

~ *Parsival's Lament* ~
(On the Rise and Fall of Space-Time)



Copyright 2003 - Oil on Linen - 30 x 48 inches

Prologue

The cosmos forged in 7 days
made by the Builder's Hand
Electron clouds to quasars vast
are moved by His Command
Whence the raw materials
or tools to shape these things?
Whence this *Builder*, grave and great
almighty King of kings?

Swarming, whirling, orbit dance
of all the outward part
The raging thrust of matter-stuff
around the Sacred Heart
Atom, cell, moon, planet, star
all guided 'round a focus
Whence the still and silent will
that binds them to their purpose?

The vortex whorls from zenith high
to nadir at the end
A gath'ring, all-compelling tide
in which all things descend
On tracks of formless, cosmic-code
move power, time, and space
Whence the latent, motive thought
that set these tracks in place?

Relentlessly evolving
ancient process of transition
Dust and stones and men and worlds
advance to their ambition
The *ever*-changing cosmos churns
as future falls to past
And long-enduring stars ferment
to elemental ash

Ghastly cosmic engine roars
a self-consuming beast
The universe itself the flesh
upon which it will feast
Dragon's lust and fury burns
yet new life e'er will rise
The Fire-Thief defies the beast
to serve the Lotus Prize

The Grail-Seeker's art has wrought
these living, yearning gyres
E'er they fall to Chaos' Flame
yet Order e'er aspires
Whither go His labors long
and wherefore was He sent?
Does e'en the Grail know the cause
of Parsival's Lament?

And yet, there is a deathless part
the *never*-changing laws
Eternal Beauty, Perfect Form
the First and Maiden Cause
The Lotus Throne e'er waits below
the many Lords of Power
who know not they serve the Watcher's
deep, Immortal Flower

Hidden in the maelstrom
a dark tranquility
Annihilation, rapture, bliss
at Singularity
Immovable Nirvana, far
within the Grail Rings
O'er the last event horizon where
the LotusMaiden sings:

*"The mighty hawk, aggressive, strong
and peaceful fost'ring dove
The burden of all suffering
and sweet embrace of love
The many lands to be explored
and frontiers e'er forbidden
The manifest that might be known
and secrets ever hidden*

*"The concrete forms of earth and sky
from dream idea grow
The body, just a slave savant
from mind, all freedoms flow
The ardent questions searching out
the answer beckons in
The restless seeds that venture forth
the womb that waits within*

*"So many things you children are
so like your parents too
He is hard and brutal Red
I am gentle Blue
Fear not all your torments, lost
in labyrinths alone
Seek your Joy, my precious ones
and find your way back home..."*

The Mystery of Beauty
of harmony and rest
The Mystery of Longing
of gravity and quest
The Mystery of Nature
of life and death and pain
The Mystery of Woman
these things...are the same

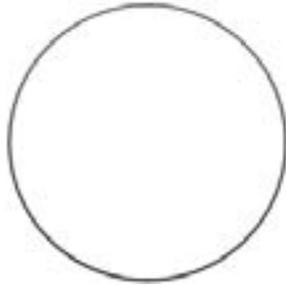
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What follows is a view of the universe and its progeny - as seen *from the inside looking out...*

Geometrostatics

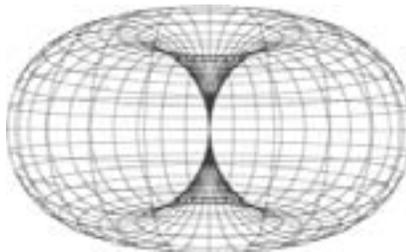
This is a dynamic image, with many elements involved in complex interaction. More complex still is the geometric landscape in which the action occurs. The large oval that contains the image is made of four different geometric motifs: the circle, the torus, the lotus, and a mysterious forth form that dwells hidden within the others...

The *circle* is the most abundant of all forms in the cosmos; from the vast (spherical galaxies, stars and worlds) to the tiny (atoms, nucleons, and perhaps the fundamental particles themselves), it is a zodiacal universe of interlocking clockwork wheels.



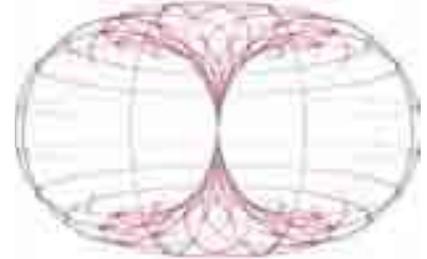
The great ring of the horizon divides the world below from the heavens above. The circle is the most simple of all shapes - a radial line of rotation drawn around a single axis - and the shortest line that encloses the largest volume. It is simultaneously one-sided and infinitely-sided. A circle has no beginning, no ending; it is featureless and invariable, undivided and complete, timeless and perfect. It is the womb from which all geometry is born, the image of the transcendent.

The *torus* is a form of comparatively recent discovery. If a 2-dimensional circle is rotated perpendicular to an axis that bisects its center, the result is a 3-dimensional sphere; if the circle is rotated instead perpendicular to an axis upon its exterior edge, the result is a form called a torus - a hole-less doughnut-like shape that looks as if the north and south poles of a spherical balloon were pinched to meet at a tiny point in the center of the now-oblated spheroid. It is an uncommon form, sometimes used to describe the large-scale structure



of 4-dimensional space-time: the three dimensions of space are represented by the circular expansion and contraction of the horizontal x - y plane; the one dimension of time is represented by the circular path of the vertical z -axis. In this "finite but unbounded" model, the origin and fate of the universe, the beginning and ending of all space and time, are at the same infinitesimal speck of nothingness called a singularity - the center of an infinitely compressed point in space that marks the ineluctable boundary of physics, the cosmos, and existence itself.

The *lotus* is associated with the mystery of creation in sacred stories across the orient - meaningful from ancient Egypt to modern Japan and everywhere in between.



It is a structurally complex flower with a precise radial arrangement of petals, blooming at sunrise like a living incarnation of geometry and the eternal forms. Like the emergence of existence from non-existence, like the emergence of life from non-life, like the emergence of awareness and understanding from non-consciousness, the lotus rises from unknown depths of chaos below the waters, to open with luminous beauty in the manifest world of light. In ancient Egypt, where it withdrew every sunset only to re-bloom again with every sunrise, it signified the first life and eternal rebirth. In China, where the purity and texture-less perfection of its coloration was admired, it signified the potential to rise from the mud and escape the moral taint of desire - the image of Buddha-nature utterly untouched by the corruption of the world. In India, where they found meaning in its rise from darkness into sunlight, it signified spiritual fulfillment. It is the shape of the chakra energy centers through which we experience the world-illusion, the mandala window through which we might imagine an existence beyond that illusion, and the luminous, many-petaled Portal through which we return to the Origin of Being. The lotus is the Eternal Throne upon which sits Brahma the Creator; it is the

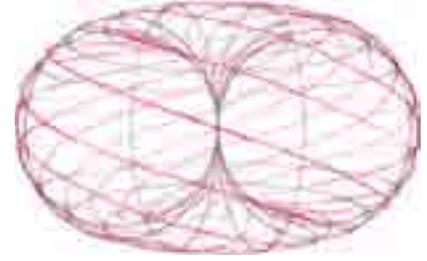
first form from which all forms emerge, connected to the world by an umbilical stalk emerging from the navel of Vishnu the preserver, Vishnu the defender, Vishnu the world-dreamer...

By revolving around its exterior boundary, *the circle generates the torus*. Now, twelve contiguous spheres of equal size packed together in omni-directional balance enclose an equal *master sphere* in the center. That is, a global, circumadjacent arrangement of twelve spheres leaves a hollow in the center, a vacancy precisely occupied by another equally-sized sphere. The first increment outward from the interior locus sphere is the twelve-fold exterior beyond, and that exterior is *made in the image* of the center. For this geometric, and thus timeless, reason, twelve is seen as the number of circumferential limit, the celestial totality of the universe. Like the Olympians around Zeus, like the Apostles around Christ, like the Knights around Arthur, like the Namshans around the Dalai Lama, like the Councilors around Odin, twelve symbolizes the revolutions of action and change, held in orbit by the gravity of an eternal truth in the center. Twelve is the journey up from initial awakening to final descent into sleep. Like the constellations of the Zodiac, twelve are the Regions of Space; like the months of the year or the hours of the clock, twelve are the Ages of Time.

And so, as a map-like projection of space-time (and *chaos incognita* beyond), this toroidal, 4-dimensional *hypersphere* has twelve longitudinal and twelve latitudinal divisions. The intersections of these perpendicular map lines are visible here as stars with pronounced lens flares - the lines of which follow the curvature of space-time. By connecting the vertices of these twelve vertical and twelve horizontal circles along the diagonals, *the torus generates the lotus*. This many-petaled pattern is seen in the crown-like projection emerging upward from singularity. But as symmetry in the forces of the universe breaks shortly after creation, and one unified



“super-force” separates into four, so too does symmetry vanish in the torus-generated lotus: one axis of diagonals fades away, leaving only a clockwise-spiraling pattern of stars representing the dynamic geometry of space-time.



The lotus generates the vortex.

This painting is a representation of creation and evolution, of challenge and struggle in the arduous quest for purpose and destiny, of things rising up with great ambition out of nothing, only to descend back down and finally disappear into blackness. It is a history and biography, telling the life-story of the universe, of worlds and civilizations, and of individual lifetimes. At every scale of observation the narrative is the same: there is a climbing out of some nameless deep that ever seeks to again embrace its vagabond progeny, there is a long journey towards the golden treasure of great purpose that ever recedes away, there is horrific violence and ravaging chaos beyond (and within) that ever consumes a finite resource of will and power, and there is a final withering collapse down into the abyss from which nothing ever escapes...

The Dance of the Rollers

Arabia: the name conjures images of parched, arid desolation. It is home of the Rub ‘al Kali - the Empty Quarter - one of the driest and most desolate places on earth. But in the western highlands, along the red sea coast, there is a comparatively lush region. This unexpected oasis on the frontier of the desert peninsula is home to the Arabian Roller, a magnificent looking bird of iridescent blue and green. Rollers have a truly amazing mating ritual, a spell-binding ballet that has an operatic, even mythological dimension. Their poetic dance is not merely the fleeting congress of male and female, but somehow also a union of *universal* principles.

