The time has come. The rite of passage has begun. We must enter the mystery to emerge on the other side.

What does it mean to “come of age” as a species? How do we outgrow dependent childhood and adolescent rebellion to grow into sustainable maturity? How do we weather the coming storms and create the necessary transformation? And how do we make sense of what we've done in the past, so as to better understand what we must do now?

WHERE DO WE COME FROM?

This question might be more appropriately framed as, “How did we get into this mess?” How did we get to a place where we can fly to the stars, but not feed the children? How did we get to a place where we fight wars over oil, so we can pollute our air sitting in traffic jams? How did we create a world in which we don't know our neighbors, have little time for our friends, and abuse our children? How is it that we have discovered and learned so much about the world around us, yet still seem to be dangerously lost on our path to the future?

In tribal cultures, an essential part of a rite of passage was to teach *the history of the tribe from the beginning of time*. Only initiated men and women who understood this history and the sacred forces that shaped it were allowed to become elders in the tribe. This is not to inhibit innovation by binding the initiate to an inflexible tradition, but to *ground* their actions in an understanding and experience of the sacred realm. We must understand our history to harvest its energy for the future.

In working with a client in crisis, a good therapist not only tries to mitigate the crisis itself, but also examines the client's past, to identify the events, beliefs, and assumptions that created the client's situation. With a world in crisis, we must do the same self-examination on a collective level. We must examine our history and expose the assumptions and beliefs that have led to the current situation. We must understand the preceding acts of the human story from an archetypal perspective, in order to keep from repeating our mistakes and perpetuating our traumas. From this examination, we can rise into wisdom.

For this reason, our story will begin by examining the childhood of our collective history as the roots for our collective future. To argue that we are, indeed, adolescents that are “coming of age in the heart,” the stages of childhood development will be mapped onto the eras of history. This history is largely Western, because it is Western culture that has the greatest influence on the shaping of the global tapestry right now—for better or worse. But this history also goes back to pre-historic roots that are common to us all. Because any viable vision of the future must integrate both masculine and feminine values, these historical stages will also be viewed in light of the archetypal masculine and feminine valences that shaped each era. This is not to blame either gender for events along the way, but to better illuminate the dynamic interplay that defines our future roles together.

An equally important thread that runs through my telling of this tale comes from the Eastern mystical tradition of yoga, through the map described by the ancient system of energy centers known as the *chakras*. As a comprehensive system, the *chakras* form a profound formula for wholeness, not only for individual awakening, but for the evolution of society as a whole. As a result of my life's work in this area, my deep understanding of the chakra system has illuminated a pattern that leads me to believe that we are moving from a culture based largely on the third chakra, which is associated with power and the emergence of ego-based consciousness, to the fourth chakra, whose focus is love, relatedness, and a more transcendent consciousness. In

my previous book, *Eastern Body, Western Mind: Psychology and the Chakra System as a Path to the Self*, (Celestial Arts, 1997) I chart the correlation between the chakras and stages of individual development. In the book you now hold, I map this pattern onto our collective development. A simple chart showing how these stages map onto the chakras, appears on pages 30 and 31. A more complex chart, featuring elements discussed in the pages ahead, appears on pages 214 and 215).

The progression through the chakras begins at the survival-oriented root chakra of our ancestral beginnings, and moves steadily upward, through the socialization of early cultures (second chakra), into the struggle for power and empire (third chakra), and partly into the fourth chakra, associated with love, compassion, and relationship. It is argued here that we have not fully arrived in the heart, having gotten trapped in the ego's love of power and the masculine rigidity of imperial power structures. The result is a fragmented society divided against itself: men against women, civilization against Nature, and war within ourselves and between each other. A divided world cannot fully enter the heart. Nor can it find peace.

In chakra theory, *it is only by embracing the full spectrum of human consciousness that we can bring about a true awakening of the heart*. This involves developing the upper chakra realms of communication, vision, and spirituality, and *integrating* them with the lower chakra attributes of the body, the emotions, and personal power—attributes that have been largely repressed by the predominant spiritual traditions. Modern technology has only recently opened the upper chakras on a planetary scale, through the ability to communicate words and images through mass media and the Internet. Simultaneously, we are entering a spiritual revolution, one that focuses more on the process of individual awakening—through such practices as meditation, yoga, fasting, and a smorgasbord of self-help techniques. Because we have the capacity to organize humanity through a world-wide technological network, we are—for the first time in history—ready to awaken the global heart as an organizing principle for a planetary society.

