



A Shamanic Perspective on Reconciling Spiritual and Physical Phenomena

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Drawing on his research and personal experience of shamanism and subtle energy, John Caddy outlines his understanding of the relationship between the spiritual and physical dimension – we need to recover elements of ancient shamanic views in order to reach a harmonious relationship with the Earth.

How to Save Mother Nature and Reconcile Science and Spirituality?

assert that our failure to conserve nature is due to modern society's lack of a religious context for 'Mother Nature'. The ancient belief system, Animism, saw Nature as 'The Great Spirit' and the landscape as Her expression. That Nature is feminine, is an ancient view that predates Monotheism. Its modern equivalent is Lovelock's Gaia; our planetary 'super-organism' –back in the news now we realise She kept the world fit for life millions of years before we came along.

The SMN stresses the need to reconcile science with religion. Given the dominance respectively of existing paradigms and dogma, these make uneasy bedfellows, and this dichotomy of beliefs is a major cause of social schizophrenia (e.g., Bohm and Peat 1987). As a result, the spiritual significance of science is ignored by monotheism: for example, the 'Big Bang' and the 'Big Birth' (the common origin of planetary life revealed by genetics) are spiritual revelations, as is Gaia theory! Other issues seem more easily reconciled: for example, the multiple dimensions postulated in scientific cosmologies are not incompatible with religions which believe that an 'immaterial element', the soul, comes from and returns to another realm. This belief in other realms reflects our species' early experience of shamanic voyaging, and according to McKenna (1991) the practices of 'primitive man' provide clues to our psychic capabilities. Thus, if our nervous systems evolved in the hunter-gatherer phase before literacy and logic, why such neural complexity? Language and social organisation are usually considered responsible, but perhaps 'primitive man' fed our nervous system with wider sensory inputs? Rather than seeking something new then, revisiting old ways of knowing could be profitable, which is why the shamanic revival is so interesting.

Practical work with qi and shamanism casts light on this issue. Shamanism probably dates back more than 70,000 years, to before the analysis of DNA markers on human chromosomes suggests a few tribes of humans left Africa (see: www.world-science.net/othernews/061130_python.htm).

These pioneers carried shamanic beliefs and practices world-wide, such as drumming, or hallucinogens for voyaging to 3 non-ordinary destinations, manipulating vital energy, use of animal guides or totems, perceiving energetically-charged sites in the landscape, and intimate relations with spirits and ancestors: all common elements of shamanism worldwide. Modern shamanism suggest our distant ancestors also used their energy bodies as '6th senses'.

Repeating ancient practices provides insight into ancient beliefs, and allows us to better interpret archaeological evidence, and understand non-ordinary aspects of reality. A spirituality soundly based in the living world emerges. While humans inevitably seek the divine in the heavens, we should not forget our community of origin with other life forms. The old view of Gaia as containing all life forms on Earth is not contradicted by science, and promotes the precautionary ecological actions urgently needed now. Only by seeing the Earth as a 'sacred relict' (quoting a Russian astronaut returning from orbit), can we preserve the living systems we depend upon for our livelihoods.

Pre-Christian Europe and Shamanism

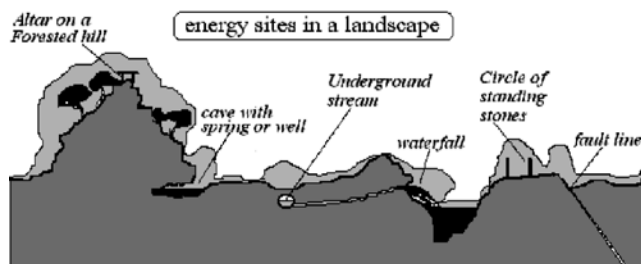
Rural belief systems of Celtic Europe in the 1900s (Wentz 1977) suggest that the pre-Christian Celtic religion was essentially shamanic. According to one Irish Seer: 'There are three great worlds we can see while we are in the body: the Earth world, the Mid world and the Heaven world'. Christianity arrived in Ireland early, and the two spiritual realities were 'superpositioned' on the landscape. Sites where pre-Christian mythic figures performed an action are now attributed to Saint Patrick. Other ancient European religions had geographical connotations – the Latins for example, followed a 'Cult of Places', each with its mythical entity in attendance (Auletta 2004).

Sardinia has abundant Stone Age sites, and being arid, finding water was always a priority. There were underground water temples, and a tradition of dowsing arose to locate underground water (Aresu 1995). Mauro Aresu was nominated 'honorary archaeologist' of the town of Palau because of his skill in locating Stone Age monuments - discovered incidentally, since most were built over underground water.