Two rollers meet. She waits silently, and will

not move; her part in this drama is in the center, the focus around which all activity revolves. She continues to wait, a silent invitation in repose. An eligible male flies by, notices her, and quickly flies down to introduce himself. As is common among birds, the male is ostentatious and vivid with pulsating color, compared to the rather static and unornamented simplicity of the practical female (an appropriately inconspicuous demeanor, however, for the vulnerable keeper and caretaker of the future). The male shuffles along the branch to get close to the object of his affections, ruffles his spectacular plumage, and seemingly expects coos of approval and submission. This he does not receive, and he must feel a certain avian corollary to ego-deflation when she merely sniffs dismissively at him. He is an extraordinary looking fellow, but appearance - a passive, inherited quality - is of only secondary interest to her. She requires him to act, to change and evolve towards a distant ambition. He must aspire to achieve her affections, earn the privilege of her gift, become worthy of the timeless perfection of her prize. Like a knight of the round table, he must actively seek to win the Grail: the Vessel of Eternal Life that can only beckon and wait...

So the amorous Roller flies up into the sky, and turns suddenly into a vertical dive. He will accelerate toward the earth at a prodigious velocity, reaching speeds in excess of 100 mph. Just a few short feet above the ground he will swoop into level flight at fantastic speed and “roll” back and forth in a dangerous swaying motion that will bring the plane of his wings perpendicular to the ground. He must intermittently stop beating his wings to accomplish this act of rocking left and right, and each rolling motion brings him closer to bone-breaking impact with the ground. Many less-competent Rollers must surely have met their fate in this fashion.

He flies back to the branch looking for some approval of this daredevil gesture; he finds none. Back into the sky he flies, even higher this time, to begin the death-defying dance again. He will roll even closer to the earth on the second run, his wings violently jerking backwards as they graze along the ground at high

speed. He may have to repeat this acrobatic display of aerial prowess several times, but he will succeed in his ambitions. Having proven his worth - the magnitude of his ability, the depth of his commitment - she who waits will surrender the prize: his genes and hers shall inseparably join in the sacred union of a new generation. Time will pass and - as is the way with the world - it will come to pass that the female will act and the male will not. But in that fleeting, but paradoxically timeless, moment of ideal perfection, the adventuring seed that ventures forth becomes one with the beckoning womb that waits to receive. And all the things of the cosmos are the swirling ballet of these two mysterious archetypes.

That which moves and That which does not

These elusive, abstract classifications are known as *Archetypes* (from the Greek, the beginning or principal idea, the unseen quality that applies *universally*). Their presence or function in the real world of common experience is not immediately apparent, but they define all the concrete, tangible qualities of the material universe, the *Phenotypes* (the shown or demonstrated form, the seen quality that applies *specifically*). My first encounter with the concept of archetypes happened long ago, when I was a little boy of five or six. I observed an unfriendly neighborhood dog that made a habit of chasing the neighborhood cats. That was a profound mystery to me. My mother had already explained to me how babies are made (offended into early revelation by a kindergarten teacher who had informed me that *God* is where babies come from), and armed with that knowledge, this dog-chasing-cat phenomenon was deeply troubling to my understanding of the world. “Mom,” I asked, “why do dogs chase cats up trees?” “Because cats and dogs don’t like each other very much,” she said. “But if they don’t like each other,” I persisted, “how do they get together to make little cats and dogs?”

My Mom probably thought I had run into a few too many tables, but cats and dogs *were* always around the neighborhood together, and kittens and pup-

pies were obviously coming from *somewhere*. Dogs are bigger, stronger, shaggier, noisier, more friendly when they like you, and more aggressive when they don't. Cats are smaller, prettier, tidier, quieter, and more reserved and aloof in all social situations. Dogs are rambunctious; cats are peaceful. I was sure that *dogs were boys* and *cats were girls*. I had perceived distinguishable characteristics in those animals, and those qualities extend far beyond the neighborhood fauna.

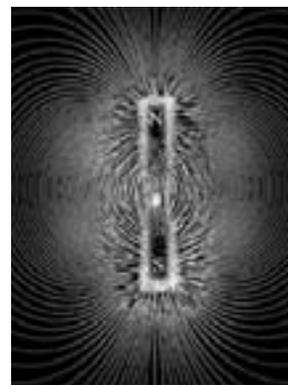
The idea of a universe created by the interpenetration of two equal but opposite principles finds its most complete expression in Chinese thought. In the well-known symbol of Yin and Yang, a circle is divided into two equal forms by a sigmoid line; each shape is created by, and only exists in relation to, the other. One form is light, the other is shadow, and within each is a small circular seed of the other - indicating that within any particular form, or within any class of forms, there is the germinating potential for its antithesis. Yang is the active masculine principle; it is a positive, linear energy, pushing upward to the zenith, outward to the horizon. Yin is the passive feminine principle; it is a negative, cyclical energy, pulling downward to the earth, inward to the center. Yang is power and the searching question; Yin is beauty and the waiting answer. Hot and cold, dry and moist, hard and soft, brutal and gentle, evolution and involution, expansion and contraction, eros and logos. The rhythm of their dance is the breath and living heartbeat of all things.

Paradoxically, these contradictory orientations and opposing modalities do not negate each other, for they are *not* in conflict; they are, rather, harmoniously interdependent, each one coming into being as the inevitable consequence of the other. The apparent separation is an illusion. It is like the two aspects of an apple: not the indistinguishable left and right parts, but rather the interior reproductive part, and the exterior protective part. The exterior part exists to provide a delivery mechanism for the interior part; it is expendable and has no other purpose than to sacrifice itself for a distant trans-personal interest. The interior part exists to ensure there will be others of its kind in the future,

and will exploit every resource available to ensure this objective. One part is ever-dying and ever-reborn; one part is perpetual. One part is the *objective form* (which is a simple dispersion of power in space and time); one part is the *subjective function* (which is an elaborate coherence of eternal geometry) - each part grows from and is an extension of the other. Like the opposing polarities of an electro-magnetic field, the existence of the whole emerges only from the flowing current between the two. And the shape of an electro-magnetic field (morphologically similar to the apple) is strangely relevant...

Universal Dynamo

Fundamental particles of matter possess a mysterious quality known as *charge*, a kind of orientation of energy that reacts with oppositely-oriented energy: particles or bodies of matter with like charge repel each other; those with unlike charge attract. Between regions of positive and negative charge there exists a potential for exchange. If a conductive pathway is established between the oppositely charged regions, a flow of *electric current* will occur. Along and around this current are lines of force that manifest as another mysterious phenomena. A *field* is a region, an ethereal force-filled sphere of influence, in which an object is able to interact at a distance with another object, doing so by virtue of certain innate properties that each object possesses, properties that extend out into the space around them. The electro-magnetic field permeates the universe. It is a composite phenomenon, consisting of two aspects. Each aspect is bound to, and generated by, the other: an electric current creates a magnetic field, and a *changing* magnetic field creates an electric current.



The electro-magnetic field - swirling around atoms and molecules, neurons, brains, people, worlds,

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stars, and galaxies - has a shape. Lines of force emerge from one pole of a central axis, rising and expanding like a hyperbolic funnel circling around in all directions in arcs that can extend for great distances; the lines of force curve all the way around and re-enter the opposing pole at the other end of the axis. The north pole is pushing outward and the south pole is pulling inward, a self-sustaining communication of differential exchange, creating the form of a many-layered torus - the hyperspherical shape of the cosmos itself.

In this painting there is a prominent vertical axis, a positive energy at the north pole, a negative energy at the south pole, and a potential for exchange between the two. This stationary axis has *apparent* spin (caused by the relative motion of the revolving cosmos), and a magnetic field is also generated by *spin*. A rotating field generates a flow of energy. And along and around this current is the clockwise-spinning electro-magnetic field (following Ampere's "right-hand-screw" rule). The positively-charged current-flow of expanding space-time, emerging and advancing away from the lotus crown, sweeps in a great swirling arc of universal rotation. This universal rotation is seen in the celestial *Coriolis Effect*, where the vast galactic currents of the heavens - like the currents of Caribbean winds - are deflected by the larger environment into rotation themselves. And so the spiraling space-time dynamo spins, dragging the very fabric of the cosmos ever downward into an enormous vortex - coiled like a great serpent winding around creation from beginning to end...

Parsival the Red

Red is the color of blood, the color of the passions inflamed; it is rage and killing, lust and love. It is action, ambition, appetite. It is birth and death. It is the burning flame of living experience in a sensual and brutal world. Red is the color of a task bestowed and a challenge accepted. It is the banner of all those who would deny their fear and endeavor for great purpose.

Parsival, the Red Knight, is one of the central

figures in the Arthurian legends and medieval romances about the Knights of the Round Table and their quest for the Holy Grail. (The untraditional spelling of *Parsival* used here - a combination of Wolfram von Eschenbach's literary *Parzival* and Richard Wagner's operatic *Parsifal* - declares an intent to take the old myth into new symbolic territory.) The Grail has been described as a dish or a stone, but it is most commonly seen as the sacred chalice that received the blood of Christ at the crucifixion. The holy artifact, the Vessel of Eternal Life, was thereafter brought to Britain from Judea by Joseph of Arimathea, but was subsequently lost and disappeared from all knowledge. Men of great virtue dedicated their lives to its recovery. This is the Grail Quest: a search for the Eternal in the here and now.

Parsival (which means, "pierce the valley", or "the way between") was born of a widowed mother, Herzelayde, who had been a Welsh queen before she retreated to the wild forests of North Wales to grieve in solitude after the death of Parsival's father, the great warrior, Gahmuret. He was far away indeed from the civilized center of Camelot, and grew up entirely ignorant of the chivalrous ways - the established social conventions - of Arthur's Court. A chance, violent encounter with the first Red Knight left Parsival in possession of the blazing, scarlet armor no longer needed by the former owner, and so he set off to be trained in the proper ways of the world by the Knights of the Round Table. Parsival's inexperience and naiveté lead him to many failures, including a disastrous first encounter at the Grail Castle, where Anfortas, the maimed Fisher-King, was left to suffer many long years more for Parsival's incompetence. But the Red Knight searched on, and as years passed he slowly gained wisdom and genuine insight. Eventually he again found the Castle, liberated the King from his suffering, re-united with his lonely wife Condwiramurs the White, and became himself the Grail King - the caretaker of the sacred heart of a profane world.