WHERE ARE WE GOING?

In the body, heart cells beat together, coordinating their actions. When heart cells are separated, they beat independently at different rhythms. When they make contact with each other, they beat in unison, pumping oxygen and nutrients throughout the entire system, nourishing every cell. It is through contact and connectedness that we coordinate our rhythms and beat together. It is time for the many parts of our world to come together and awaken the global heart, beating in unison with love for our world. These parts include genders, races, religions, and nations, as well as the many aspects of civilization such as economics, education, technology, media, government, science, and philosophy.

To *come of age in the heart* is to enter a rite of passage that transforms ego-centered self-interest into an embodied expression of love. Guilt, fear, or manipulation will never produce lasting evolutionary change, but what is inspired by love is fueled by natural willingness, even excitement, to serve a higher purpose. Think of the efforts we put forth for the people and things we love. What else but love could get us up in the middle of the night to change a soiled diaper? What else but love could keep an activist woman in a redwood tree through two hard winters, in defiance of loggers and timber corporations? What else but love makes us care for things that we value, and do the work of that caring willingly, even joyfully?

Yet it seems too many of us have fallen out of love with the world. Like a bad marriage, we have forgotten the once-shining beauty of our partner, forgotten even that we are engaged in a partnership. Disenchanted, we use and abuse our environment, spinning without anchor through a life of destruction and disconnection, broadcasting this destruction through our newscasts, and simultaneously distracting ourselves with addictive consumption of cheap substitutes to fill the emptiness. In an estranged relationship, we have forgotten the sanctity and rights of the other person. As we dishonor them, we are no longer engaged with a “thou” but are instead acting out against an “it.” We lose touch with the numinosity, power, and beauty of the Sacred Other.

CHAKRA CORRESPONDENCES AND AGES

CHAKRA	ONE	TWO	THREE
Sanskrit Name meaning	Muladhara root support	Swadhisthana One's own place	Manipura lustrous gem, jeweled citadel
Location	base of spine	sacral area	solar plexus
Element	earth	water	fire
Psychological association	grounding security	pleasure sexuality	power and will
Individual developmental phase	womb to 1 year	6 months to 2 years	18 months to 3-4 years
Historical Time period	Paleolithic	Neolithic	Bronze and Iron Ages

FOUR	FIVE	SIX	SEVEN
Anahata unstruck unhurt	Vissudha purification	Ajna to perceive and to command	Sahasrara thousandfold lotus
heart	throat	brow	top of head
air	sound	light	thought
love relationship	communication creativity	intuition imagination	consciousness intelligence
4 – 7 years	7-12 years	adolescence*	adulthood
Began c. 600 B.C.E.	Began in Renaissance	Began 20 th century	Now dawning

In both individual and cultural development, the opening of a particular chakra does not mean that its development is completed in that phase. Often higher levels of realization are necessary in order to consolidate a previous chakra phase.

In the maturation of the individual, the heart phase is early childhood, while adolescence is equated with the opening of the sixth chakra. The reason we are now at our adolescence culturally, yet still not consolidated in the

heart, is that we are suffering from arrested development, a topic dealt with fully in these pages.

In the collective tasks, it can be seen that we have achieved, at least partly, the tasks of the upper chakras, yet have not yet arrived at peace and freedom for all. It is argued that global communications in the fifth, sixth, and seventh chakra realms are necessary to achieve a global awakening in the heart.

To come of age in the heart is to *fall back in love with the world*, to find that our world is subject, not object; to realize that, yes, the self *is* sacred, but so is the entire web of life. In the realm of the heart, we reconstitute the archetype of sacred partnership: balanced, respectful, and mutually enhancing. Here we are inspired to act from passionate dedication, not spineless obedience; to be repossessed by the sacred, rather than dispossessed by its lack; to be pulled forward by an evolving vision from the future, rather than held back by the decaying patterns of the past.

This coming of age transformation is simultaneously individual and collective. In our private lives, many of us are being forced by the acceleration of events around us to face our own depths, examine unconscious motives, and upgrade our values and belief systems to meet the pace of a rapidly changing world. But these individual changes are small compared to what is being asked of us collectively: to not only change ourselves, but to transform the world in which we live. We are products of this world. We think with its forms, depend on its products, breathe its very air.

The path toward wholeness, which Jung called the archetype of *individuation*, is now being thrust upon the collective psyche. Individuation is the soul's process of maturing and awakening to its true nature. It often begins in a crisis that forces deeper self-examination. Here we find forgotten selves, reclaim disconnected parts, such as our shadow or wounded child, and bring our inner masculine and feminine into balance and relationship. This process calls us to break the confines of cultural conformity and begin to live authentic and embodied lives.

