



# The Real Challenge of Our Times: the Need for a New Worldview

Anne Baring

*Neither do men put new wine into old bottles; else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish: but they put new wine into new bottles and both are preserved. Matt. 9:17*

*To reclaim the sacred nature of the cosmos – and of planet Earth in particular – is one of the outstanding spiritual challenges of our time. Diarmuid O’Murchu, Quantum Theology*

*The threat of global warming, the urgent need to free ourselves from dependency on oil and the current financial crisis could be the triple catalyst that offers us the opportunity of bringing about a profound shift in our values, relinquishing an old story and defining a new one.*

Our lives and well-being depend upon the fertility and resources of the earth, yet in relation to the earth, it would seem that we have been autistic for centuries. Now, instead of treating our planetary home as the endless supplier of all our needs, we could rethink beliefs and attitudes which have influenced our behaviour for millennia.

Because of those beliefs we have come to look upon nature as something separate from ourselves, something we could master, control and manipulate to obtain specific benefits for our species alone because ours, we were taught, has been given dominion over all others and over the earth itself. It has come as a bit of a shock to realise that our lives are intimately bound up with the fragile organism of planetary life and the inter-dependence of all species. If we destroy our habitat, whether inadvertently or deliberately by continuing on our present path, we may destroy ourselves. We have developed a formidable intellect, a formidable science, a formidable technology but all rest on the premise of our alienation from and mastery of nature, where nature has been treated as object with ourselves as controlling subject.

Yet now, the foundation that seemed so secure is disintegrating: old structures and beliefs are breaking down. It is as if mortal danger is forcing us to take a great leap in our evolution that we might never have made were we not driven to it by the extremity of circumstance. Many people are defining a new kind of relationship with the earth, based not on dominance but on respect, responsibility and conscious service. Because our capacity for destruction, both military and ecological, is so much greater today than it was even fifty years ago, and will be still greater tomorrow, we have only decades in which to change our thinking and respond to the challenge of this evolutionary leap.

There is a second problematic legacy from the past: the image of God shared by the three Abrahamic religions. This has presented God as a transcendent creator, separate and distinct from the created order and from ourselves. Western civilisation, despite its phenomenal achievements, has developed on the foundation of this fundamental split between spirit and nature—between creator and creation.

Only now are we brought face to face with the disastrous effects of this split.

Once again, as in the early centuries of the Christian era, it seems as if new bottles are needed to hold the wine of a new revelation, a new understanding of reality which could heal this split. But how do we create the vessel which can assimilate the wine of a new vision of reality and a different image of God or Spirit? How do we relinquish the dogmatic beliefs and certainties which have, over the millennia of the patriarchal era, caused indescribable and quite unnecessary suffering and the sacrifice of so many millions of lives?

I cannot answer these questions. But I do know that as the new understanding, the new wine comes into being, we have to hold the balance and the tension between the old and the new without destroying the old or rejecting the new. It must have been like this two thousand years ago when the disciples of Jesus tried to assimilate what he was telling them: something utterly different from the brutal values which governed the world of their time. Even today, the revolutionary teachings and the different values he taught have barely touched the consciousness that currently governs the world, however much political and religious leaders proclaim allegiance to them. What would Jesus have thought of WMD, depleted uranium and cluster bombs, and the massacre of helpless civilians in war, let alone the destruction of vast swathes of the earth’s forests to supply crops for biofuels? What would he have thought of the fact that obscene sums of money are spent on the military when 17,000 children die every day from hunger and disease?

The need for a more conscious relationship with both nature and spirit, bringing them closer together, is intrinsic to the creativity of the life-impulse itself—urging us to go beyond the boundaries of the known, to break through the concepts and beliefs, whether religious, scientific or economic, which currently govern our culture and constrict the expansion of our understanding and our compassion.

What is the emerging vision of our time which could offer a template for a new civilisation?

