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Spiritual Epistemologies and Integral Cosmologies: Transforming Thinking and Culture

Jennifer Gidley

*The Stars spoke once to man
It is World-destiny
That they are silent now
To be aware of the silence
Can become pain for earthly man*

*But in the deepening silence
There grows and ripens
What Man speaks to the Stars
To be aware of the speaking
Can become strength for Spirit Man
Rudolf Steiner*

The culture of a people is intimately connected with their type of thinking and system of knowledge. In Western culture, universities have been the official guardians and transmitters of those systems of knowledge for the past 1,000 years or so. A crucial question to be addressed here is whether universities have sufficient foresight today to spearhead essential changes in thinking and culture, or whether they are merely “credentialing the status quo” (Wildman, 2000). The twentieth-century university model had its rightful place in the context of nineteenth-century industrial and social progress, and nineteenth-century Western linear rationality. Centuries of instrumental rationality have led to an atrophying of imaginative vision and subsequent technologization of culture throughout Western society, but particularly within universities. They, in turn, have become obsessed with methodological issues and technical detail. The resultant disconnectedness from community and culture of much dry academic thinking today parallels a process of cultural degeneration and fragmentation.

Looking at the conceptual trilogy of methodology, epistemology and ontology as ideally representing a balance, we must recognize that contemporary universities have all but forsaken the latter two constructs. Universities need to move beyond methodology to a dialogue of epistemologies, encompassing the deeper sense of multiculturalism, and beyond that to reflecting on their own ontology, to their very purpose of being. However, it is proposed here that even this is not enough. If universities are not only to survive the complex political, economic, and social chaos that present trends suggest will occur in the coming decades, but also to be active in transformation, then they need to reflect critically on their underpinning worldview (Gidley,

2000). If universities of the future are to rise to the challenge of being agents of transformation, they will also need a more extensive, inclusive cosmology—an underpinning system of knowledge comprehensive enough to take in and give meaning to the complex, global problems we have created. In the growing complexity of current global crises, there is an urgent need to access higher order ways of thinking and knowing if we are to avert environmental and cultural catastrophe.

Even so, in spite of some positive signs of change afoot, the orthodox academic world still seems obsessed with the need to categorize, to label, and to fragment knowledge into its smallest atoms. It is not content with divisions into the disciplines of science, philosophy, humanities, theology, and so on. Even within disciplines, it must divide and fragment exponentially into branches of philosophy, specializations in science, while society follows suit with denominations of religion, and with sects and cults within those. If we are to rise above current global conflicts, and even terrorism, universities as the “guardians of knowledge” must become stewards of practical wisdom by committing themselves to integral approaches to knowledge through fostering inclusive cosmologies and the cultivation of imaginative/integral thinking. This will require an epistemological shift in thinking to encompass the types of spiritual knowledge systems inherent in the “Perennial Philosophy.”

This essay explores how thinking may be transformed from the dualistic, fragmenting, and conflict-producing instrumental rationality of the past to a higher-order integral consciousness that has the capacity to transcend and include pluralistic worldviews and to generate diverse, yet inclusive, cultural futures (Wilber, 1995).

From the perspective of the discipline of futures studies, the scientific, intellectual mode looks at the future as a trajectory of existing trends—an empirical model. This concept binds the future to the present and colonizes its potential. The youth-futures research suggests that the young have taken in and are disempowered by the negative potential in the existing trends, fed also by negative images through the media of fearful futures. A society with no vision, no imagination, cannot progress, cannot transcend the limitations of the present. The ability to imagine better worlds is crucial to creating better worlds, as is well known from the research of many futurists (Boulding, 1998; Slaughter, 1994; Inayatullah & Wildman, 1998).

So was intellectual rationality a mistake? An aberration? On the contrary, it was exactly the appropriate and necessary stage of consciousness for humans to discover their freedom and their ego-nature. Intellectual rationality has been a powerful tool for increasing the scientific knowledge of the natural world that has developed since the Enlightenment, and in a sense its development has been one of the major accomplishments of Western civili-

zation. Its limitations, however, become greater the further we move beyond the material manifestations of reality, from the physical sciences into the life sciences, and especially into the social sciences. Its categorical nature leads to dissection and fragmentation of knowledge rather than synthesis and integration. In this regard it is extremely limited in its ability to know the human psyche. Even so, orthodox psychology tries to emulate natural science in its approaches. This is the failure of much contemporary psychology.

If intellectual rationality has led to academic and cultural fragmentation, the question must be asked: “Can the rational intellect itself be the tool for reintegrating the divided disciplines?” It is argued here that it cannot and that new ways of thinking, speaking, and creating meaning need to be found, which lift our consciousness into communion with the spiritual world for inspiration. I would go further to suggest that, in our endeavors to create the new modes of thinking and speaking required to spiritualize our consciousness, the closest forms we have at present are poetry, mythology, movement, and art. For the intellect it is a complicated, convoluted effort to try to integrate “separate” disciplines such as science, philosophy, and theology. What language can be used? “Theologizing science?” “Empirical religion?” “Philosophical methodology?” Conversely, using the artistic imagination, we may create inclusive cosmology mandalas (maps or models) that stimulate the imagination to perceive this interweaving.

A Macrohistorical View of Thinking: Cosmologies of the Past

The term *cosmology* is used very broadly to mean worldview, including our view of the universe and the place of human beings in it. It will be argued that there is an important link between the major cosmological models underpinning macrocivilizational periods and the type of thinking associated with these eras.

The seminal theories of Richard Tarnas (1991) suggest that the present dominant worldview of our culture leaves humans alienated on all levels: cosmologically—in terms of our worldview; ontologically—our understanding of the nature of being; and epistemologically—how we arrive at knowledge. Tarnas’s research on the history of Western philosophy further supports the views of Willis Harman (Harman, 1988) and the work earlier of Rudolf Steiner (Steiner, 1923/1990), who claimed that human consciousness would reach a crucial turning point throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. In all these perspectives, it is argued that a crucial shift occurred in the sixteenth century with the declaration by Copernicus that the earth was not the center of the universe. In order to understand the significance of this shift for all aspects of human development and culture, it is necessary to look

back briefly to how humans viewed the world before Copernicus. There were two key aspects of earlier pre-Copernican Western cosmologies and these aspects are also found in the cosmologies of traditional non-Western cultures.

- The universe is symbolically represented in holistic, usually circular, mandala forms.
- The imagery within the mandalas consists of hierarchies of living beings representing different aspects of the earth and cosmos.