These monuments were ancient when Aristotle wrote of the ceremony of 'incubation' in Sardinia: persons seeking wisdom or a cure were buried in a 'giant's tomb' for up to 5 days. The skills of geomancy presumably also originated within Earth Mother belief systems prior to the classical age (Graves 1961), and Aresu's book illustrates an ancient 'priest' with a 'dowsing fork'. The high ground energy of some pre-Christian religious sites (e.g., springs, clearings and hill tops), and Christian churches built on older sacred sites, may reflect geological faults or underground water, reinforced by ceremony. A confirmation of the 'Physics of Ceremony' comes from the physicist Tiller, who demonstrated that experienced meditators can 'imprint' localities and equipment, leading to 'anomalous physics' (Tiller et al. 2001).

Has the Dominant Chakra Moved upwards in Historical Time?

Julian Jaynes (1976) contended that 'I' for the Ancient Greeks was located in the chest region. More recently, North American Indians expressed surprise that white men think with their heads, 'not with their hearts like us'. According to Breasted (1905), the ancient Egyptian 'identity' was centred in the stomach region, and Asian energy schools stress development of the stomach chakra as the key for progress in martial arts. These observations suggest that chakral dominance has migrated upwards in historical time to the brow chakra associated with logical thought, while we have lost other perceptual capabilities.



(Above): Dowsers experience landscape features as having different 'densities' of energy (shown schematically by a grey stratum superimposed on the landscape). (Below) Carvings on a Maltese temple some 8000 yrs old showing spirals (chakras?).



Why Did Miracles Occur so Long Ago?

The 'Theory of Chakras' (Motoyama 1995) answers this question. Mystical experiences are restricted to those with expanded auras and activated chakras, but pranic healers observe that typically, one or more chakras are inactive in people nowadays. This restricts the perception of qi energies associated with the lower chakras. On seeing supernatural entities, an Irish Seer said: 'the physical eyes may be open or closed - mystical beings in their own world and nature are never seen with the physical eyes'.

The key word for 'sensitives' in 2007 was 'embedded'. I hypothesize that we are embedded in the 'Aura of Gaia': a stratum of heavy energy over the earth, holding memories of past emotional events in a locality. This Gaian field is co-extensive with our personal auras, hence potentially we are aware of psychic phenomena. Prior to Monotheism, sacred high energy locations in the natural world – 'Sources': were holy springs, caves and woods (see Figure above). Since Monotheism, 'Nature' is without Spirit, and her living components have become 'Natural Resources' – although we should be aware of the dangers of considering 'Nature' as simply 'resources'!

Qi energy is emitted by life forms, and a modern view of 'ground energy' might consider the recent discovery of archaeobacteria in rocks down to 4 km below the planetary surface, at a similar biomass to surface-dwelling organisms! If they also generate qi, may they contribute to 'ground energy' and the aural sheath round the planet? The 'Gaia theory' of Lovelock, based on mysteriously coordinated planetary processes, is compatible with such a planetary energy field. The Animist belief in a global 'super-entity' gains support from the recent discovery of our common genetic heritage with all living organisms on Earth, making us 'organelles' of Gaia. It is reasonable then to see qi/prana as a means of communication between Her living sub-units.

The Spiritual Realm of Shamanism

Shamanic voyaging is a practical application of multiverse theory, in that we still seem to be 'hard wired' to visit three destinations recognised by shamanic societies world-wide (Harner 1980):

The Lower World: Spirit guides may be encountered, and in my personal experience, roughly 50% of participants acquire guides during Lower World ceremonies, and may merge with them.

The Middle, Astral or 'Elemental' World: is a 'copy' of the material world (Bruce 1999). Voyaging provides clues to events at this map location in the past – i.e. 'shamanic archaeology' is feasible. Presumably dowsers access this realm unconsciously when seeking hidden resources.

The Upper World: a realm of higher spiritual experience where advice is obtained on spiritual matters.

After I drum for shamanic voyagers, a questionnaire captures basic information on their experience. From voyaging and clues from archaeology and anthropology, it seems impossible that Astral voyaging and the Energy Body were unknown to our distant ancestors, hence we should examine closely 'Voyaging'; the oldest spiritual activity of our species. This universally available function illustrates how information persists in Gaia's energy field.