I believe it is a vision which takes us beyond an outdated paradigm or worldview where we are held in bondage to beliefs and habits specific to race, nation, religion or gender, which have led us to exclude and devalue those who are different from ourselves and neglect our relationship with the earth, our planetary home. It is a vision which offers us a totally new concept of spirit as an energy field — a limitless sea of being — as well as the creative consciousness or organising intelligence active within that sea or field, and a totally new concept of ourselves as participants in that incandescent ground or sea of consciousness.

It is a vision which recognises the sacredness and indissoluble unity of the great cosmic web of life and imposes on us the responsibility of becoming far more sensitive to the effects of our decisions and our actions. It invites our recognition of the needs of the planet and the life it sustains as primary, with ourselves as the humble servants of those needs. It invites us, as Einstein asked us to do, to widen our circle of compassion, to look upon every child as our child, every woman as our daughter, our sister or our mother, every man as our father, our brother or our son, the well being of every creature as our responsibility. Above all, it is a vision which asks that we relinquish our addiction to weapons and war and the pursuit of power; that we become more aware of the dark shadow cast by this addiction which threatens us with ever more barbarism, bloodshed and suffering—ultimately with the possible extinction of our species.

From this perspective, the crisis of our times is not only an ecological and political crisis but a spiritual one. The answers we seek cannot come from the limited consciousness which rules the world but could grow from a deeper understanding, born of the union of heart and head, helping us to see that all life is one; that each one of us

participates in the life of a cosmic entity of immeasurable dimensions. The urgent need for this psychic balance, this deeper intelligence and insight, this wholeness, could help us to recover a perspective on life that has been increasingly lost until we have come to live without it — and without even noticing it has gone — recognising the existence of nothing beyond the parameters of the human mind. It is a dangerous time because it involves transforming entrenched belief systems and archaic survival habits of behaviour that are rooted in fear, as well as the desire for power that is born of fear. But it is also an immense opportunity for evolutionary advance, if only we can understand what is happening and why.

For a rapidly increasing number of us, there is the possibility of choosing whether to follow in the tracks of the past, continuing to live our lives in servitude to the power principle and the institutions which embody it, however subtly expressed. Or to live and act from a different relationship with life and commit ourselves to the immense effort of consciousness we need to make to understand and serve its mystery.

After so many billion years of cosmic evolution, it is simply unacceptable that the beauty and marvel of the earth should be ravaged by us through the destructive power of our weapons, our ever-increasing numbers and the misapplication of our science and technology. It is inconceivable that our extraordinary species, which has taken so many million years to evolve, should destroy itself and lay waste to the earth through ignorance of the divinity in which we dwell and which dwells, unrecognised, in us.

**Anne Baring** is a Jungian analyst and author and co-author of seven books, including her latest reviewed in this issue – ***The Dream of the Cosmos***. See [www.annebaring.com](http://www.annebaring.com)



## YOU ARE TOTALLY FREE

*I know that you are consciousness itself, not the conscious being. Consciousness is not a quality attached to you, you are consciousness. You are totally free.*

*So proceed from anywhere. Either be more free or be more conscious, and the other will result automatically. Be more free, and you will be more conscious. You cannot be more free unless you are more conscious.*

*Be more conscious and you will be more free. You cannot be otherwise, because consciousness creates freedom. And when you are absolutely conscious, you are absolutely free. Then there is no cause and no purpose for you to exist.*

*Then everything is a happening, a leela.*

## YOU BELONG TO ETERNITY

*You exist in time, but you belong to eternity. You are a penetration of eternity into the world of time. You are deathless, living in a body of death. Your consciousness knows no death, no birth. It is only your body that is born and dies. But you are not aware of your consciousness; you are not conscious of your consciousness.*

*And that is the whole art of meditation: becoming conscious of consciousness itself.*

# Defining the Feminine

Anne Baring

What, in its deepest sense, does the word 'Feminine' mean? As I am defining it in my book, *The Dream of the Cosmos*, it does not refer to the female sexual attractiveness that is so promoted in today's world, nor to the qualities of caring and gentleness usually, though not exclusively identified with women, nor to the feminist agenda of the empowerment of women in a man's world.