These two aspects are evident in Figures 1 to 4 below.

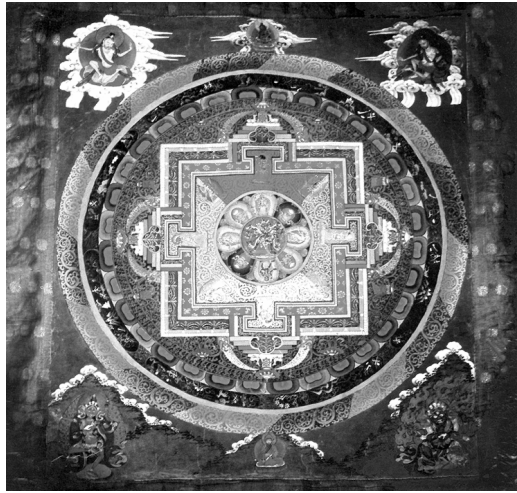


Figure 1. Tibetan Cosmology—Mandala of the Maitripada

At the center is the deity Samvara (or Cakrasamvara) the Secret Lord of Mt. Kailash—Samvara means “Supreme Bliss.” “Inner freedom begins where the opposites have ceased to exclude each other in continuous conflict” (Lauf, 1976, p. 173).

Through the symbols and artistry in these pre-Copernican cosmologies, everything was viewed as a whole and, furthermore, humans were seen to be at the center of this whole worldview/cosmology, as if embedded in a great cosmic womb surrounded by living beings of all dimensions. The Western view of the universe before Copernicus (when science and religion were still united) was based on the Ptolemaic model, which held that the earth was the center of the universe. Ptolemy based his cosmology on the thought of Aristotle (c. 300 BC). This unitary, cosmological archetype, sometimes referred to as “the great nest of being” (Wilber, 2000), is illustrated conceptually in Figure 5, which depicts the centrality of man’s place, using the well-known

image by Robert Fludd (Godwin, 1979) of man as microcosm in the macrocosm (Gidley, 2001).

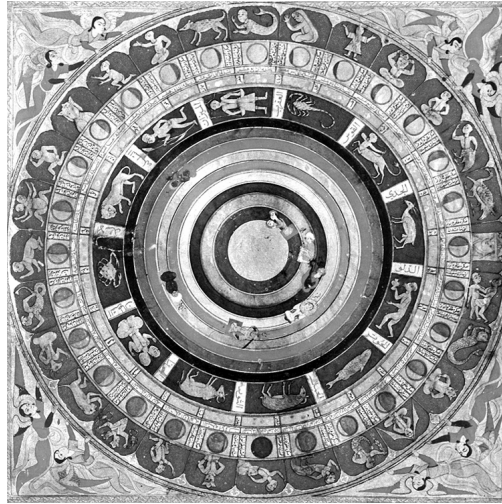


Figure 2. Islamic Cosmology—Man and the Macrocosm

Miniature depicting man in the bound cosmos, surrounded by the heavens, each corresponding to one of the prophets; the zodiacal signs; the lunar mansions that symbolize the letters of the secret alphabet; and finally, the angelic realm which is above all space and therefore beyond the visible cosmos and itself the gate to the Divine Presence (Harmony with the Metacosmic Reality) (Nasr, 1976).



Figure 3. Medieval Zodiac (Time: Rhythm and Repose)
From early medieval manuscript, Italy (von-Franz, 1978).

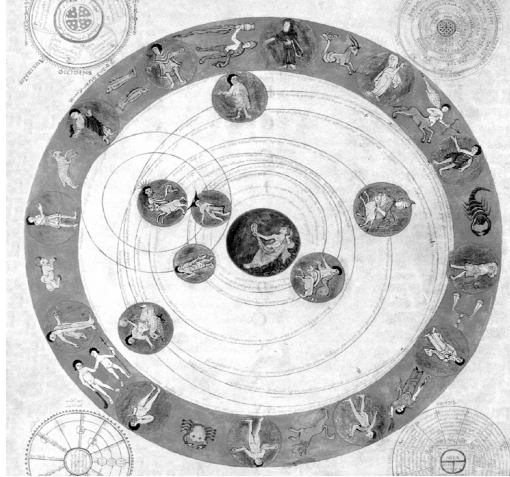


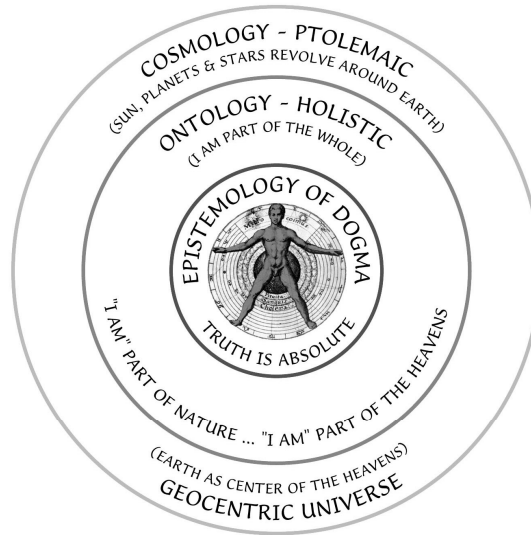
Figure 4. Ptolemaic Cosmology
The medieval view of the zodiac, France, circa AD 1000 (Mammana, 1990).

From the present-day scientific perspective, it is argued that in these earlier “prescientific” times, humans were primitive and childlike and merely imagined a world of Gods and spirits because they were not intellectually mature and developed enough “to know reality scientifically.” However, from the perspective of a spiritual epistemology (or Perennial Philosophy), it could be said that in the times represented by such cosmologies, humans were in closer communication with the spiritual hierarchies, but that later the spiritual beings guiding human development stepped back so that humans could become free. From both these perspectives it is evident that this “stepping back of the Gods” paralleled the development of rational thinking. The spiritual alienation experienced by contemporary humans was highlighted by Rudolf Steiner in the following poem written in 1922 for his wife (Steiner, 1961):

*The Stars spoke once to man
It is World-destiny
That they are silent now
To be aware of the silence
Can become pain for earthly man*

*But in the deepening silence
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COSMOLOGY I
Past - Pre-Copernican, Pre-Rational

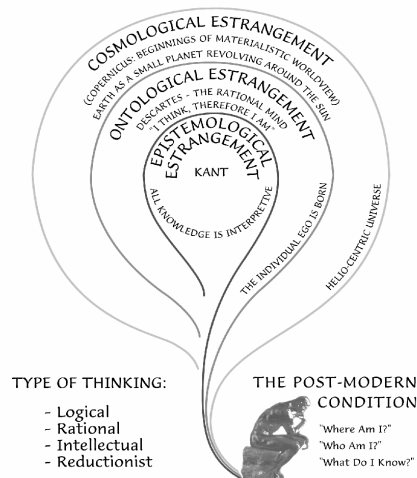


TYPE OF THINKING:

- Pre-Rational, Pre-Logical
- Pictorial, Sentient

Figure 5. The Human Being Within the Cosmic Womb: The Premodern Condition.