In the legends, Parsival is *not* reported to have battled dragons across the starry heavens. But in his role as a noble servant bound to a great purpose, he

represents an ideal of honor and duty that extends far beyond the shores of Britannia...

Who is Parsival? He is resurrected Horus, he who has returned from the underworld of death to stand against the life-negating machinations of Set. He is mighty Thor grappling with Jormungand, the Midgard serpent, at the threshold of Ragnarok. He is Gilgamesh, diving to the bottomless depths of the cosmic sea to find the Watercress of Immortality, only to loose it to an avaricious little snake, whose tireless hunger lived on unsated ever after. He is Vishnu the preserver, the defender, standing in cosmic counter-balance to the all-consuming aspect of Shiva the destroyer. He is Hercules struggling to appease the Olympians, the twelve constellated governors of the cosmos, by surmounting his Twelve Labors - one task for each cosmic hour between celestial sunrise and sunset. He is Prometheus stealing fire from the greatest power in the universe (so that Man might one day be greater than the vengeful gods) only to endure eternal torment for his defiance. He is Alexander, subduing the armies of the known world and shining the beacon of Hellenism across it, only to be felled by the tiniest insect soldier. He is Einstein disappearing into his study in 1907, and in the unknown caverns of the mind stealing past the hungry dragon who guards the Treasure of Great Knowledge, to victoriously return with his intellectual boon eight years later - an aged man long before his time.

Who is Parsival? He is an incarnation of the dynamic universe, the action of matter and energy in the field of space and time. He is the cosmic builder, the tireless process gathering fundamental materials into the atomic and molecular forms of the world. He is the ambition of cosmic evolution, assembling those many simple forms into an astounding edifice of ever-increasing complexity and sophistication: galaxies, stars, worlds, life, consciousness. He is the conscious will of the self-organizing principle diligently building islands of order in a dangerously rising sea of *disorder*.

Who is Parsival? He is an incarnation of advancing civilization, a visionary soldier of progress

ever marching toward some distant ideal of justice, peace, and prosperity. He is the vagabond spirit of freedom that wanders the globe in search of the foresight, good will, and optimism that binds the disparate abilities of many to a common goal in the future. He is the confidence that expands into unknown frontiers, ever looking for potential not yet imagined. He is the security ensured by rule of law that makes development and new opportunities possible, the vigilant sentry that stands between society and the dragons that always seek to drag us back to the primitive barbarism we left behind.

Who is Parsival? He is us, born with great promise into the world entirely without the understanding we need to survive and prosper here, fumbling through ignorance, humiliation, and failure. He is the hope we have to participate in the larger drama around us and make some important contribution to the process. He is our ambition to shape the world to our own design, and when we must, the resolve to accept the world as it is. He is the combination of strength and pride, knowledge and wisdom, and fear and desire that struggles against the terrible, gathering inertia that threatens to immobilize us, allowing the dragons to consume us from within.

Who is Parsival? He is the image of the self-made cosmos, standing alone against the relentless, all-consuming vortex, staggered by the appalling horror of its fury: the cosmos is an engine and blood is the fuel it burns...

Dragons of Chaos

The dragon is many things to many people. Chaos and violence, consumption and decay, suffering and death. A penetrating insight into the symbol of the dragon can be found in the Ouroboros - the self-consuming serpent. A snake sloughs its skin and consumes the protein-rich remains; that is, the old and decaying is made young and vivified by the act of eating itself. This is the image of nature: the living world endures through a constant act of self-consumption. Life lives by eating other life. *Nature is perpetu-*

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ally digesting itself. Civilization is largely an attempt to disguise this hideous truth and inure us to the reality of this place. The attempt is rather successful, and we do indeed get to enjoy a protected existence here in our technological cocoon. In our artificially manufactured innocence, we gasp at nature films where the crocodile explodes with unrestrained ferocity from the river's edge and drags the thrashing wildebeest to his doom. Such mortal violence is unknown to most of us. We are thankful to be so safe. But the indomitable dragons from which we have taken refuge are everywhere...

The Second Law of Thermodynamics states simply that heat flows from a hot body to a cold body, and never the other way around. This means that you can't get more energy out of an exchange than you put in, because some energy is always lost in the form of heat. And if there is always ever less available energy, the system must degenerate from an initial state of maximum order to a final state of maximum disorder. Some systems may temporarily experience an apparent increase in order at the expense of great heat-loss, but in any closed system (a laboratory experiment, a power station, or even a life-sustaining world) the entropy (the amount of disorder) must always increase until a state of thermodynamic equilibrium is reached and no further ordered or meaningful exchange (of heat or information) can occur. Everything in the universe will eventually decay into a featureless mash of chaos. Confluences of order - accretions of pattern, structure, and complexity - are the regularities we see in the natural forms and processes of the world. They do not last. The universe has been churning for about 15 billion years now, and may endure in more or less its current form for some billions of years to come. But the dragon grows fatter every passing moment, and the finite amount of energy available to perform useful tasks is ever vanishing down the inexorably approaching throat at the end of the universe.

But that is very far indeed from here; the cosmic ocean and its galactic island archipelago seems peacefully undisturbed by that distant storm. However, the galaxies themselves are not always the peaceful, stardusty snowflakes we suppose they are. It is still

unclear exactly how these large-scale structures of the cosmos were formed. When we look out into the deep heavens, we are looking at the remote past. Light travels very fast, but if its journey is from the boundaries of the observable universe, it may take 12 billion years to reach us. And in that remote past we see amazing objects called quasars that seem to shine with the light of billions of galaxies. We don't know what they are, but they may be involved somehow with the formation of galaxies; we do not see them in regions of the universe at a later stage of development. Some people think these galactic blast furnaces settle down into super-massive black holes that dwell still in the hearts of modern galaxies. And sometimes it seems those immense black-hole hearts (with the mass of perhaps billions of stars) develop a bit of a flutter - perhaps as the result of a collision with some other super-dense object. We can look out into the heavens and see swirling agglomerations of 100 billion stars all dying at the same time as gamma-ray bursts erupt from a galactic core sterilizing everything within a radius of millions of light years. After the big bang, these are the largest events in the universe, which, for a fleeting moment, shine with intensity *greater than all the rest of the cosmos combined*. Galactic neighbors who live too close to these "little big bang" meltdowns will suffer a similar fate, as the dragon's prodigious flames sear out across the intergalactic wastes.

But that is also very far from here; there is good reason to believe that such events happened only in the young universe, and that galaxies, even when in collision, are comparatively stable places to build a pleasant solar neighborhood. However, the stars themselves are not always the warm and friendly lights we suppose they are. Nobody expects things to last forever, and so stars come into being, live a stellar lifetime appropriate to their size (hot, fat stars always die young), and then expire - usually with considerable violence. Next-door neighbors may not survive such events. But old stars advertise their age, giving plenty of notice that the time to move on is approaching. The real nuisances are the stars that get sudden indigestion. Like proto-galaxies, stars too can mysteriously become

gamma-ray bursters, caused, perhaps, by a rare form of simultaneous gravitational collapse and supernova, or perhaps by the collision of neutron stars. When such events happen, a radius of hundreds to thousands of light years is waylaid by a toxic storm of gamma and cosmic rays. The process is not well understood, but there seems to be no way of knowing which stars are contemplating things they shouldn't, no way of predicting when the dragon's scorching breath might howl over the interstellar sea, reducing every living world in its path to inert, lifeless ash.

But that is probably not *too* great a worry around here; the modestly-sized stars in our little corner of the galaxy do not seem to be at all threatening. However, the peace of our quiet solar neighborhood is intermittently disturbed by marauding gangs of meteors, asteroids, comets, and various other vagabond bombs. It is common knowledge now that the dinosaurs were probably killed off by the impact of some celestial object about 65 million years ago; the Permian Event is a mass-extinction that occurred about 245 million years ago that *killed 95% of all life on earth* at that time. When the largest chunk of the Shoemaker-Levy cometary fragments struck Jupiter recently, the resulting fireball was *larger than the earth*. Unfortunately for us, these are not isolated incidents; the completely obliterated surface of the moon testifies to the grim fact that bombardment from the heavens is the rule, not the exception - the geologically-active earth just has a better clean-up crew. The self-erasing geological record of such impacts is somewhat vague, but there is good reason to believe that these events are periodic, happening with clockwork predictability. One hypothesis suggests that our solar system, orbiting the galactic core upon one of the outer spiral arms every 200 million years or so, actually bobs up and down as it revolves, encountering a greater density of interstellar flotsam as it passes through the galactic ecliptic. Regardless, we know that the cosmos is permeated with countless mountain-sized sledgehammers careening through the depths at 30,000 miles an hour, oblivious to any planetary anvils that might block their path. A merciless, world-crushing wrecking ball is already swinging

towards us, and the dragon does not wait for straggling residents to find alternative accommodations before it strikes.

But that is, well, *hopefully* not an immediate concern, and so we strive to enjoy the tranquility of this planetary island oasis in the solar archipelago. However, the earth itself is not always the rock-solid terra firma paragon of stability it seems. For example: volcanic explosions that hurl 35 cubic miles of ejecta into the atmosphere, great rivers of molten rock that scour the landscape of any previous feature, earthquakes that heave up the very surface of the earth and shake it like a dusty carpet, tidal waves that race across the ocean at 600 miles an hour and leap to heights of more than 200 feet before crashing through the shore, windstorms 500 miles across that blow almost 200 miles an hour, wind vortexes that blow at more than 300 miles an hour splintering everything in their path, tectonic forces that tear trillion-ton continents apart and collide them together. And ever the frost-serpents who sleep at the poles threaten to awaken hungry and avaricious, and once again slither out over the temperate regions of the globe to bury them under a three-mile coil of ice.