The word 'Feminine' stands for the Soul and the unseen cosmic web of life that connects each one of us to all others as well as to the life of the planet and the greater life of the cosmos. It stands for the recognition that we live within a Sacred Order and that we have a responsibility to protect the life of the planet and all the variety of species it embraces instead of exploiting them for the benefit of our species alone. In sum, the word 'Feminine' stands for a totally different perspective on life, a totally different worldview or paradigm of reality and for the feeling values which might reflect and support that worldview. It stands for a new *planetary* consciousness and the arduous creation of a new kind of civilization.

Without reconnecting to the Soul and the guidance and wisdom of the Feminine, without going in search of the values it represents and opening our own heart to its subtle guidance, we will not understand the purpose of our presence on this planet, nor will we be able to disempower the unconscious atavistic tendencies which draw us ever closer to the destruction of our habitat and therefore to self-annihilation.

Like the fiery magma of the earth's core, the long repressed feminine principle is rising to meet the masculine one in response to a deep soul impulse to balance and marry these archetypal energies within ourselves and within our world. The resurgence of the Feminine invites a new planetary consciousness where the deepest instincts of the heart in both men and women: compassion, informed intelligence and a longing to protect, heal and make whole are able to find expression in ways that can best be described as devotion to planetary and cosmic life.

Awakening to the Feminine means becoming protective of the whole of creation: dying to all the divisive ways of looking at life and each other; being born into an utterly different vision of reality. As it becomes more conscious in us, we are already becoming aware of our dependence for our continued existence on the integrity and sustainability of the planetary biosphere. Our image of reality and our relationship

with the planet and with each other are being transformed as we assimilate the implications of this 'marriage' of the two primary archetypal principles. The return of the Feminine has the impact of a planetary earthquake, dissolving long-established social patterns, political and financial systems and religious institutions, asking for a radical transformation of our understanding of life.

The influence of the Feminine is responsible for the growth of the environmental movement; for the determination to free women in every culture from their long oppression and subservience and encourage their increased participation in society; for the interest in the so-called non-rational; for many new approaches to healing both psyche and body. It is reflected in the mounting revulsion for our weapons of mass destruction; in compassion for the helpless victims of our addiction to war; in the engagement of hundreds of thousands of people in the work of helping both the planet and the victims of oppression. These different channels of influence are creating new perspectives on life, new ways of connection that bring together body, soul, mind and spirit. All this is being accelerated by the connections between people facilitated by the Internet and by online organizations like Avaaz which now has over twenty one million subscribers.

The recovery of the Feminine invites a reorientation of consciousness, a

receptivity not only to the events occurring in the external world but a receptivity to the long-ignored voice of the Soul. The activation of the Feminine is helping us to relate to the deep cosmic source of our psychic life and draw up the living waters from those depths. This enormous shift challenges every aspect of our beliefs. It immeasurably deepens and broadens our perspective on our presence on this planet. It gives deeper meaning to our lives. It is changing everything.

It may be that the new epoch we are entering will see the birth of a very different image of God or Spirit, a new understanding of the instinctive intelligence within the processes and patterns of nature, and how the unseen or inner dimension of reality influences and interacts with this material dimension. This new understanding may help us to recover an authentic spirituality which takes us beyond religious and secular beliefs into a new sense of relationship with a sacred earth and an ensouled cosmos. From my work on *The Myth of the Goddess* and its last chapter called "the Sacred Marriage" I know that this emerging phase in the story of our species could herald an evolutionary advance as spirit and nature are reunited and humanity enters into a conscious relationship and partnership with life, seeking to serve it with insight, compassion and wisdom.

Extract from Chapter 10 of my book, *The Dream of the Cosmos: a Quest for the Soul*