COSMOLOGY II
Present - Copernican, Rational



TYPE OF THINKING:

- Logical
- Rational
- Intellectual
- Reductionist

THE POST-MODERN
 CONDITION

"Where Am I?"
 "Who Am I?"
 "What Do I Know?"

Figure 6. The Human Being, Hurlled Out of the Cosmic Womb: The Postmodern Condition.

Cosmology of the Present (Western Worldview)

The triple alienation described by Tarnas (1993) as the post-Copernican double bind will now be explored in more detail. When Copernicus declared that the earth (and by default, human beings) was not the center of the universe, the heliocentric cosmology model was born, leading to cosmological estrangement. In the seventeenth century, the ontological estrangement from our own being came with Descartes' *cogito ergo sum*. The realization that "I think, therefore I am," meaning in essence I am an intellect, nothing more, led to a further depersonalization and mechanization of thinking. Finally, in the eighteenth century, building on these new rational/materialist foundations, came the epistemological estrangement from Kant's conclusion that all human knowledge is interpretive, that the world has no reality save what is perceived by the mind that views it (Tarnas, 1993). The diagram (Figure 6) is an attempt to illustrate some of the key features of this stage of human culture and consciousness. In this diagram, the image of man chosen to represent the postmodern, alienated, rational man is the sculpture of Rodin's thinker.

In parallel with these events, cultural power was shifting from the church to science as the new authority. By the seventeenth century the battle was on and by the eighteenth century, science had won. Prior to the developments mentioned above, which in a sense hurled mankind out of the cosmic womb, science and religion existed hand in hand, often woven together in art. Once intellectualism became underpinned by a reductionist, materialist worldview (as opposed to a divine one), spirituality was relegated to superstition and sidelined as faith (as opposed to knowledge which was "scientific"). No longer regarded as a sphere of knowledge, religion lost its status to science that had become by then "scientism." Hence, the dynamic dualism of science and religion gave way to the monism of science as the one true way of knowing. However, science without its divine moorings soon led to philosophical nihilism. In a sense the nineteenth and twentieth century "antiphilosophies" of nihilism and postmodernism are the logical extensions of this triple alienation of the human spirit.

With all these developments, the Western worldview has become increasingly rationalistic, materialistic, and reductionist. The mode of representing a cosmology became denotative rather than connotative, and with this process there was a subsequent decline in the artistic life and imagery of cosmological representations. Therefore, we lost beauty when we severed intellect from its divine source. What was once regarded as the starry heavens, the home of all the spiritual beings who surround humans, became a dark void, filled with dead planets, gaseous balls and black holes. Representations of this field became lists of numerical calculations and linear charts.

Our attempts over the past 300 years to understand the nature of the cosmos, the planets, solar systems, and galaxies, have been dominated by a materialistic worldview and reductionist methodology. However, the attempt to understand the esoteric nature of the cosmic bodies using physical instruments is analogous to trying to understand the human mind by studying a corpse.

Psychosocial Implications of a Materialist Cosmology

The full sociocultural and psychological implications of the dominant materialist worldview have been gradually seeping into the human soul over the last of three centuries. In many ways the twentieth century could be seen as the low point in this regard. From a psychological perspective the litany of symptoms, exhibited by many young people in the “most developed” nations, exemplifies this disillusionment with great poignancy. Research shows that many young people of the West increasingly manifest high rates of depression (15% to 24%), eating disorders, and other forms of mental illness (Bashir & Bennet, 2000). Comparative studies, primarily in OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) countries, indicate that when the numbers for all mental health disorders are combined, including ADHD, conduct disorder, depression, anxiety, and so on, as many as 18% to 22% of children and adolescents suffer from one or more of these disorders (Raphael, 2000). In Australia there have been increases in youth homelessness and school truancy that have created an underclass of “street kids” disenfranchised by society, yet often by the young people’s own choice. Increasing numbers of youth are committing suicide and other violent crimes at an alarming rate, and are expressing a general malaise, loss of meaning and hopelessness about the future (Gidley & Wildman, 1996; Eckersley, 1993). Youth suicides among young males (ages 15 to 24) in Australia have doubled in the past twenty years (Mitchell, 2000, p. 194). Sohail Inayatullah (2002) refers to these phenomena as symptoms of “postindustrial fatigue.” Personally, I regard them as symptoms of the “malaise of materialism.” Under the impact of globalization, it can be expected that the “developing nations” will catch up to the West’s sorry statistics in the near future (Gidley, 2002).

We might ask: Has the great Western civilization project been a huge mistake? Richard Tarnas believes that our current predicament is not an error or an imperialist-chauvinist plot, but part of a greater design. This view is supported by other grand theorists such as Rudolf Steiner (1968), and contemporary thinkers such as Duane Elgin (1993) and Ken Wilber (2000) as the remainder of this essay will demonstrate. Although the postmodern predicament may seem depressing, from another perspective it can be seen as an

essential step in the development of human consciousness—a step toward the freeing of the human ego. The evolution of human consciousness, by way of the rational intellect which Western civilization has spearheaded for better or worse, will be further discussed below. However, what has happened to spiritual knowledge during the age of the dominance of science and intellectual thinking? Has it vanished or merely gone underground?

The Perennial Philosophy—Hidden Stream of Cultural Transformation

The Perennial Philosophy is that primordial wisdom of mankind whose traces are found everywhere, except in the modern and postmodern Western materialist paradigm. Not only is this wisdom the prerogative of churches and temples, but rather it can be transferred through a lineage of creative individuals. This unbroken lineage has, throughout every generation in history, expressed itself in ways appropriate to the challenges of the time and place. The following list includes some examples given by the Lindisfarne Fellows: the Theosophy of Yeats and Steiner, the Freemasonry of Mozart, the Alchemy of Fludd, the Hermeticism of Bruno, the Sufism of Ibn Arabi, the Kabbalism of Rabbi Moses de Leon, and the Neoplatonism of Plotinus. The hermetic texts on which some of these are based go all the way back to the most ancient Egyptian teachings of Pythagoras and Hermes Trismegistus (Lindisfarne Association). The esoteric Christian stream of mystery-knowledge centers also includes the Cathars, the Rosicrucians, and more recently the Anthroposophists.