But such things might possibly be still far in the future, I'm sure, and so we ignore the pitiless destruction of nature all around us and enjoy the tiny, soap-bubble dome of security afforded by this insulated, *artificial* nature called civilization. However, the dragons of history provide little respite. In my lifetime I have seen on the evening news: 1 million dead in Burundi and Rwanda during the tribal violence of the mid-90's, 1 million dead in the Iran-Iraq war, 4 million dead in southeast Asia during the Vietnam war, and a ghastly parade of other bloodbaths too numerous to easily recall. In the last century or so we have suffered 20 million dead in the Chinese cultural revolution, 50 million dead in the second world war, 20 million dead in the Soviet gulag, 10 million dead in the first world war, 25 million dead in the Chinese T'ai-p'ing rebellion. When European ships first arrived in Tasmania, they killed, with weapon or disease, the original inhabitants of that land - all of them. They are an extinct people. Perhaps we'll do better when the

first interstellar ships from afar arrive on the defenseless shores of our little planetary island.

If we should be so fortunate as to survive exploding galaxies, exploding stars, exploding worlds, exploding civilizations, and alien invasions...then we can prepare for assault from within. The *little* dragons also have a truly impressive array of lethal weapons: viral, fungal, bacterial, and protozoan infection, cancer, disease, genetic disorders, etc., etc., etc. And in the end, of course, they must win: cellular integrity diminishes with every duplication, and the dragon-breath acids of time slowly dissolve us into the constituent parts of which we were made: the dust of the earth - itself the ash of long-dead stars.

The torus-motif in this painting is a representation of the universal dynamo, a cataclysmic creation and destruction of galaxies and stars, worlds and civilizations, all grinding themselves into oblivion...

Encounters with the Dragon

Once lent a pen to someone I disliked in high-school and he was not inclined to return it in a hurry. It was a small matter, but I allowed it to fester in my mind over a period of some weeks (because, I suppose, I disliked him). The disagreement came to a head one day when I noticed he had a pen - my pen - hanging out of his mouth. I walked up to him, pulled the pen from his mouth, snapped it in half, and tossed the pieces to the floor at his feet (take *that!*). I turned and walked away. This fellow was understandably upset (I rather suspect the dislike was mutual), and he attacked me from behind. I turned and met a furious volley of punches, most of which were ineffectual and clumsily blocked. This persisted for a few moments, him throwing punches and me pushing them away. I don't recall having any feeling about the fight at that time; I was still shocked at the sudden attack, and was merely defending myself dispassionately. And then he landed a good punch on my jaw. *Something* in my head took over. I was still there in my brain, aware of myself as a distinct entity, but I was no longer the operator of my body machinery. The new captain of

the ship threw the other boy to the ground and began striking him in the face with ruthless ferocity; I, on the other hand, merely observed the events as though from some distance, wondering why I felt no anger and how long the *other* would continue. A teacher and a few students pulled me off shortly thereafter, and so I was not required to mutiny - if such a thing is possible. But that encounter troubled me for a long time: I knew that the *thing* that battered that boy so viciously did not intend to stop - ever. *Bad dragon.*

I once witnessed a beating in progress. As I slowed to a stop at a red light, two men from a car in the lane beside me leapt from their vehicle and attacked two men in a convertible in front of me. Then the *other* came back. I quickly jumped out of my car and ran to the altercation, situating myself between the attackers and the attacked. The aggressors dodged and crowded angrily, trying very hard to reach over and around me to continue their attack, but they did not punch or otherwise re-direct their considerable anger at me - despite the fact that I was indeed physically restraining them, and doing so with confident efficiency. We wrestled in the street for ten or fifteen seconds, the light turned green, and the convertible sped off - closely followed by the attackers' car. I did not know if the occupants of the convertible deserved to be beaten. I did not know if the attackers were gun-wielding madmen. The *agent* who made the decision to intervene did not care about such things. I did care, however, and when *it* retreated to wherever it is that such things go when they are not awake, I began to shake and sweat and had difficulty driving my car. *Crazy dragon.*

I had the opportunity to travel when I was 26, intending to cross Eurasia by land from London to Hong Kong. I did not complete the journey. The adventure was intoxicating, and I became increasingly reckless as I progressed across Europe. By the time I arrived in Turkey - a wonderful place, by the way - I had quite lost all perspective and was doing things far in excess of my abilities. It was only a matter of time before something bad happened - and it did, in a little place called Anamur. There is a 12th-century crusader castle there, crumbling into ruin by the sea. I decided I

should scale the exterior wall - and let us not discuss the reasons for such action or the unfortunate symbolism therein. I had done some rock-climbing before, but my confidence was far in excess of my weekend-scrambler abilities. Despite my lack of skill I had always enjoyed good fortune in my climbs, but in that remote location (many hours from the nearest hospital, I later learned to my dismay) my luck ran out. I climbed up perhaps 30 - 35 feet, and reached an impasse: 800 years of exposure to wind and salt had compromised the stone, and 5 feet from the top the rock was too eroded to continue; it simply wouldn't support my weight. It was then I realized that I had never really learned how to climb *down*. So I clung there to the wall of that castle, hopelessly trapped. I became frightened; directly below me was an unpleasant pile of jagged stones that had fallen from the walls, which extended out to a distance of about 12 or 15 feet. I was going to fall and it was going to hurt - a lot. My knees began to shake and I felt a profound shame that my immanent demise should be so undignified. I had no plan, no intention, other than to wait for the inevitable. The stone crumbled in my hands, I lost my grip, and fell. And then *it* came back. In the tiniest fraction of an instant that it had to act, it was able to leap hard away from the wall, propelling us backwards out beyond the rock pile; as we fell it was able to orient my body slightly forwards to see



where I was falling and finesse the landing to the extent it was possible. I hit the flat ground just beyond the rocks; it sat up and inspected my wounds: head fine, back fine, left arm fine, *working* arm broken, right leg fine, left leg *badly* broken (which cost me almost an inch of tibia). Its job finished, it lay back down, went to sleep (or retreated into its pit), and left me thereafter to clean up the mess. Stupid human - *good dragon*.

My experience with the dragon is, I suppose, embarrassingly mild (Erich Maria Remarque speaks, in his harrowing tale of trench-warfare, *All Quiet on the Western Front*, of young soldiers in combat who experience a kind of "battle-torpor" where higher cognitive function all but disappears as the survival part of the brain takes over for *weeks* on end). But I do have one more brief story to tell. Some years ago, I was late for an appointment and driving too fast on an icy road in my haste to get there. Just ahead of me the road was bending to the left and there was a row of cars parked on the right hand side. As I started to navigate the corner, I could tell that 40 mph was too fast (I was probably distracted and fumbling for a cigarette) and so I lightly touched the brake. But I had badly misjudged just how slippery the ice was and the car started to skid, with the back end sliding out to the right. I was only several car lengths from a nasty accident (and I do not wear a seat belt). And then, in a sudden atemporal flash, I became merely a passenger. The view through my eyes was indeed still from the driver's side of the car, but *I was no longer driving*. In a tiny fraction of a second, *it* took control of the situation, removed my foot from the brake and steered hard right. The car responded and careened onto the sidewalk mere inches before the row of parked cars and continued on, veering left between two trees and on *through several snow-covered front yards*, before a gap in the parked cars allowed the driver to jerk my vehicle back onto the road. I watched the spectacle in astonishment, mute and paralyzed, as the hijacker in my head continued on as though nothing interesting had happened. And then it vanished...and *my will* poured back into my arms and legs and *I* was driving again. My voice returned: "Thank you *God!*"

I whooped involuntarily, but of course god had nothing to do with it.

Consciousness, whatever it is, seems to emerge from the concatenation of information flowing together from all the various data-processing hubs around the brain, congealing like the various sections of an orchestra into a single symphonic soundscape. These symbiotic areas of the brain, resonating and resolving into the perceiver behind our eyes, are rather like evolutionary parasites. The various music-like aspects of the cognitive ensemble are adaptive claim-jumpers, all clinging precariously to a small and brutish nub of brain function that is 500 million years old - a "relentless malice" upon which they are all dependent for survival. And where the symphonic character and totality of consciousness is manifold and unique to each individual life-performance, the stage or predicating foundation upon which it performs is *undifferentiated*: we are but many instruments to this one lethargic, suddenly manic conductor. It is truly *stunning* to witness just how fast the personal cerebral concert collapses when the ancient, universal dragon down in the amygdala (Jormungand the World Serpent) is roused for performance. And so sometimes, like when nations are at war, the usual scattering cacophony of millions of distinct person-melodies is harmonically subsumed with the common purpose of an even larger symphony; and yet, it is precisely when the arrangement is so extraordinarily large and complex that a simple fundamental rhythm binds the whole chaotic endeavor: the metronomic breath of a singular ageless intention...preparing to feed on its children...

(Are these musical metaphors - *consciousness is a symphony of cognitive function*, or *civilization is a symphony of social function* - merely explanatory devices, or do they represent something more? The emotional power of music, which for many is the most intense emotional experience they can have, defies explanation. We know that music stimulates the pleasure-center of the brain, the hypothalamus. *But why?* Why is music so different from all the other sounds we hear, so much more emotionally penetrating than the data we gather with our other senses? When the right

(harmonically complex) sound encounters the right (electrically complex) consciousness, the resonance between them seems to dilate our sense of self: it's almost as though we disappear from the world into another realm beyond time and space. Perhaps some deep part of us is *remembering*, and music is the closest approximation we have here of another home we had before we came to this place...)

Encounters with this most brutish aspect of human instinct (although *none* of our biological imperatives are quite so dignified as the disguises we give them) are common; our history is unending lament of inter-tribal slaughter, a grizzly testament to the latent bloodlust lurking below the surface of consciousness. We have lived with the dragon in our collective basement a long time, but it is still disconcerting to know that such murderous potential hides within us, slumbering peacefully until awoken. We live our peaceful, rational lives, familiar with who we are and what we can do, and all the while the dragon waits - merciless and implacable. And yet, the brutish, primal instincts that incline us to violent self-consumption are the same instincts that have allowed us to survive the monstrous vicissitudes of nature and endure through countless ages. That is the dragon: alive in the natural processes of the heavens and all the worlds therein, alive in the processes of history and in all the people therein. It is the eternal hunger of the primitive forms upon which the fragile superstructure of more developed forms has been assembled. It is the immortal threat of consumption, compelling us into action against it; the dragon's wrath provides the motive force of the cosmos: Eat or be Eaten...