The physicist Tiller proposed that while we live in four dimensions, the universe contains seven other hidden dimensions. Like a person in a virtual reality suite, we have access to other realms in ecstatic states; often passing through a 'tunnel' with spirals in the wall. Spirals are commonly encountered in rock art and early religious architecture (Figure below), and such 'ground chakras' suggest that voyaging was common in early cultures. (According to Graves, for the pre-Christian Irish, dying was 'Going to Spiral Castle'). Spirals are also generated in the fractal mathematics of Mandelbrot (1977), and Peitgen and Richter (1986) show spiral tunnels incorporated into fractal boundaries; hence mathematics may help us visualise the interface between planes of reality.

The centre of a chakra seems the point of exit for the spirit body when visiting another realm, but we remain linked with the body by a 'silver chord'. An analogous concept for cosmologists is the transdimensional 'worm hole' envisaged as connecting different 'States of Nature', 'realms' or 'branes'. The chakral exit point is visualised in Buddhist 'mandalas', while American Indian 'dream catchers' also have the structure of a chakra. Pre-death visions also report such a tunnel, and thus resemble a (potentially) one-way shamanic voyage.

Evidence for Esoteric Knowledge and Voyaging in Pre-History

Two examples suggest that early Europeans knew about vital energy practices:

- Otzi, the 'bronze age' man deposited from a glacier in 1991, has tattoos on those acupuncture points used by Chinese doctors for treating osteoarthritis. Were our early European ancestors familiar with the theory of meridians discovered in China 2-3000 years ago?

- A slate slab in the Grenada museum from 30-40,000 years ago (see Caddy 2006a), shows a head with no sense organs. Lines diverge from the lower chakras; typical of a shaman voyaging. Evidently, our stone age European ancestors also knew about chakras. This 'Hunter-Diviner' posture was also described by Gore (1995), who verified that voyaging in postures depicted in ancient engravings, leads to specific 'destinations' or entities.

From accounts of surviving tribal shamanic cultures (e.g., Joan Halifax 1979) 'primitive cultures' on different continents shared similar voyaging traditions. A millennial rock painting in South Africa (Hancock 2005), illustrates a shaman bleeding from the nose after a tribal dance session. In adjacent images he merges with his guide, a large antelope - readily identified as the shaman by also bleeding from the nose! Such human-animal forms (therianthropes) are common in rock art. Still further back, Upper Palaeolithic cave paintings in France and Spain seem to depict voyages to the Lower World, and Hancock proposed that they represent mankind's first discovery of religious thought. They are certainly consistent with modern voyaging experience.

Male Dominance in Religions had a Beginning and still has Ecological Consequences

It is hard to interpret ancient images before the invention of writing unless we call upon shamanic sources, because a dramatic shift in spiritual cosmologies occurred in southern Europe at the end of the New Stone Age: the replacement of maternal by paternal deities.



(Above): Wall of a troglodyte dwelling in Sardinia from a pre-Nuraghic age shows entities descending from above the ceiling into the ground.

(Right): A carved dolmen seems to represent a priest(ess) with a ceremonial dagger. The 3-tailed symbol again suggests the spirit returns to Mother Earth on death.



Some late prehistory: In 'The White Lady', Robert Graves described how warrior societies worshipping male Gods, migrated from the steppes north of the Black Sea to replace the matriarchal societies of the ancient Mediterranean. This led to dramatic spiritual changes: the formerly-dominant earth goddesses were relegated to sub-dominance in a male pantheon of Gods. An interpretation of engravings from a troglodyte dwelling in Sardinia (Figure above) is that the deceased descend to the Earth Goddess on death. Engraved dolmens discovered in Sardinia from before the Nuraghic age also seem to represent the spirit of a priest/shaman (with a ceremonial double-bladed dagger), sinking down to Mother Gaia on death. Prior to Her overthrow, Gaia was relied on by our Stone Age ancestors for good harvests and fertility, and in some cultures Mary, mother of Jesus continues in this role. The male deities of the Achaeans (and the tribes of Israel) supplanted these female deities, and for the Celts, this was accompanied by a reversal in the location of the afterlife: 'After Christianity, the vulva of the land goddess (a deep valley)' was redefined as the entrance to Hell'. (Dames 1992).