Just as it occurs for individuals, our task is to *collectively* face our hidden shadow of violence, greed, and domination and stop projecting it onto others. We must balance the powers of masculine and feminine not only in socio-economic status, but also in terms of our innate values, making emotional intelligence as necessary as cognitive genius, nurturance as important as accomplishment, receptive wisdom as valuable as creative expression. Only through this integration of values will we transform our larger cultural systems.

Such transformation begins with a shift in the archetypal framework that tells the story of who we are and why we're here. Our current age of power has delivered vast knowledge, sophisticated technology, and personal freedom, greater than at any time in our history. Yet the shadow side of our power has created pollution and tyranny. Power and domination, where one part rules over another—such as mind over body, male over female, white over black, civilization over nature, or personal gratification over the needs of others—has typified our world for the last several millennia. The Age of Power brought us the initial steps of individuation from an undifferentiated tribal unity, much as our personal autonomy emerges from an initial fusion with our mother. Separating from the archetypal Mother and giving birth to the ego brought us the Heroic Age. The heroic journey has been a rightful quest for power, but this quest has now overshot its mark.

The Hero's journey mirrors the initiation process: heeding a call to serve something greater, separating from what is known and dissolving the structures of one's individual consciousness, entering the belly of the underworld, facing trials and ordeals, meeting and merging with archetypal forces, opening to new vision, then rebirth and return. We are all at different stages of this journey. Some of us are experiencing dissolution; some of us are in the underworld. Others are battling their ordeals, and many are discovering and opening to archetypal forces, returning with new vision. We are all a part of this initiation, each in our own way.

Sometimes the most demanding task of the Hero's quest is the *return home*, where the fruits of the quest—the elixir of healing or the enlightened vision—are brought back to a broken and ailing world. The Hero's quest begins with the striving of an individual—but ends in the healing of community. The quest illuminates our power, but the return is an act of love.

The return is seldom easy. Who wants to leave their new-found paradise to return to an ailing world? Who wants to have doors slammed in their face, or confront the apathy of a world that wants to remain in denial? Who wants to return a hero but be treated like the child that left? Sometimes the Hero chooses not to return.

Others, like Galileo, who dared to suggest that the Earth just might be traveling around the sun, are locked up, censored and punished. Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King were murdered, while Nelson Mandela spent most of his life in jail. Yet, if we understand this archetypal drive—and *longing*—to come home again, we can open the passage for our heroes to return, and embrace the gifts they bring with an open mind.

EVOLUTION IS THE GODS' WAY OF MAKING MORE GODS

This is a basic premise of this book. You can replace the concept of God with whatever term, gender, or pantheon you like, but the point is that evolution proceeds, not only toward greater complexity and freedom, but also towards ever more potent god-like powers of creation and destruction. When we can influence the course of life on our planet through global warming, species extinction, or gene splicing—to say nothing of nuclear warfare—we are approaching the power of gods. But have we evolved the wisdom and grace equal to that power? If not, what does it take for us to get there?

Some say it will take a global disaster for humanity to wake up. They may well be right, for we know that rites of passage include *some* kind of death. There are values and behaviors that are so deeply embedded in Western culture, and are so pointedly unsustainable, that clearly *something* needs to die. Do we need to go through a global “detox” in order to remain healthy? And while natural and man-made disasters have always occurred, the difference today is one of scale. Because of Earth’s population density, disasters now affect millions. On some level, they affect us all.

Disasters do open our hearts. This was evident in the outpouring of public support following the destruction of the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, the Tsunami of 2004, and the flooding of New Orleans in 2005. Earthquakes and hurricanes, floods and droughts, all break down the isolation of individuals, and awaken a

sense of community. Disasters are one form of initiation. However, a proper initiation can also *mitigate* disaster by awakening a guiding vision. Without that vision, we are stuck in old belief systems, with only guilt to guide our current behavior. We know we shouldn’t drive so much, use so much, waste so much. But most people feel they have little alternative. Others are not even aware of their impact. Nor is it easy to give up privileges we have come to rely upon.