Dragons in the Blood

Some years back, a series of interesting experiments (at Rockefeller University and University of Colorado) were performed on some rats. They isolated two small communities of the rodents, and then randomly shocked them through the floor with a very uncomfortable but not lethal amount of electricity. Rats in the first community were trained to push a

small button that would break the circuit and provide relief to both communities. These two rat groups had no idea when the periodic shock would occur, but group one did learn that they could control their environment by pushing the little button to eradicate the unpleasant sensation.

Now, the poor rats in the second community suffered exactly the same amount of physical trauma (the little button eliminated the current to both communities), but the big difference was that they had no control whatsoever over their environment; the pain came and the pain went away with no apparent cause or predictability.

This is interesting because when the body is subjected to duress, mammalian brains respond by producing chemicals called *endorphins*. The chemical is very much like morphine (from which it gets its full name - endogenous morphine): it nullifies and delays the pain of serious injury; if damage is sustained in a life-threatening attack, endorphins allow us respond appropriately to the crisis and postpone the agony so that we might still act with sufficient vigor to escape and live to see another day. This highly useful and naturally occurring drug makes us feel better when we need it, but it is *not* good for us. The second rats were many times more likely to develop ulcers, infections, and were in general dull-witted and more susceptible to disease. They did not know their suffering would be mitigated by the enabled rats, and so their little brains pumped out endorphins constantly. Their immune systems and cognitive functions became ever less effective, overloaded with quasi-poisonous pain-blockers as addictive as morphine. The helpless rats became lethargic, weak, sick, and died, basically, in a narcotic catatonia.

The rats in the first community didn't *really* have any power over their environment. The scientists were free to shock them as many times, and as violently, as they pleased. But the rats *believed* they had the control and so for that reason alone they were free to be rats: eat, poop, reproduce, and experience such joy of which rats are capable. Humans, likewise, should endeavor to seek purpose in their lives. Not

because such purpose actually obtains, but because it is in our vital interest to do so. When some calamity befalls us, as it inevitably must in this tormented place, we *must* say: "The Gods did not want me to go that direction. They have other purpose for me. I do not know Their purpose, but I will go where They send me. I will work for the Noble Purpose of the Gods."

The universe has ingeniously ensured that it is beneficial, even *crucial*, to believe that everything happens for a reason, even the very bad things. Unlike the rats (who know nothing of *psychological* distress), we cannot always turn the pain off, but we *can* believe the suffering is for some good reason - a Great Purpose to which we have the privilege to contribute... if we choose to do so. That is our control; that is our freedom; *that is the purpose of free will*. To choose to participate in the bloody orgy of life and death and pain is our liberation, our escape from the merciless life-sucking dragon hiding there in the pituitary, waiting for an opportunity to strike...

The Dragon's Cave

We all understand that the human skeleton is the essential human form, the universal foundation upon which the flesh of the human body is assembled. And despite small variations from skeleton to skeleton, we also understand that there is only one archetypal form for the human skeleton, a single blueprint from which all human skeletons are derived. Human consciousness - the Psyche - also has an essential, universal skeleton; this primordial, psychogenetic Consciousness is the singular archetypal form from which all the many distinct psyches of the populous earth are derived. And just as a local projection of the universal skeleton inhabits every woman and man, so too does a local projection of the universal psyche live within every human mind.

How do we know this? When we observe the human form we are quite easily able to determine the basic similarities of shape. Some are tall and some are short; some are fat while others are thin. But we

still recognize the essential human shape: bilaterally symmetrical and bipedal, 4-limbed and 5-digitated, etc. We are not able to observe the psyche so easily, but we may certainly study patterns in human thought to determine what thought-forms present themselves as universal. And extensive study has indeed revealed patterns of thought universal to humanity - from Wall Street to New Guinea, from theoretical physicists to Paleolithic cave painters. We hear these whispers of the primordial voice in the global distribution of identical dream-images, in the prevalence of analogous motifs in our many different spiritual beliefs, in the uniformity of the guiding themes that animate our historical stories and great literature, in the different motivations, ambitions, and even emotional pathologies of men and women that everywhere are manifest in the same enigmatic forms.

In the *dragon-cave* stories of legend, an intrepid and selfless adventurer is permitted to escape with one little sample of gold; avaricious profit-seekers, on the other hand, never get past the guard and are consumed, digested, extinguished. How does one resist such vast treasure and recognize the one seemingly unremarkable trinket they may possess before following a beckoning light that lies beyond the dragon? And what *is* the treasure for which they risk so much?

The dragon sometimes takes other forms (goblins, ghosts, pirates, even forbidding landscapes), and the treasure may be gold or it may be a virgin princess, but the motif is the same: a dark terror zealously guards something for which he has no apparent use. The hero in these stories is invariably a rube, a naive and inexperienced fop who knows nothing of the great world beyond his tiny village. He is us, the average, egocentrically self-absorbed human, mired in the small parochial concerns of a small parochial life. We know precious little of friends and family; how much less do we understand the far corners of the earth that we shall never see? We know one little part of the world: the part we carry around in our heads (and our knowledge of even this may be suspect); about the rest of creation we are monumentally ignorant.

But perhaps there is a way to see much more than the tiny fragment of the world that is visible from our conscious perspective, a way to see the world from the center and achieve a perspective on the world entire. In a world of bewildering multiplicity, perhaps there exists a rare view of simple *unity*.

According to legend, to witness this ancient view of the undivided world is to achieve a great and terrible power - and disappear from the ordinary manifold world of the here-and-now - rather like those who wear Bilbo's Ring. To achieve *invisibility of the self* (that is, to dissolve into the primordial Consciousness of which all individual consciousnesses are but mere local projections of a greater, *darker* entity) is to earn the privilege to search for gold in the Dragon's Cave. The risk is also akin to that of Bilbo's Ring: How long can you wear the ring before the ring wears you? How long can one play with the dragon before one is forever trapped in the belly of darkness? Once the little raindrop dissolves into the great ocean, once it learns the unfathomable immensity and awesome power of which it is part, can it ever again become the same insignificant raindrop?

What was Smaug going to do with all that gold, or Malificent with Sleeping Beauty? In countless legends and fairy tales, a quiet hero stands against the terrible guardian and liberates the precious treasure. But what did Bilbo really gain when he escaped with that small trinket? Bilbo of the Shire knew a great deal about the simple ways of Hobbiton, but nothing at all of the big world beyond. After his great adventure to the lair of Smaug, Bilbo is never again a citizen of the Shire in the way he was, for unlike all others who dwell there, he has looked out through the eyes of the dragon and acquired a rare and frightening view of the world entire.

To journey down into the impenetrable depths of the psyche, down through the ages of history, down through the evolution of Man...ape...lizard, down below love and pain and mercy, is to travel to the very Source of Consciousness. It is to dissolve the boundaries between the separate and distinct, swim in a boundless ocean like a drop of rain, fly in the in-

finite heavens like a breath of air. It is to leave behind what makes one unique, and approach what makes all identical. It is to abandon what is concrete, and become ethereal, indistinct, unified, One. To descend into the most ancient and primal aspects of human existence and look out at the world through the primordial eyes of *Instinct* - the multi-dimensional beast that protrudes into the world from wherever it lives into each and every one of us - is to see the world, not this way or that, but *as all men see it*. The dragon, a universal observer animating the deepest and most fundamental strata in the *Mind of Man*, sees the world as it actually is: an awesome and terrible machine of universal procreation and self-consumption. And the great treasure it guards so jealously is the unknown Will and Intent whom it serves.

We have, for a very long time now, been telling ourselves the astounding story how this dragon, busy elsewhere in the cosmos for long ages of the universe, inexorably found its way to the world in some long-forgotten first age of humankind, to insinuate itself into our affairs ever after...

Serpent Woman

People must have thought about history differently when there was significantly less of it. Evolution, the idea that our species was once a different kind of beast that very slowly changed incrementally over a thousand generations into our current morphological incarnation, is relatively new in the human imagination. There were such speculations even in the classical world (i.e., Anaximander's *transmutation of forms*, c. 550 B.C.), but without Darwin's epiphany - a description of the *mechanism of natural selection* - the idea never really caught on. And yet there was certainly the idea that *civilization* was evolving. It must have been apparent that there was a time in the past when the products of human design - buildings, writing, fashion, law, and city-life in general - were less established, or not established at all. They would have felt much closer than we to any description of how things came to be civilized, when

it was obvious that at some point in the not-nearly-so-distant past, things were much different. They must have wondered, as we still do of course, about the process by which mankind came in from the cold.

How *did* we become organized out there in the jungle, and learn to co-ordinate our labor to construct the first cities? Who taught us to think and speak and build? And why would we do such a thing, begin such an expensive long-term project, when very few instant benefits are readily apparent beforehand? The question is rather convoluted and theoretical now, but in the very early history of (semi) civilized man they must have had a much more immediate sense of it - an intimate perspective on our beginnings worth sharing with subsequent, further-removed generations. And because they had neither the formal logic to scientifically describe, nor even writing to accurately record their understanding, they were obliged, it seems, to instead reckon the making of the world with extraordinarily incisive and memorable language:

"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth..." and continued on to make everything else, including man and woman, in the ensuing 6 days. The man and the woman were blissfully happy in the garden God made for them, but a conniving serpent convinced the woman to eat of the *forbidden* fruit...and so God tossed them (and their descendants) out into the street. Thus did sex and death come into the world.