From the perspective of these spiritual epistemologies, the cultural evolution of the human race has been a descent of humans from a spiritual homeland (Golden Age, Dreamtime, Eden) deeper and deeper into matter, through several major cultural epochs. Interesting links can also be observed between the various major cultural periods, the architecture and the thinking of the time. As demonstrated in Figure 7, twentieth-century Western architecture is overall the least artistic and integrated, with a predominance of square boxes, that reflect the structure of intellectual thinking.

From a Buddhist perspective, the Perennial Wisdom is referred to as the Shambhala Warrior teachings (Trungpa, 1984):

The Shambhala teachings are founded on the premise that there is basic human wisdom that can help to solve the world's problems. This wisdom does not belong to any one culture or religion, nor does it come from the West or the East. Rather it is a tradition of human warriorship that has existed in many cultures at many times throughout history.

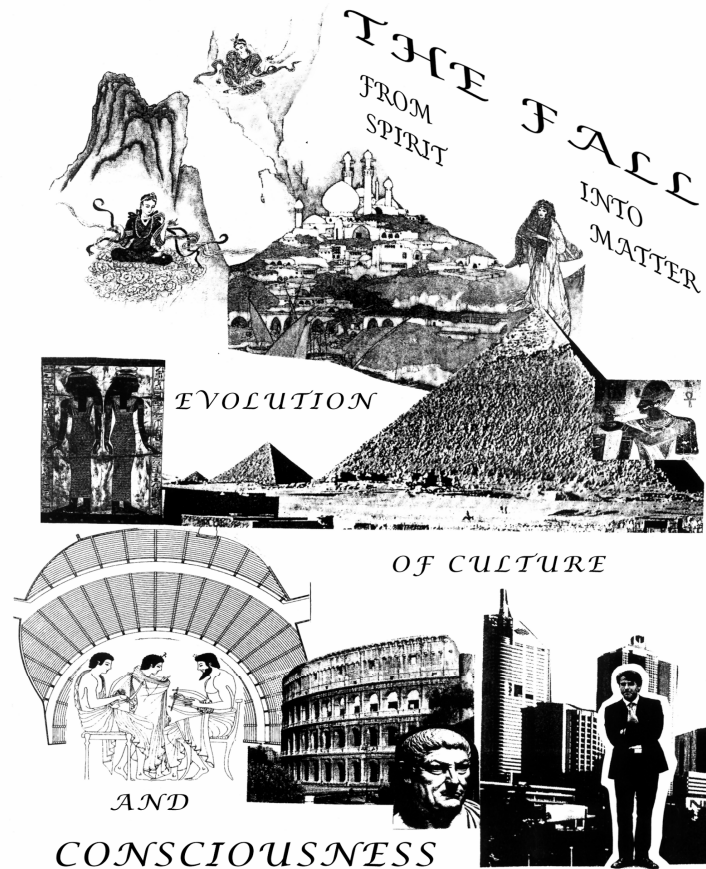


Figure 7. The Fall from Spirit into Matter.

The way in which this Buddhist wisdom could underpin a wise civilization is well illustrated by the following quote by E. F. Schumacher: “A Buddhist sees the essence of civilization not in a multiplication of wants but in the purification of human character” (Zajonc, 1997).

Esoteric Anthropology

In a contemporary attempt to develop what might be a new human image within the paradigm of Perennial Philosophy, Sheldon Isenberg and Gene Thursby (1984–86) introduce the concept of esoteric anthropology. In their view the Perennial Philosophies provide a significant response to the cri-

tiques of modernity while also transcending the postmodern despair of relativism. They offer two alternative approaches within the perennial stream: one which preserves the orthodoxies of traditional religions and one which promises freedom from their psychic bonds (Isenberg & Thursby, 1984–86). These two types of Perennialists are referred to as:

- **Devolutionists** (Traditional Perennialists)—those who believe traditional religions are the only authentic carriers of the Perennial Philosophy.
- **Evolutionists**—the Perennial Philosophers who believe that authentic mysticism is possible apart from the historically established traditions. Isenberg and Thursby refer to Oscar Ichazo (whose scientific mysticism goes beyond Aristotelian logic and Hegelian dialectics to trialectics) and to Ken Wilber as being significant contemporary evolutionists. They also refer to the “evolution of consciousness” work of Rudolf Steiner (Spiritual Science) as interpreted by Owen Barfield.

Robert McDermott (2001) from the California Institute of Integral Studies also discusses the debate within Perennialism between the traditionalists and evolutionists in a series of articles (McDermott, 2001a, 2001b, 2004). He refers to himself as espousing a “spiritually based evolutionism.” He explores Rudolf Steiner’s evolutionist position in a discussion of the different types of empiricism of Steiner and William James. He refers to Steiner’s work as a comprehensive “spiritual epistemology,” based on transformational empiricism informed by imaginative thinking, as a “method for generating spiritual, including philosophical and moral insights that can be known to be simultaneously individual and universal” (McDermott, 2001b, p. 6).

Although, in the light of the above, it seems evident that in terms of official culture spirituality had lost its place to science, it has been carried underground by the Perennial Philosophers who have carried a parallel responsibility for the evolution of culture and consciousness. In a sense the Romanticism movement was the visible peak of this underground movement—perhaps a little ahead of its time. Scott (2000) cites Tarnas as referring to a reemergence today of Romanticism with a “new vigor.”

The Initiation of the Human Ego or “I Am”

There are many different views on where humans stand today. Many believe that the human race and earth as we know it will come to an end before too long, that we will exhaust resources and/or there will be massive catastrophes. The two extreme views are represented by Duane Elgin’s “Crash or

Bounce” scenarios. A contemporary Perennialist, Elgin (1999) speaks of the present crisis of humankind as a “self-inflicted initiation”—a rite of passage that could lead human beings to a new relationship with one another and with the Earth. He speaks of the possibility that we may either crash or bounce, and of four likely stages of denial, innovation, initiation and bounce (see Figure 8).