A switch in the afterlife from a below-ground sanctuary - domain of the female Deity, to the heavens - domain of the Sky Deities or 'Weather Gods' (Toynbee 1976) occurred. In a reversal of sacred geometries, below ground destinations are now reserved for lost souls, while Monotheistic dogmas offer a sky destination for the virtuous. The old tradition in Celtic countries was that the 'Faery Realm' or 'Land of Bliss', under hills or lakes, was a 'radiant archetype of the world' (Wentz 1977), and the location of the Celtic Afterlife. This resembles the Lower World of shamanism, and is in stark contrast to the Hades of the Achaean Greeks - a shadowy place where ghosts pined for life on the surface. Hades seems the precursor for the Christian purgatory where 17th Century Irish Catholics expected to 'do time' repenting their sins. Its location (Wentz 1977) was 'near Limbo' (the destination for pure un-christened souls and unbaptised babies) 'at the edge of the Pit beside the centre of the Earth...'. Thus, Christianity visualised underground destinations as unpleasant: at the extreme resembling Dante's Hell. Might a suspicious mind consider this reversed cosmology a strategy to convert pagans from voyaging to their below-ground paradise? Modern voyagers to the Astral world may also encounter the deceased. (In a recent Astral World voyage I drummed for in Sweden, five out of nine participants encountered relatives and friends who had passed on).

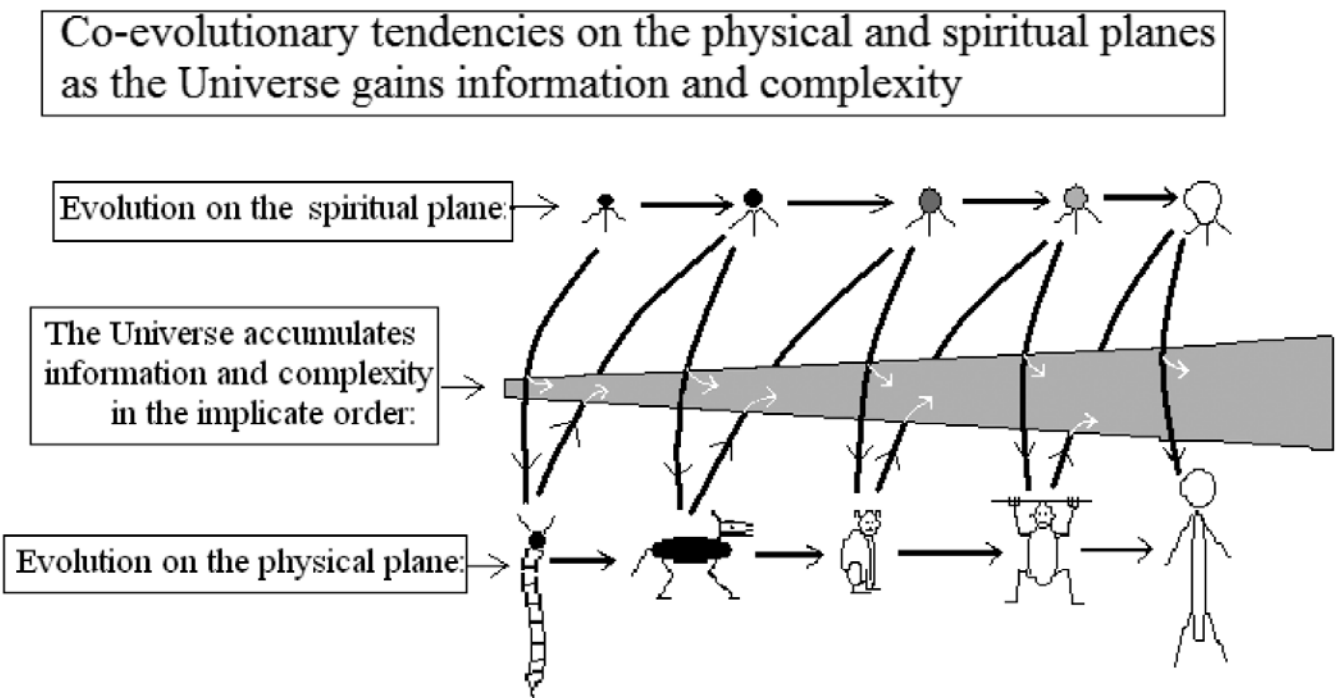
An ecological deduction might be that Monotheistic religions ruled by male sky gods arose in low diversity steppe and desert habitats (e.g., Islam, Judaism, Zoroastrionism), but Animism/Pantheism and/or female deities came from high biodiversity forest habitats (e.g. Hinduism, the Balinese shamanic religion, the Mayan Gods, and Druidism in Europe). Do religions arise which reflect the diversity of the local ecosystem? Would we expect a sky religion to emphasise the sacredness of the living world?