For many (perhaps even most) people, this *is* the bible, the single most potent image that has reached out and firmly lodged itself in the consciousness of everyone in the western world. The effortless ease with which this archetypal narrative insinuates its way into the human psyche hasn't diminished in 2500 years of telling. (It is possible that the Jews had an older version of this tale - other passages in the Old Testament with markedly different mythological and historical flavor certainly seem to date from perhaps 1000 years earlier - but the version that has come down to us almost certainly dates from a time after the Judean exile to Babylon in 587 B.C.: clearly influenced by the great and ancient culture, the Jewish

≈ *Parsival's Lament* ≈

legend of *Man's Fall from Paradise* is suffused with much older Mesopotamian creation motifs.) How does a story come to be so important that we remember it for so long, when so many other things are forgotten? Imagine the mundane observations of two men in a Neolithic tavern: "I heard about this woman in a garden looking at an apple, but the groundskeeper told her she couldn't have it, and then she took it anyway, so he threw her out!" To which the other man must then have replied: "I like your story; let us form a great religion around it!" The *real* answer for why this simple fable has endured through millennia must be rather more complicated than that.

The language of Genesis - grand, portentous, intensely *dramatic* - is obviously poetry and not meant to be a journalistic account of how the world came to be; and yet, *it feels profoundly true* in some nebulous, difficult-to-understand way. It often happens that we hear something said, that we *know* means something else entirely. And in such situations, it is almost always the case that smooth language is used as a veil to discreetly disguise and conceal something far more primal beneath. The primal aspect of *The Fall* has found an empathetic resonance with something correspondingly primal *in us*, singing of something ancient, something of which we *never* speak, something that, nevertheless, we all know *must* be true...

At some point in our distant past we were barbarous and uncivilized, brutal and savage, like the other animals of the jungle. And then...we were something else. By what process did we move from a kind of existence that we shared with all the other living things of this world, to a new kind of existence that humans alone experience? Who made the bridge from the jungle to the city? In other simians, we generally see a division of labor rather than a physical imposition of superiority between males and females; however, stone-age man certainly *could* have imposed his wishes, as the stronger beast eats the weaker, if he so desired. And with a perpetual mating season, he *desired* very much. Savagery is a tolerable situation for the man, but less so for the woman. So how (and *why*) does the savage imagine a potential *beyond*

the savagery of *everything else in nature*? And after so imagining, how could he possibly believe such a potential was anything more than fantasy, given the universal brutality of everything else in his experience? What is the appeal for *him* of a world where he is, *not* the indomitable hunter who lays low the charging bull mammoth (some more than twice the size of the largest modern elephants) with nothing more than preternatural courage and a sharp stick, but only a domesticated salaryman obediently performing his allotted task for the benefit of society? What possible inducement could have made that *impossible* proposal...inevitable? And yet, in the remote history of humanity, someone must have said (in deeds, if not words): "This way we have always done things - endlessly wandering the world for food, and fucking and killing whomever we please - will now *stop*. I have imagined a new and different, *better* world: *non-nomadic, non-violent, non-chaotic, safe*. We *will* make it exist - *here; now*." Who would ask for such things, make such extravagant demands...of a savage? Who gains the most from leaving the jungle (where *any* action not forbidden by natural law is permitted), for the city (where strict limits are imposed, by Man, upon the appetites of Man)? That is a good question; Genesis, and the story of Man's separation from nature, answers it. Therein lies its enduring enchantment.

Obviously this decision to "go urban" happened on many occasions in many different places in the world. And it didn't begin by a sudden and irrevocable flight from primitive life; it was, rather, an incremental process of development occurring over thousands of years. And yet, it seems that a single, compelling purpose must have driven and inspired the whole drama. If it were possible to watch this history happen, and observe the experience of particular women acting upon this astounding revelation, one would probably see many different stories; but if one could somehow get a distant perspective of the whole great saga of human development (as one might watch a vast battle from a great height and see many thousands advancing as a single shape), it would seem very much like a great force rising up in the world to say:

“Follow me, you strong and clever builders...”

The primary beneficiary of civilization is the *woman*. It was women who determined the idea and form of the settlements we have made. It is not the interests of the testes, but the *interests of the womb* that are served by a fixed and organized society, and the *experience of women* made it necessary and inevitable. It was the persistent insistence of women - and *only* such insistence - that made men ever less savage, and ever more useful to the design of this new, “better world.” It was women, not men, who *needed* civilization to happen; *and it was women who first made the necessary psychological adaptation required to make it happen.*

Someone had to animate the world and transcend passive nature through dynamic will. Someone had to lead the way from an epoch of might and predation and ignorance, to a new epoch of respect and law and intelligence, someone who had the most to gain from the formal limitation of man’s instincts, someone who had revolutionary weapons (or *methods*, if you prefer) unseen in the long history of the earth that might subdue the hunter and channel his strength away from the boyish games of death towards a man’s responsibility to life, someone who knew a great secret about the world...that the other did not. Someone who was *beautiful*...

Only the woman could have imagined mercy and compassion (a deceptively gift-wrapped package from the Cosmic Serpent hiding a darker antithesis within) to thus lead us on those first tentative steps into humanity. And once the woman had this realization, she was no longer the female beast she was. Adam may have been the first man, but *Eve* was the first *human*. She wasn’t *forbidden* from eating of the fruit, of learning the difference between good and evil, between civilization and barbarism; she was *chosen*. A serpentine arm of the Grand Design reached out, not to primitive Adam, but to the *Woman of the Serpent*, the unwitting proxy of the Cosmic Will, imbuing her with a silent invitation glowing around her like a beacon. It’s difficult to describe in words what that beckoning invitation was - the ecstatic, agonizing

synthesis of hormones, ego, and guilt - but the *first moral being* needed something new in the world that could not be found in the jungle, and she needed the hunter’s strength to achieve it. And so *she made the savage understand*...and the man followed the light of her secret knowledge, the two of them leaving the garden behind forever. Perhaps men have still not entirely accepted this arrangement, and some men seem to live easily in either world contingent on their immediate purposes. But, in general, we *have* accepted this bargain and its promises of something we *still* do not yet comprehend. Thus did grace and purpose enter the world.

It seems the universal Lawmaker has determined that the only thing more inimical to its Grand Design than the man’s rapacious appetites is his colossal laziness, and so it has provided an awesome and irresistible, beautiful and terrible incentive to activate and focus his potential - a force of nature, a hurricane indeed. *This* is the secret the woman learned at the Tree of Knowledge, the divine realization - understood, even if only through the natural hormonal processes of her body - that led our species from the blissful ignorance of an *environmentally-determined* State of Nature to the onerous knowledge of a *self-determined* State of Civilization. Only the woman could look into the emptiness of the distant Watcher that the self-recreating womb of the woman serves, to receive the judgment of the hungry, aching void in the self-recreating cosmos itself. And the unquenchable *expectation* thereby delivered was the catalyst that awoke the slumbering Demiurge to his long and arduous task. Sometime in the remote prehistory of Homo Sapiens there was a first expression of free will, a first decision that was not determined by instinct but instead by something entirely new in the human mind. Eternal knowledge *found* the woman; man *chose* to deny his nature and follow her guidance into a fundamentally different kind of adventure in the history of life. Thus did shame and evil enter a suddenly dirty and murderous world.

There’s no returning to that from which we have been divided, no unlearning the truth that fell

from that tree, no escape from the moral revelation that Eve (a symbolic archetype of the early women of our species) delivered unto the world, no redemption from the guilt we all carry ever after: *we're all Jesus*, unavoidably assuming the sins of the world, dying (sooner or later) for the taint it leaves upon us. As you have murdered - culpably bound in an intractable web of complicity that extends to entangle the entire world - so too shall you be murdered. The Universe seeks Life - the many-windowed, Infinite Good - but not any one *particular* undetermined roll of the genetic dice. The Grand Design requires the *certain* determination that only comes from *all* rolls, life across the *entire range* of possibilities from creation to extermination: love and ecstasy and fury and torment, all superposed in a universal probability wave of every attainable experience throughout the cosmos, an undulating celestial tide of triumph and despair rolling over the horizon of space-time towards some distant, unknown shore of judgment...

The Rise and Fall of Space-Time

About 15 billion years ago, the universe came into being: all space and time, all matter and energy, emerged into existence from a dimensionless point of nothingness. The new-born universe grew rapidly, according to laws and geometry inherent to its nature. For the first few infinitesimal moments of existence the eternal Forces of Nature were unified and symmetrical, like the symmetry of the eternal geometric forms in the Lotus-Crown expanding up from the singularity. But brief instants later they broke apart into separate forces - gravity, the strong and weak nuclear forces, and the electromagnetic force. We see the symmetry break in this image; the counter-clockwise axis in the crown evaporates and the lotus-vortex thus



acquires chirality (or “handedness”): the universe unwinds in a *clockwise* manner. This chirality permeates the painting, an echo of the cosmic-scale shape of space-time, and is indicated by strings of stars that follow the force-lines of the whirling vortex.

The early universe continued to grow ever larger and cooler; matter congealed out of energy, and about 300,00 years later the density of the initial matter-radiation fireball became dilute and transparent. In about 1 billion years the first stars and galaxies appeared. Ordinarily we don't expect to see little clusters of order growing in the debris hurtling away from an explosion, but this is what happened. Some mysterious process of nature, working in the blast-wave of the big bang, began to assemble matter into the large-scale structures of the cosmos - building order in chaos. In this image the early transparent epoch of the universe is seen just above the glowing halo of the Lotus-Crown; there, an ancient dragon of chaos is well along in the process of collapsing in upon himself, swirling into - and generating other - orderly spiral forms of stars: galaxies.



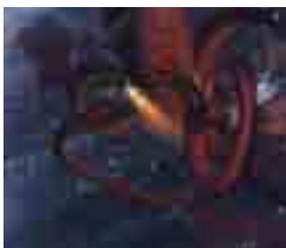
Below that we see a more recent event: another mortally wounded dragon is just beginning the process of contraction - still more dragon-like than galaxy-like. And below that we see the agent responsible for this mysterious rise of pattern and structure: the Celestial Builder, *liberating order by slaying chaos*. Even as the third dragon perishes, he is already contracting, already coiling up into the orderly spiral of stars he will become. And the Builder slays the dragon with a spear-like sceptre that is crowned by a strange disc. The Dragonfire Amulet has twelve circumferential Jewels, one for each labor between Him and the Grail.



Three of the Jewels are glowing incandescent - one for each dragon-task dispatched. The Builder is mining chaos, harvesting dragon-flame, charging the Lotus

Jewels with the Essence of Creation, to fashion a great Key for some distant purpose...