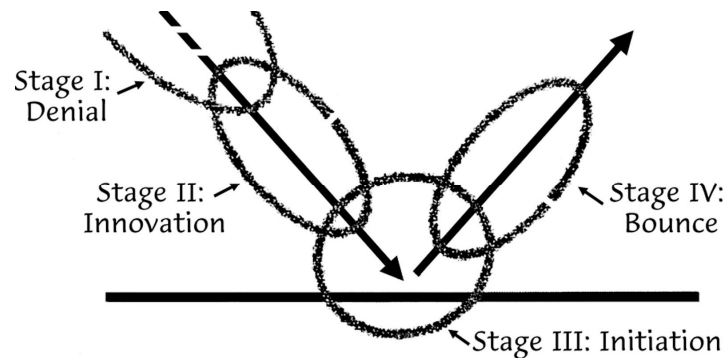


Figure 8. Evolutionary Initiation and Bounce.

Other Perennial Philosophers have a similar view that we are at a low point and will bounce or climb back out of our crisis, also seeing the present time as a time of initiation. Rudolf Steiner’s spiritual epistemology includes the concept of conscious evolutionary development and regards the present stage of heightened materialism as a low point. This is the “no growth without crisis” theory in which we had to be thrown “out of the nest” and rejected by the Gods for our own development and freedom. In this view, which is an extension of the bounce theory, the crises of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries described above relate to the development and freeing of the human ego. Crucially though, the individual human ego, if it is not to lead humanity into an abyss of self-centered materialism, needs to be transformed by a higher order, spiritual consciousness or “higher self.” Frithjof Schuon, cited in Isenberg (1984–1986), described the human ego as the great double-edged sword. “He alone among terrestrial creatures is free to go against his own nature” (p.14). Soren Kierkegaard was also aware of the dangers of the “free human ego” devoid of spiritual grounding:

The most tremendous thing that has been granted to man is: the choice, freedom. And if you desire to save it and preserve it there is only one way: in the very same second unconditionally and in complete resignation to give it back to God, and yourself with it... (quoted in Campbell, 1968, pp. 197–198)

The Vertical Dimension

That there is a vertical dimension to our ontology may sound a little flip-pant at first. However, it is fundamental to the idea that we can “bounce.” The bounce idea also implies that we are at a low point because if we believe that we are already at the top of the evolutionary ladder (as in the Darwinian view), then there is nowhere to bounce to. Even so, foundational to our materialistic and postmodern philosophies is the belief that hierarchical levels of existence including consciousness are part of the old “pre-scientific,” traditional religious belief systems, and therefore died with God. On the other hand, the vertical dimension of humanity stretching from the physical to the spiritual has always been foundational to the Perennial Philosophy as discussed earlier. This vertical dimension has long been referred to as the Great Chain of Being. E. F. Schumacher, in discussion with Fritjof Capra, described what he called “a fundamental hierarchical order consisting of four characteristic elements—mineral, plant, animal and human” (Capra, 1988, p. 228). He related these also to four qualities—matter, life, consciousness, and self-awareness. Schumacher maintained that the differences between the levels represented fundamental jumps in the vertical dimension or “ontological discontinuities.” Such ideas are also part of the comprehensive spiritual epistemology of Rudolf Steiner, which will be further explored in the next section. Harman expressed a similar view when he explored four levels of science (physical sciences, life sciences, human sciences and spiritual sciences), in which only the first is really well developed in the West (Harman, 1988). In this context it is not surprising that the horizontal rather than the vertical dimension is favored by Western science because in this first level (the physical level) it reigns supreme and consequently, it is easier to deny the existence of the other levels. Ironically, the vertical dimension and the ontological levels within it have always been acknowledged and respected by the Perennial Philosophers and mystics and have been symbolically represented by the metaphor of the ladder or steps (see Figures 9 and 10). St John of the Cross (1959) refers to the secret ladder as secret wisdom in his sixteenth-century classic of spiritual initiation—*Dark Night of the Soul*.

Types of Thinking—Three Major Layers

If the vertical dimension is applied to types of thinking we may consider three major layers—the prerational, rational, and post/transrational. These can be contextualized into a broader framework of human development where the human potentiality has nine major parts: three body related, three mind/soul related and three spiritual. This vertical layering of the different aspects of the human being (Figure 11) is found in a slightly varied form in

many of the Perennial Philosophies (Eastern and Western), as already discussed. Similar taxonomies may be found in Vedanta Hinduism, Mahayana Buddhism, and the Kabbalah (Bjonnes, 2001), while Ken Wilber (2000) cites dozens of such frameworks in his book, *Integral Psychology*. In spite of the numerous different taxonomies for examining the developmental layering of the human being, the model presented here is chosen because it contains many linkages to other fields and includes the theory that different levels of consciousness are developed in humanity during different major cultural periods. Hence it supports the main thesis of this essay that the culture of a people is intimately connected with its constituents' type of thinking.

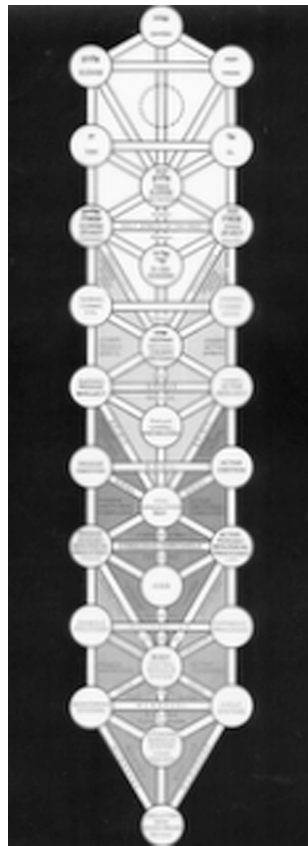


Figure 9. The Tree of Life (Jacob's Ladder)
According to the Kabbalah, the Tree of Life (or Jacob's Ladder), represents where the four worlds (of the Jewish Cosmology) interpenetrate the whole of existence.

The four worlds are:
The World of Emanation (White for Radiance)
The World of Creation (Blue for Heaven)
The World of Formation (Violet —Union of Heaven and Earth)
The World of Action (Red for Blood and Earth) (Halevi, 1979).