By contrast, a guiding vision can give us something to move *toward* instead of something to move *away from*. No disaster was necessary to switch from an electric typewriter to a word processing computer; it was simply a better idea. It didn’t require a failure of the telephone system to make room for cell phones. When a better way becomes apparent, we choose it naturally. *A destructive lifestyle is simply ignorant of a better way.* What’s needed is a vision of the future as an organizing principle, much as the blueprints for a house organize the laborers who build it. Without something positive to move toward, we are much like an adolescent who is acting out, suffering from lack of guidance.

Yet the public media broadcasts information that is often more destructive than creative, attacking or destroying innovation before it has time to mature. Progressive ideas in politics, new discoveries in science and medicine, the leading edges of social movements, and alternative spiritualities—these frontiers are often dismissed as unrealistic elements of a fringe society. When new ideas are so blatantly necessary, one has to wonder why this is so. Our collective vision of what is possible is the organizing principle for our transformation. But none of us can create this alone, for that is part of the old way, and is, by nature, counter to the vision of collective awakening.

The evolutionary biologist, Elizabet Sahtouris, has popularized a metaphor for transformation based on the metamorphosis of the caterpillar into the butterfly. This process has so many parallels to our collective rite of passage that we will refer to it again and again throughout these pages, as a guiding image for our collective changes.

When a caterpillar nears its transformation time, it begins to eat ravenously, consuming everything in sight. (It is interesting to note that individuals are often called “consumers” and one of the largest

manufacturers of heavy construction machinery is called “Caterpillar, Inc.”) The caterpillar body then becomes heavy, outgrowing its own skin many times, until it is too bloated to move. Attaching to a branch (upside down, we might add, where everything is turned on its head) it forms a chrysalis—an enclosing shell that limits the caterpillar’s freedom for the duration of the transformation.

Within the chrysalis a miracle occurs. Tiny cells, called “imaginal cells,” begin to appear. These cells are wholly different from caterpillar cells, carrying different information, vibrating to a different frequency—the frequency of the emerging butterfly. At first, the caterpillar’s immune system perceives these new cells as enemies, and attacks them, much as new ideas are called radical, and viciously denounced by the powers now holding center stage. But the imaginal cells are not deterred. They continue to appear, increasing in numbers until the new cells are numerous enough to organize into clumps. When enough cells have formed to make structures along the *new* organizational lines, the caterpillar’s immune system is overwhelmed. The cells of the original body then become a nutritious soup for the growth of the butterfly.

When the butterfly is ready to hatch, the chrysalis becomes transparent (much as the Internet is making many hidden actions transparent). The need for restriction has been outgrown, yet the struggle toward freedom is part of the process. Were the chrysalis opened too soon, the butterfly would die. As the butterfly emerges, it fills its wings with liquid, (a “right wing” and a “left wing,” we might note), and then flies away to dance among the flowers.

The awakening of the global heart results from transforming the body politic from the unconscious, over-consuming bloat of the caterpillar into a creature of exquisite beauty, grace, and freedom. This coming of age process takes us to a new mythic reality, a larger story, ripe with meaning and direction. It takes us from the naïve egocentricity of childhood into a larger reality of interdependent reciprocity. It is not a passage that ends in the gray grimness of adult responsibility, denying the colorful spirituality of childhood innocence. Rather, it is a reclaiming of wholeness that denies little, and embraces all.

It is from this abundance that we can love and cherish our world.

This book is the story of that passage. It examines the beginning stages of the Hero’s journey of dissolution and darkness. It takes us back to the beginnings of humanity, to our ancient birth from the Great Mother, where we reclaim our roots. It takes us through the twists and turns of our collective infancy into early childhood, and then through the struggle for power and freedom, the attempts and failures at unity, the development of technology and communication, and the hunger for a new vision at this time. We will examine the archetypal Mother and Father, with their Son’s and Daughter’s emancipation from oppression and dependence, finally leading into the budding maturity of both men and women capable—perhaps for the first time—of truly egalitarian relationships. This takes us historically from a basic *thesis*, into its complete *antithesis*, for the purpose of finally creating a new and dynamic *synthesis*.

From the love of power to the power of love, this rite of passage is the emerging myth of our time.

ESSENTIAL POINTS

- We live at a time of unprecedented challenge and opportunity.
- Our power to affect the future of life on Earth is dangerously more developed than our emotional and spiritual maturity.
- We are culturally like adolescents, undergoing an initiatory rite of passage into adulthood and the next era of civilization.
- This passage marks the transition from the love of power to the power of love as an organizing principle for society.
- Our cultural values are formed by an ongoing play of archetypal energies that have definable patterns. These patterns have been woven through history and make us what we are today. Part of the initiation process is to learn the archetypal patterns of the past.