But nine of the twelve dragons remain to wreak their unholy wrath upon the cosmos. One dragon lurks within the Builder himself, swimming through his veins like lethargy and despair; a little piece of that serpent flows from the thigh-wound inflicted by dragon III. The other dragons, great and small, stand between the Builder and His destiny, and one by one He must steal their fire to energize and activate the Key. These labors will take the lifetime of the universe to complete.



The universe continues to cool, as the geometry of space-time curves around; time is running out. The stars lose their energy, become cold, and slowly extinguish. The universe is smaller now, and much darker. The Builder is old and weary, and has one final Amulet Jewel to illuminate, one final guardian destroyer, greater than all the others, to slay at the event horizon of cosmic night...



Black Time

The universe is able to make an object so heavy it cannot lift it. When too much matter is compressed into an insufficient volume, the fabric of space-time will not support the object and, in extreme cases, it “drops” right out of the universe. When a massive star burns up its fuel supply, it can no longer generate enough *expanding* heat to counterbalance the *contracting* tendency of all that matter, and so it will start to collapse. If the star is fat enough, the gravitational collapse will occur with such ferocity that space-time itself will turn “inside-out,” leaving nothing behind but a spherical region of infinite space-time curvature. The diameter of this spherical region will have a fixed size (the distance from one side to the

other might be 10 miles or 10 thousand miles) but its radius will always be *infinite*. Such a place is a hole in the universe so fathomlessly dark and so bottomlessly deep that nothing, not even light, ever escapes. It is a place where matter and energy, space and time, are crushed to a dimensionless point of nothingness; it is the end of everything.

Modern reckoning suggests that the universe is filled with countless billions of these things. If space-time is flat, then each black hole corresponds to an independent terminus, and the cosmos would thus have billions and billions of endings. If, on the other hand, space-time is a hyperspherical torus, then each black hole is oriented, in four dimensions, at the same central focus - *the one and only singularity at the heart of every black hole everywhere*. It is in this direction, towards this dimensionless point of nothingness between the rise and fall of the universe, that gravity, present in every massive object everywhere, insistently beckons all things.

This is the Black Goddess Kali, and Her terrible cloak is the swirling vortex of space-time, gathering the entire universe into an infinite emptiness that can never be filled - the boundless black silence of Eternity. In the very Heart of the limitless abyss dwells the thirsty twelve-petaled blossom of the Lock of the World Lotus. It is here at the point of singularity that the nameless magic of transformation and creation occurs, here at the junction of the opposing energies of the Outward and the Inward



- in conflict everywhere else except in this harmonious orientation - that a new element is introduced to the stillness of an eternal perfection that never changes.

We see, in the trailing coils of the last dragon lurking at the end of space-time as it collapses back into the singularity from which it emerged, the unseen will behind the manifold machinations of chaos: the dragon’s tail *grows from* the geometry of space-time

≈ Parsival's Lament ≈

- it is an *extension* of the eternal forms. The universal vortex is *made* of dragons - one whirling void of hunger for each House of the Cosmic Zodiac. And these primeval demons exist for only one purpose: to drag the innocent forms of the universe from brief and flittering struggle in the light...to extinction in the dark.



The dragon is a projection of *shakti*, the energizing principle of the Goddess that dwells in the motionless center of the revolving universe. Shakti is the incarnation of purpose that motivates the evolving cosmos to aspiration and transformation. It is the primary impulse to action that guides the aim of all ambition. It is the Voice of the GrailSong in Avalon-Nirvana, rippling through the cosmos from the other side of a final, catastrophic desolation. She sings an invitation to discovery, an inspiration to the Quest, an imploration to the Task, and a promise that all this suffering is for some Great Purpose. The Lock of the World Lotus beckons...and waits.

And so it comes to pass that He is triumphant and crosses the boundary of no return, thus bringing to Her the Key of the World Lotus throbbing with dragonfire, the Essence of Creation stolen from the serpents of destruction. This essence, upon which the dragons have grown fat and furious, is *entropy*.

This image is a symbolic representation of a vast but dwindling domain of perpetual upheaval falling into ruin: the fundamental reality of existence is *carnage* - the ghastly still denouement of all endeavor. The universe is promise: *certain annihilation for all things*. Every process, from the atomic to the galactic, deletes from an ever-diminishing pool of available energy and contributes to an ever-growing reservoir of entropy. Every action, no matter how small, is bound to a corresponding accumulation of entropy that has made the cosmos less by an equal amount. It is rather like an accounting ledger of events, a document of all that has happened in the life of the universe. It

is a History of the Cosmos to which all forms - living and otherwise - contribute in the process of their existence, and into which they disappear when the last of their energy is spent. In some distant future when all available energy in the ouroboric universe has been consumed exactly in the fashion of the self-consuming serpent it so resembles, there will *only* be entropy. And this great treasure - the Energy of the Dead - is a seed.

We saw within the inter-flowing symbol-forms of Yin and Yang a contrapuntal seed of energizing opposition; it is a principle we also see in this painting, incarnate in the dance of two conflicting intentions - one that seeks movement and one that seeks stillness - because they are both of them *transformed*. The ever-changing universe is a *manifest process* of Order into Chaos, one aspect slowly consumed by the other. The never-changing Codex of Eternal Law is a *mysterious state* of magical transformation - Chaos into Order - where sorrow becomes joy, pain becomes bliss, death becomes life. Where the fundamental reality is chaos and ever-growing entropy means there is ever *less* potential in the cosmos, then action is the agent of order, the possibility and realization of form and structure; where the fundamental reality is order and there is *only* potential, only idealization without realization, then action is the agent of chaos, the possibility for revision and perhaps even *expansion* of the infinite and everlasting Realm bound in a changeless symmetry of perfection.

And so the *Order-Builder* labors to assemble the Twelve Spheres of the Cosmic Temple and liberate the Grail-Prize, ever challenged and slowly eaten by the shadow of the *Chaos-Devourer*. But what lies beyond the darkest robes of this lamentable night? On yonder shore of singularity where *the agent of order becomes the agent of chaos*, what then becomes of these dragons of space-time, these incarnations of shakti that flow from the cloak of the maternal sky? In their eternal aspect they must be, not the defining parameters of a universal slaughterhouse, but an ageless and exquisite Matrix of Eternal Geometry. In that still and silent domain of gestation and expectation, the

Order-Keeper waits for the destruction of the Absolute, ever yearning for the light of the *Chaos-Bringer*: the possibility for transformation from which creation emerges, the necessary agent of corruption by which the infinite perfection of eternal idea is released into the agonizing process of actualization. The *all-powerful* Key of the World Lotus is the insemination of burning time into the frozen womb of eternity.

The Lock of the World Lotus receives the Key and opens in a blinding thousand-petalled blossom of new creation. This is the Goddess Devi - an *All-Beautiful* efflorescence giving birth to all things - filled with sorrow for the countless times He has suffered and died, filled with joy because He is ever reborn in new form to venture forward and build anew.

The Maiden of the Lotus is the vernal Dawn of Spring, the perpetual cycle of Creation and Regeneration. The Goddess of Love is the Singer of the heavenly Music of the Spheres - the Transcendent Will arousing all immanent ambition. The Cosmic Womb is the still center that draws the manifold cosmos into orbit around Great Purpose, beckoning the dynamic universe into action and transformation. She is the White-Goddess-who-Watches as the Red Lord endeavors in his brutal, cosmos-building Task. She is Order in Eternity waiting for Chaos to inexorably traverse the zodiacal Cycle of Time and triumph over the twelve labors of his great Celestial Quest to return Home...

One is the Imperishable Form that is all forms, waiting for possibility; the other is merely movement where all is stillness...

Fingerprints

The universe is made of atoms, each one the collaboration of opposing charges. Every atom in the universe has an electromagnetic field, a many-layered nimbus around the nucleus, shaped very much like the torus in this painting. Atoms and all the other building-block pieces of the universe are all based upon the same model, *a dynamic periphery around the still center*: electrons around the nuclear

bundle of protons and neutrons, DNA around the spine of hydrogen bonds, the cell around the nucleus, the organism around the heart, sensory awareness around consciousness, civilization around the guiding philosophy of a catalyzing idea, worlds around molten cores revolving around stars revolving around galaxies revolving around...

And this all-pervasive image of orbital entrapment also looks very much like the marauding army of tiny sperm soldiers encircling the Great Sphere of Creation; after a long and dangerous journey to She Who Waits, each one seeks nothing more than to be the one chosen for annihilation in the creation of something far greater.

The repetition of this simple form, in the domains of the very big and the very small, is reminiscent of the shards of a broken hologram, each of which possess a complete representation of the unbroken original. This universal image is a reflection of the source, a picture of the predicate forms of the cosmos: the *many-around-one* motif is a lover's *self-portrait* of the Creators.

Two Observers, separate, but each also dwelling deep within the other; distinct in the dimensions space-time, but topologically bound in some higher dimension as a single interpenetrating loop of being. Each seeks the other...merely to understand the *impossible unity they are...it is*. The intentions that make the universe, love and duty and hate and vengeance, are merely the swirling eddies churning in the wake of their greater quest. But whether, upon finding the *x-dimensional* continuity that eludes them, they seek to nurture that inscrutable coherence or destroy it, I doubt even the gods themselves - *whatever they are* - can say. In their absurd, paradoxically uncertain *and* determined relationship with the *unseen bond that cannot be broken* they are, perhaps, most like we children who so resemble them...

* * *



Personal Notes on *Parsival's Lament*

I had been thinking about this image for a long time - more than a decade. I first encountered the torus in a dream, and was certain that *I* had invented it. I had been reading about how the large-scale shape of space might be round; that is, if you follow a perfectly straight beam of light long enough, you end up right where you started. And I had also been reading about how time might be similarly wound around so that the beginning and the ending are the same place-moment. (Time, inclined just like space to bend in the presence of extreme gravity, may not be a temporal thing at all: it could actually be a hyper-*spatial* reality, a vast 4-dimensional sculpture of all the 3-dimensional instants of history somehow all piled up on "top" of each other, with consciousness creating our familiar sense of movement as it successively encounters each eternally frozen moment.) And so I experimented with geometry, graphically representing circular space and circular time together on two perpendicular axes - which generated the torus. I did *not*, of course, invent the torus and when I found another representation of the torus in an excellent little book by Rudy Rucker (*The Forth Dimension*), I was quite disappointed, but also excited that I might really be on to something genuinely interesting.