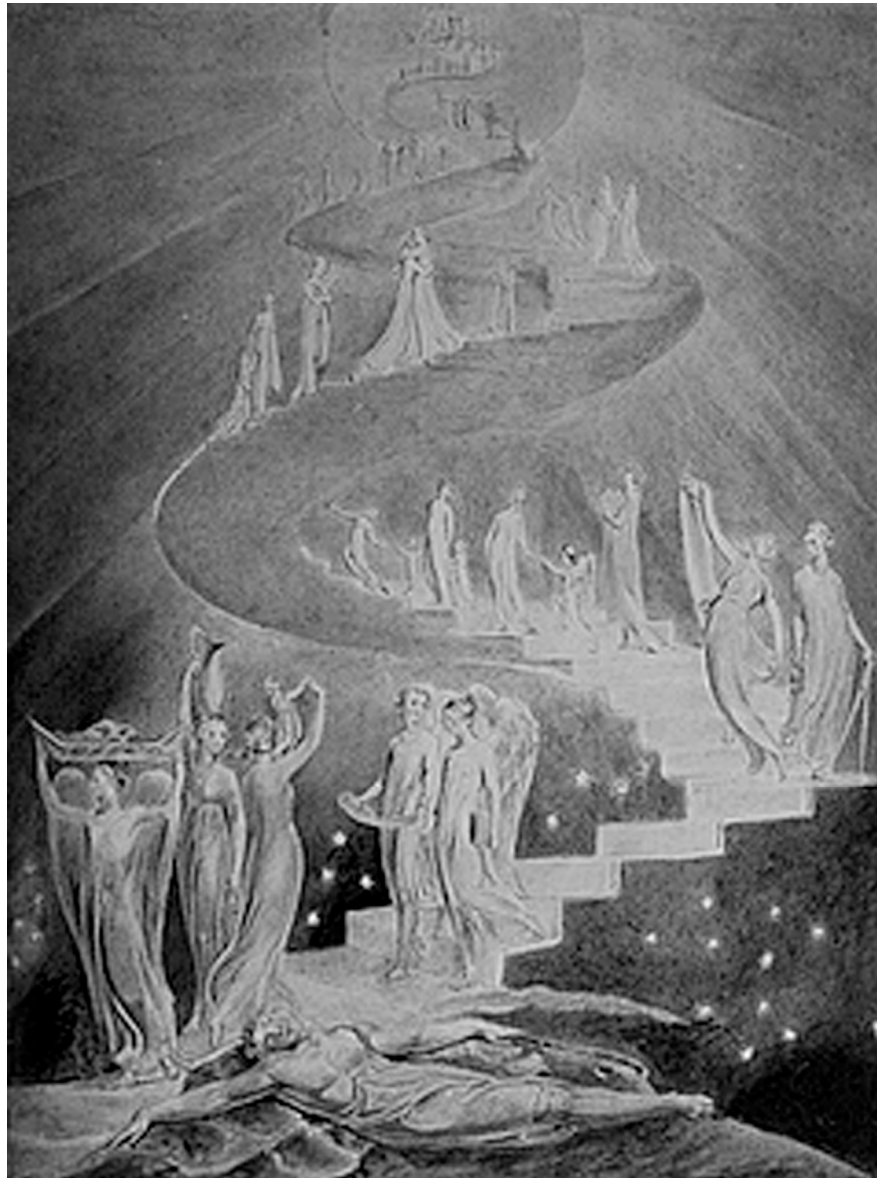


Figure 10. Jacob's Ladder—An artistic representation, painted by William Blake, circa 1800, England (Purce, 1974).

**A Framework for Depicting the Developmental Layers
of the Human Being**

Body	Mind/Soul	Spirit
Physical Body (Mineral)	Sentient Soul Prerational/Prelogical Picture thinking EGYPTIAN	Spirit Self (Transformed Astral) Psychic
Life/Vital Body (Vegetative)	Intellectual Mind/Soul Rational thinking Logical thinking GRECO-ROMAN	Life Spirit (Transformed Vital) Subtle
Emotional/ Astral Body (Animal)	Consciousness Mind/Soul Vision-Logic Transrational Imaginal/integral thinking PRESENT ERA	Spirit Man (Transformed Physical) Causal

Table 1. A Linear Model of Layers of Human Development.

From the point of view of cultural development, the aspects that most concern us in our recorded history are primarily related to the three mind/soul functions or thinking types:

- From a Western perspective, prior to the Greco-Roman times, humans thought primarily in a pictorial manner—the hieroglyphic writing of the ancient Egyptians is indicative of thinking more steeped in images than the more abstract Greek and Roman alphabets. The Egyptian period (prelogical, prerational) covered approximately 3,500 BC–1,500 BC.
- The newborn logical powers of, for example, Aristotle, in a sense heralded a new stage of human consciousness from picture (or prelogical) thinking to logical, rational, intellectual thinking. The intellectual, rational thinking developed during the Greco-Roman period of approximately 1,500 BC–AD 1,500.
- Finally we encounter the consciousness thinking (post-rational or trans-rational thinking) characteristic of our own era (AD 1,500—present and future). Some of the great souls of the Renaissance period expressed the first glimmerings of this stage of consciousness (the multifaceted, integral human), but the next few hun-

dred years would see intellectual thinking become more instrumental, materialistic, and reductionist, and finally completely fragmented and alienated from its source.

With any new development in human evolution, there are always the initiates who come before, while the majority of humanity may take hundreds, even thousands of years to catch up. As a new stage breaks through, the time of most resistance from the old is encountered.

The trans-rational, imaginal/integral thinking that we need to develop in the present era, if we are to rise to a new, conscious accessing of spiritual wisdom, was called by Steiner “consciousness soul.” In this view, imagination can be seen as a first step in transforming the thinking from matter-bound intellect to spiritual consciousness. The three stages of imagination, inspiration, and intuition are virtually universal concepts found in many spiritual paths (Steiner, 1967, p. 58). The development of imagination is thus a vitally important, yet neglected, part of education at all levels. This concept can apply to personal development, as well as laying foundations for a spiritual transformation of culture, beginning with developing our thinking beyond the categorical intellect to encompass imaginative consciousness. This same process of conscious, imaginal, and spiritually embodied thinking has been identified by several other contemporary thinkers. Essentially it involves a reinvention of human values to reincorporate the sacred. This approach is aligned to Thomas Berry’s (1988) “post-critical naveté,” Morris Berman’s (1981) “participatory consciousness,” and David Tacey’s (1995) call for a “postmodern spirituality.” Wilber (2000) and Scott (2000) call it “integral thinking.” Futurist Tony Judge (1998) calls it higher coherence.

As an example of how information may be imaginatively transformed, the diagram in Figure 11 is an attempt to present the information of Table 1 in an integral rather than a linear way and illustrates how such an image could be synthesized with the “great nest of being” metaphor.