What was the Purpose of Ancient Religions?

Dames' interpretation of the Celtic cosmology is: 'An invisible world in which the visible world is immersed like an island in an unexplored ocean'. The spirits and Sidhe (fairies, in the old sense of life-sized supernatural beings), 'do not come from some distant realm of space, but are here at our elbow'. Are UFO's their modern equivalent? Strassman (2001) reports that under the influence of the natural hallucinogen DMT, his subjects often voyage to another realm to encounter futuristic 'Machine elves'. Their accounts of these space age 'aliens', are strikingly similar to encounters with the Sidhe in Celtic countries in the early 1900's (Wentz 1977) .

According to Dames (1992), the Celts believed in rebirth from Gaia, implying individual immortality and their evolution in both physical and spiritual worlds. The Bardic source book, 'Barddas' recounts: 'As a knowledge of physical existence is unfolded... the Monad or soul... commences its course in the lowest water-animalcule, and passes at death to other bodies of a superior order, successively, and in regular gradation, until it enters that of man'. Such a doctrine is visualised below. Reincarnation was accepted by the early Irish Church until 553 AD, when the Council of Constantinople placed an 'anathema' on the possibility of multiple rebirths.

(Below) The Celtic view of 'personal evolution by reincarnation'; (I have added a repository for accumulating information and complexity during evolution - the Implicate Order of Bohm. (Figure from Caddy 2006b).



Shamanic Voyaging Occurred in the Classical World

I live near Ardea, an ancient Latin town south of Rome. Its kings descended from Enaeus who fled here after the sack of Troy. A local historian, Auletta (2004), cited Virgil's account of 'spiritual voyages' at the local 'Cave of the Faun'. As for Delphi, sulphurous fumes from volcanic fissures induced trance states, and,(my translation): 'People from all over Italy came to Lavinium....in the silence of the night they lay on the skins of sacrificed animals in front of the sacred cave.... In their sleep they entered into communication with the 'infernal' divinity through visions of strange phantoms and the babble of numerous voices'. Perhaps the identification of Hell with 'fire and brimstone' by the early Church was designed to discourage voyaging under 'telluric influences' without the mediation of a priest?

However, the damage was already done before Christianity. Socrates and Plato (around 400 BC) postulated a fundamental rift between Mind and Matter (including the Living World). Logos replaced Mythos, and set the scene for Science. The Church adopted the views of these 'honorary pagans', leading to 'Dualism'; the philosophy which still persists; namely that: 'In each person, good and evil battle within a cosmos in miniature. This implies an equivalent split in the macrocosm between Heaven and Hell, and Good and Evil'. Dames remarked that these forces play out their conflict in a soulless world (other than for human beings of course). Instead of 'living manifestations of the Deity', the clouds, the moon, hills, vegetation, etc, become 'barriers blocking our view of an abstract Godhead'.

In both material and spiritual/religious worlds, 'History is written by the victors'. Thus, any reinterpretation of pre-Monotheistic thought without written records is uncertain. After eliminating our knowledge of their teachers the Etruscans, Caesar's 'Gallic Wars' documented how the Romans 'culturally cleansed' the orally-transmitted knowledge of the Druids in northern Europe. Much later, the Inquisition completed this process, so that a vacuum exists concerning pre-Christian spiritual practices. though it seems likely that Druidism involved perceiving earth and sky energies: (the Tao of Classical China offers a possible parallel).

Some Conclusions on Vital Energy and Voyaging

- We are embedded in Gaia's energy field which varies geographically.
- The boundaries of our memory are uncertain and may not stop at the skin.
- The Gaian field acts as an information storage medium and is accessed through the aura or by dowsing.
- Ceremonies accentuate high energy sites, which may be due to underground water or geological faults.
- Gaia's field links us to each other and forms a geographically-differentiated information source.
- 'Objective observations' on others in a qi field are impossible (the 'Observer effect' of quantum science prevails: the observer cannot be separated from the participants).

- Most people are capable of 'riding the drum', and in 'voyages', hearing (despite the drum beat), sight, smell, and touch may be activated.
- The locations and persons/entities encountered are usually new and surprising.
- Often, there is a transmission of emotionally important information to the voyager.
- Events that occurred at the site in the past may be revisited.
- The animal guide to the Lower World usually remains the same on successive voyages.
- It helps to enter the voyage with a question or objective in mind.

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