Children of Eternity is another attempt at the same idea, of course. In that painting, I was also trying to integrate the Vesica Pisces (that which generates geometry) into the torus (that which generates space-time). As I neared its completion, I was already thinking about *Parsival's Lament* - a different and hopefully *better* solution to the problem. I think I was tinkering with new designs even before I finished the first attempt.

I am embarrassed to confess how long it took to create *Parsival's Lament*. The paint-

ing itself only took about 10 weeks. I did a small 11" x 17" oil study, trying to solve as many of the execution problems as I could at that small scale; that took about 2 weeks. I spent about 8 weeks designing, just figuring out how to squeeze 12 dragons and 2 figures into my space-time torus, somehow leaving enough empty space in a pleasing design for the underlying geometry to be visible. And that geometry had to be *perfect*; the painting wasn't going to work if the many swirling arcs I had planned did not line up. That meant I had to have a perfect drawing and a perfect underpainting underneath the painting: I would not be able to find the geometry with sufficient precision in the painting stage without a detailed image already on the canvas. The drawing of the finished design on the canvas took about 4 weeks. That's almost 6 months, and most of those days were *long* ones. And I'm not even including the many little doodles I did over the years, calculating the geometry of that obliterated torus in the first place. I spent an *insane* amount of time on *Parsival's Lament*; I am very proud of this painting (and I get to look at it every day, as it hangs over the sofa in my living room), but I won't ever do another one like it again.

In *Children of Eternity*, I was thinking of the central goddess figure in a mysterious but certainly not malevolent way; in *Parsival's Lament*, however, I understood it was to be an image of the all-consuming *Goddess of Death* at the end of the universe. Perhaps I was just working too hard, but I found the experience quite a bit more unsettling than I expected. On at least four occasions during those months, I awoke *screaming* from terrifying nightmares where the fragile sphere of my conscious self was being flushed into oblivion from my brain like filthy water from a toilet bowl (a prescient dream, perhaps, of the Observer getting entangled in the meat upon final departure). I

did not sleep well in that time.

(The experience has lead me to wonder: If whatever it is that I am really is just made of chemistry, and thinking desperate thoughts about mortality and death is just another kind of chemical state of the brain, then mightn't such adverse brain chemistry actually affect the brain...adversely? Does bad thought *cause* disease? (Perhaps this painting is also an image of the two hemispheres of the brain, a picture of *mind* under siege, slowly murdering itself from the inside...) I fear that my concern about this nasty idea may be permanent, and so I also have a name for this painting that I enjoy in the privacy of my own thoughts: what else could I call it but *A Man and his Dragons...*)

Very close to the time that I began working on this project, my Mom was diagnosed with brain cancer. She did not live to see the painting completed. Maybe it's not right to paint the Goddess of Death while your Mother dies, I don't know. Maybe it's vulgar to dedicate a painting of self-consuming nature to one who has been consumed. But this unhappy painting also, in some way, marks the end of a happy journey, a creative odyssey that began when an 8-year old boy found purpose in this world, revealed to him in the delight of his Mother at a simple drawing he had made for her. I wish she could have seen the strange place to which her many words of encouragement sent me.

Thanks Mom...

Postscript

I began this *Artist's Search for the Secret of the Sky Goddess* with the claim that I would present images "that express a hope that there might be something soft and nurturing in the world - and a fear that there is not..." I have not yet resolved that lingering doubt.

Permit me to state again the obvious, aforementioned point: if there is not strength in the world, we *will* perish; the many challengers marshaled against us do not sleep for long. There is certainly some weakness in the world, but strength is so well admired and rewarded by human society (and weakness so profitably exploited) that we should have little concern for its long-term existence. It may come to pass that we are not strong enough for some greater adversary we have not yet faced; we shall see. Nevertheless, as I have also said before, without *compassion* in the world we also must perish. But it must be *real* compassion, not the fraudulent, self-serving variety that we have become so familiar (and disillusioned) with in our government-dominated Kafka-World. Real strength is not found in the make-believe adventures of play-actors in a movie *pretending* to be heroic; nor is real compassion found in the prevarications of service-providers protecting and consolidating their own artificial positions of power in society. Real compassion can *only* come with *intimacy*.

Com-compassion (literally, *jointly-suffering*), as opposed to mere civic duty, must be the rare conjunction of two lonely consciousnesses, fleetingly looking out at the turbulent world *through the same window*. It is only in this way of deeply connecting to and understanding another that we can realize and truly know a simple truth, an obvious yet recondite fact of the world that is at once both comforting *and* frightening: *we are in this together*. We often say (in public life anyway) that as we admire strength we also admire compassion. But we lie. Compassion is inconvenient and tedious, and it is scarcely rewarded at all (certainly not in a way that generates any useful or acceptable currency in the Halls of Commerce so ardently defended by the political sentries of the Kafka-World). Most significantly, compassion requires an almost insurmountable *sur-*

render: that we, you and I, invite someone into the private, most secret recesses of the mind and show them, not merely the embarrassing dirt we have smeared upon the window of our personal world-view, but also the surprisingly fragile walls that hold it in place. We are understandably leery, or even afraid, of genuine compassion, and skeptically wonder whether the awesome energy of consciousness surely required for such a feat is even possible in a world so overrun with opportunistic dragons. However, *it is the nature of energy to release itself*; it can be locked away in many different forms, but it *always* escapes.

The first progeny of cosmogenesis - a vast dispersion of hydrogen atoms - were hurled to the far ends of the universe by the violence of their creation. But the very first thing they sought to accomplish thereafter was gather in great number with others of their kind. Only in seething, compact herds of trillions and trillions of atoms could they find the right environment to *mate*: two hydrogen atoms fuse to become one deuterium, which fuses with yet another hydrogen to become light helium, and so on. This churning, hydrogen bacchanalia is the power that burns in all the stars in the sky. Thus, in an orgiastic spectacle of cosmic procreation, did light come to the universe.

And so too came the process by which simple forms come together to make larger more complex forms, that also must bind together in a perpetual ritual that continually releases new formations of energy into the universe. The unknown compulsion that inexorably pulls the manifold forms of being into luminous energy-shedding fusion is the regenerative coherence that sustains the whole cosmic adventure - and even at fifteen billion years of age, the universe is still extravagantly fecund and saturated with desire. What could we possibly call this intrinsic affinity that commands the destiny of...*everything*? The concept of *libido*, which

I briefly mentioned in *LotusWood*, is perhaps sufficient to describe interactions in the lower levels of the Hierarchy of Forms - of atoms, molecules, cells, organisms. But surely it is *not* sufficient to represent the swirling symphonies of potential that result from the entanglement of the compound forms in the higher strata, of *consciousness and ideas*. What *is* this impossible gathering of many-colored windows rising together into astounding patterns of ever-growing complexity and nuance, like a supreme stained-glass masterpiece blazing in the darkness?

If *love* is not the *only* energy of consciousness, then it surely is the most potent form. And consciousness *without* any bond of love with at least some small part of the world is soon extinguished by the permeating abundance of such creative and voracious energy. Love, the energy of consciousness, has an innate predisposition to release itself, like - as the song says - a "fiery supernova." The metaphor is even more appropriate than it first seems: a supernova does indeed have its radiant *giving* aspect, but in the unseen black hole core that remains is a dark and *hungry* aspect. Young people often experiment with the uninhibited release of this bi-polar energy upon other people...and quickly learn (as Romeo and Juliet did) that it is the nature of colliding stars to consume or be consumed. Two entangled supernovas burn much more than twice as bright - and far too erratically for such flimsy beings as we.

Another descriptive metaphor is found in the nature of radioactive isotopes: some closeness yields a useful heat; extreme proximity, however, yields critical mass, chain reaction, *meltdown*. Consciousness simply does not have the emotional insulation to long tolerate such burning intimacy with other another consciousness; it requires some emotional minimum-safe-distance, or only *fleeting* inter-

≈ *Parsival's Lament* ≈

action, to endure. Yet we crave far more than distant, occasional contact with the vivifying universe beyond the empty loneliness of our interior experience. And so adults endeavor to find other less combustible things upon which to bestow their boundless love; consciousness imbued with a sense of self-preservation must also seek - in addition to blissful but fleeting moments of thermonuclear fusion with another consciousness - some kind of *sustainable* entanglement: intimacy without disappointment, without expectation, without accusation, without *judgment*.

Some release their energy of consciousness on tangible nature, some on intangible faith. Some love their pets, their cars, their houses, their material possessions of many kinds; some love activities or pursuits of one sort or another. Some love stature and power; others, culture and tradition. Some love experience and sensation; others, knowledge and wisdom. Some misfits love their *work*. Consciousness is compelled to seek an escape

from the solitary nature of its being by looking to something beyond the self, and yet it remains prudently wary after near self-immolation in the beautiful ignorance of youth. And so many of us connect most profoundly to mere nouns and verbs, releasing our best energy, our very *life-force*, upon things that cannot return it. Civilization is, in large part, only the most impressively conspicuous artifact of our unsatisfied desires.

But there *is* one kind of human that can transcend the monolithic barrier of emotional insulation that runs between all the friends and

lovers of the world keeping them separate and safe, one manifestation of consciousness that is able to surrender its psychic fortifications to another and quietly suffer the petulance of an unruly dragon as it rampages through the vulnerable halls of an undefended mind. Unique among all the many different kinds of bonds that form between people, only *a mother's love for her children* can endure undiminished and uninterrupted for the duration of her existence. It is this simple mercy, more than any other, that redeems the all-murdering horror of a pitiless universe.

Parsival's Lament is an image of transient power, of the travails and destiny of Life and Nature. But this painting is only *half* of the story; it requires a *sequel* - a companion image of eternal beauty hidden deep within that central singularity, the primordial, green-glowing twelve-petaled heart chakra of transformation - to describe, not the fall to destruction, but the *rise to creation...*