Although many contemporary thinkers are becoming increasingly aware of the need to stretch consciousness to new levels, the processes for achieving this evolution are often not so clearly accessible. It is suggested here, however, that the processes for attaining such development of thinking to higher levels of consciousness have been known in the secret knowledge centers. Perhaps now, in this time of global planetary crisis, is the time for them to be unveiled for all. By awakening our thinking with the ideas found in the perennial philosophies or spiritual epistemologies, by contemplative practices, by artistic work to stimulate the imagination, and sometimes by “grace,” we can all develop our consciousness and ultimately our cultures to move beyond fragmented, materialistic thinking to multilayered, pluralistic,

and inclusive integral cosmological models. Crucially, it involves a shift from solely “brain centered” thinking to “heart and brain centered” thinking.

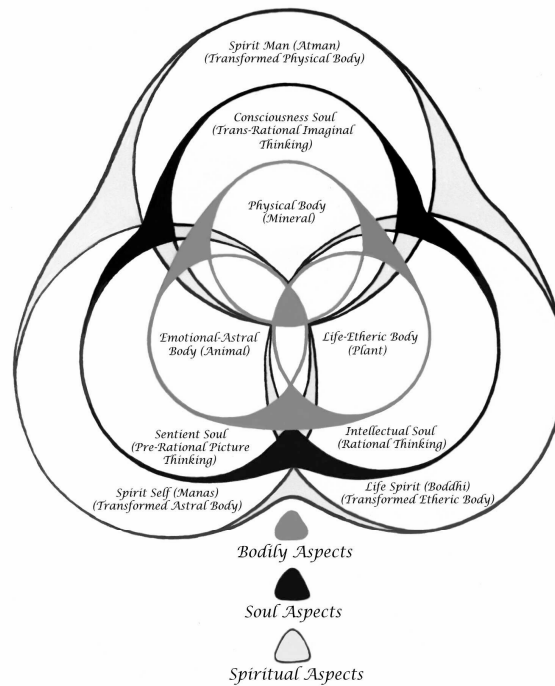


Figure 11. Layers of Human Development—An Integral Psychology Model.

Steiner also stressed the importance of the rational intellect. He insisted that we use the same rigorous thinking of the natural sciences to come to know our own inner natures and that of the outer, unmanifest, spiritual world. Through this, as well as contemplative practices and artistic practices, spiritual consciousness will come. These thoughts are echoed in Peter Russell’s comment: “I believe that when we delve as fully into the nature of mind as we have into the nature of space, we will find consciousness to be the long-awaited bridge between science and spirit” (Russell, 2000). Some might argue that we are returning to the past and to prelogical thinking, but Wilber (1990) refers to this potential confusion as the “pre/trans fallacy” whereby no distinction is made between the prerational and trans- or post-rational type of thinking. There is, however, a crucial distinction: prerational, pictorial thinking was largely by unconscious revelation. Trans-

rational, integral thinking includes all the earlier stages and transcends them in full consciousness (Wilber, 1995).

Integral Cosmologies for Reintegrated Futures

In this final section I suggest a conscious approach to the “bounce” model, although it is a work in progress. I propose here that it is entirely possible, using a spiritual epistemology to reverse the process of threefold alienation described by Tarnas (1991), to resituate the consciously evolving human being back into an inclusive cosmology where indeed the earth has meaning again and, from a spiritual perspective, becomes again the center of the cosmos.

In the same way that we can not regress to prerational thinking, we can not revert to pre-Copernican cosmological models. In searching for new images for a “*post* Post-Copernican” cosmology, we must not go back to the old circle, and we cannot ignore the developments of science. There will be no one future cosmology, as there will be no one future—mine may be full of images created from my experience. It is often said that “the Spiritual beings clothe themselves in different images depending on who is looking at them.” We need not deny our Cartesian rational thinking, nor revert to old, absolutist, and pre-Kantian “truths.” However, by using our own individual interpretive framework, we may endeavor to create new cosmological models for the future. As Tarnas (1991) stated: “The human mind is ultimately the organ of the world’s own process of self-revelation” (p. 434). In this spirit perhaps we could move beyond Descartes, “I think, therefore I am” to a new dictum, “I am, therefore I create.”

In an attempt to uncover any existing integral cosmologies from the Perennial Philosophies which might provide a starting point for our own creations, I have chosen to present two models developed by the Rosicrucians, both because of their universality of symbols and their artistic beauty. The Rosicrucian cosmologies illustrated in Figures 12 and 13 are examples of reintegrated systems where mankind is “outside” the cosmic womb yet part of it. Universal symbols are contained, including:

- the macrocosm/microcosm idea
- ‘as above so below’
- living spiritual beings as part of the planetary and zodiacal systems
- the four elements/directions
- the vertical dimension by way of steps

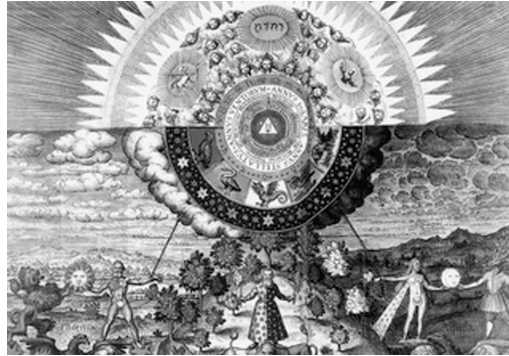


Figure 12. Rosicrucian Cosmology

From the *Museum Hermeticum* (the most influential of the alchemical-Rosicrucian texts—published in 1677). The picture is believed to be the illustration for the oldest known alchemical text, the *Emerald Tablet*, supposedly written by Hermes Trismegistus. According to the Rosicrucians, the nature of the cosmos (or macrocosm) is visualized as a reflection of the lower world (microcosm). “As above so below.”



Figure 13. Rosicrucian Path of Initiation

Important themes include the seven steps, the mystical cave, the signs of the zodiac, the four elements, representing human beings “outside the circle” (cosmos), yet with steps to take in consciousness to reunite with the cosmos (Walker, 1990).

It is possible that these illustrations may be ridiculed by some scientists as being full of superstitious meaningless symbols. However, similar to the mathematical formulae of physics, the symbols in these images are intensely charged with meaning for those who are initiated into their secrets.

Beyond Dualism to Inclusiveness

As mentioned in the introduction, one of the most limiting features of rational, intellectual thinking is its categorical nature that leads to fragmentation and a narrowing of options. Indeed, when it comes to presenting cosmological models, the basic dualism underpinning the Western worldview tries to force a choice between the old, “prescientific” Ptolemaic, geocentric model, and the “scientific,” Copernican, heliocentric model. At the heart of the dilemma is the intellectual way of thinking, the categorical mode of Western intellectual thinking. When binary logic dominates we have tremendous difficulty dealing with paradox—“If one thing is correct the other must be incorrect.” Compare this with the modes of speech used by Eastern mystics as devices to point beyond those pairs of opposites by which all logical thought is limited. For example, in the Zen Koan we hear of “the gateless gate,” the “full void.” The closest we have to it in Western linguistic concepts is the oxymoron, deriving from the Greek “pointedly foolish” which somehow does not command the status it deserves. It is merely a literary device rather than a path to spiritual awakening. I would like to suggest that the idea of the Koan gives us a clue to a reintegrated view using these two apparently conflicting cosmological models as a point of departure. I suggest that these two views are not in conflict and are, in fact, complementary views—the Copernican model explaining the physical universe and the Ptolemaic model being more applicable when we take into account the evolution of culture and consciousness incorporating the spiritual hierarchies as viewed by the Perennial Philosophies. These two cosmologies are in juxtaposition; neither is wrong but just incomplete. The potential power of bringing such an imagination to our scientific observation is captured by Tamas (1991):

It is only when the human mind brings forth from within itself the full powers of a disciplined imagination and saturates its empirical observation with archetypal insight that the deeper reality of the world emerges. (p. 434)

It is interesting to note that, although Western science began to come to terms with such complementarity in the twentieth century in the area of quantum physics, it still feels most comfortable when this paradoxical behavior of reality is restricted to minute particles (microcosm). There is still great

controversy over whether the paradoxes found in quantum mechanics can be applied to the universe as a whole (macrocosm). Earlier, Rudolf Steiner (1970) proposed the notion that, before too long, people would again come to an understanding that the Ptolemaic model of the universe still has meaning when we can move beyond a materialistic worldview. Interestingly, a similar view is taken by quantum physicist Werner Heisenberg in his essay on scientific and religious truths. In a discussion of the different types of language used to express religious and scientific ideas, Heisenberg, cited in Wilber, speaks of the

...precision-oriented language of natural science...(which)...tries to give its concepts objective meaning. But religious language... (closer to that of poetry)...must avoid this cleavage of the world into its objective and its subjective sides; for who would dare claim the objective side to be more real than the subjective? (Wilber, 2001, p. 43)

Heisenberg also states:

In the astronomical universe, the earth is only a minute grain of dust in one of countless galactic systems, but for us it is the center of the universe—it really is the center. (Wilber, 2001, p. 43)

Ironically, some of the latest developments in astronomy are beginning to have some resonance with these seemingly heretical ideas. At a conference held in 1973 in Poland, to celebrate the 500th birthday of Copernicus, a concept was presented that had the potential to turn astronomical thinking full circle. First put forward at this conference by the astrophysicist and cosmologist Brandon Carter, the Anthropic Principle in astronomy has been gaining ground and even developed several versions. While it is beyond the scope of this essay to expand on the “weak Anthropic principle,” the “strong Anthropic principle” and the “final Anthropic principle,” the basic thesis is an attempt to explain the “observed fact that the fundamental constants of physics and chemistry are *just right* or *fine-tuned* to allow the universe and life as we know it to exist” (Barrow & Tipler, 1986).

In summary, it is argued here that, while the Copernican system is undoubtedly true for the physical universe, the Ptolemaic system, which placed the earth (and thereby humans) at the center has more meaning from the perspective of the evolution of culture and consciousness. In this light the inclusive, future cosmology model developed here as a starting point in a new dialogue of cosmologies, incorporates this complementarity principle at the macrocosmic level as illustrated in Figure 14.

In this proposed model for a future-oriented integral cosmology, each of us as human beings is at the center of our own interpretive, creative cosmology: “I am, therefore I create.”

While this approach may evoke the fears and risks of megalomania and terrorism, these are with us already and will not be overcome by the simplistic dualisms of “us and them.” Notwithstanding also the tremendous structural obstacles many people around the planet are faced with today, we each have the choice and responsibility to begin our conscious evolution. If as a species we are to survive the materialistic age, we are obliged to lift our thinking beyond matter-bound intellect via one of the spiritual epistemologies. Through the imaginative process of higher order trans-rational thinking, we will be able to see beyond dualistic logic, to live with and embrace paradox and to begin our transformational tasks. The networking of change through a critical mass of innovative individuals and organizations can act as a human trampoline to facilitate the civilizational bounce that will be needed as materialistic culture collapses.

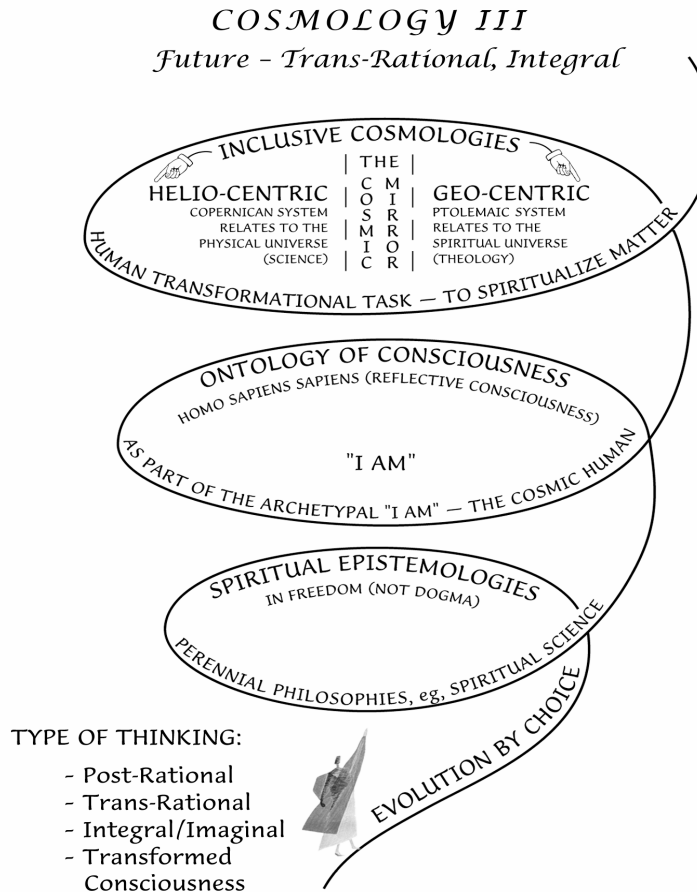


Figure 14. The Human Being Steps in Freedom Toward Spiritual Consciousness.

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