WAKING TO THE RHYTHM OF A NEW MYTH
Mythic Perspectives for a World in Distress

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This essay is concerned with the myths that are leading us into an uncertain future, how they can be understood, how they can be worked with, and how they can be transformed. Some people think a myth is no more than a quaint relic from an antiquated culture, a fanciful story created to explain what is not known. More exactly, myth is the way people combine what is known and what is not known into the maps that guide them through their lives. We are continually making choices within largely uncharted waters. We can never be certain about where these choices will lead, yet we must choose. Our myths serve as the internal maps that invisibly guide us from one choice to the next. While a myth -- to be viable for the contemporary mind -- must be aligned with our capacity for rational thought, myth-making is as much with us today as it was thousands of years ago. Myth is, in fact, grounded in the quintessential human ability to address the large questions of existence using symbolism, metaphor, and narrative. And no other species has a guidance system that touches ours for promoting flexibility and creativity in responding to the environment.

The thesis to be developed here is that a new mythology is being born in the human psyche. It is, in fact, already seeping through the cracks of the mythology that has been guiding Western civilization for centuries. Because a culture's new mythology is hammered out on the anvil of individual lives (Feinstein & Krippner, 1997), the emerging mythic contour is also evident in the psyches of many people throughout the world. And not only is the myth changing, but the myth-maker as well. Humanity's ability to meet the world as shape-shifter, dream-weaver, and myth-maker has radically expanded. Today, large numbers of people are becoming aware of themselves as evolving beings who have arrived at a moment in history when they can decisively reflect upon,

analyze, and influence their personal and collective development. And this possibility has emerged at precisely the moment in history when we must deliberately and wisely influence the course of our development if our species is to survive.

A MYTHOLOGY THAT FAILED TO TRANSFORM

Countless once-glorious cultures around the world, and their mythologies, have disappeared, leaving only the faintest clues about the reasons for their demise. In Meso-America, dozens of ornate Mayan temples lie mute, as do an untold number of Incan monuments in Peru, Celtic cairns in Wales, Khymer statues in Kampuchea, and Sumerian ziggurats in Iraq. The puzzle of Easter Island's vanished civilization and its giant statues is unique in archaeology because of the isolation of this barren land from its neighbors -- 2000 miles from South America and 1400 miles from the nearest inhabited island. Current archaeological evidence indicates that some 1600 years ago the island's first settlers, explorers from Polynesia, found themselves in a pristine paradise with subtropical forests, dozens of bird species, and no predators. They prospered, multiplied, and distributed resources in a manner that suggests a sophisticated economy and a complex political system. Emulating the stone carvings of their Polynesian forebears, they began erecting ever-larger statues on platforms, perhaps as an expression of worship of their gods, perhaps to surpass rival clans with ever more grandiose monuments to their power and wealth (Bahn & Flenley, 1992; Diamond, 1995).

Eventually, as the population on the 64-square-mile island grew to perhaps as many as 20,000 people, the trees were being cut more rapidly than they were regenerating. The need for canoes, houses, and rollers and rope for transporting the gigantic stone heads finally decimated the forests. The absence of wood for seagoing canoes reduced fish catches. The growing populace consumed the local birds and animals. Erosion and deforestation diminished crop yields. The island could no longer feed its human inhabitants. Many archaeologists believe the political and religious establishments that had directed and distributed the local resources languished until the ruling class was finally overthrown. Disorder ensued, and clan fought clan, toppling and finally desecrating each other's statues in the process. By the time the Europeans arrived (Easter Sunday, 1772, hence the island's name), the once-fertile land was barren and desolate. Its remaining inhabitants, only a fraction of the numbers a few generations earlier, were heirs to a society that had deteriorated from splendor into violence, starvation, and cannibalism.

How could this have happened? In an astute analysis of Easter Island's ruin, physiologist Jared Diamond (1995) observes that the changes in deforestation occurred so slowly from one year to the next that they were almost impossible to detect. An islander might easily miss the long-term trend, assessing: "This year we cleared those woods over there, but trees are starting to grow back again on this abandoned garden site here" (p. 68). Furthermore, Diamond suggests that any islander who issued a warning against the oncoming disaster would have been silenced by vested interests. Chiefs, priests, and stonecarvers alike depended on the status quo to maintain their position and privileges.

Perhaps Easter Island's page in history, if we can discern its lesson, is not just a bleak omen but also an example of mistakes not to make, the miniature enactment of a possible future, a

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negative instruction manual that can be creatively studied. Easter Island's history is, so far, a microcosm of our planet (Bahn & Flenley, 1992). A rising population is faced with dwindling resources. Vested interests inhibit a realistic assessment of the predicament, no less an adequate response. And just as no one could emigrate from Easter Island, the Earth has become so interconnected that it is itself like a single island. There is no place on the globe that is not affected by the ecology of the entire planet and, as Diamond observes, "we can no more escape into space than the Easter Islanders could flee into the ocean" (p. 69).

Humanity may not act in time to prevent the decimation of the rain forests, fossil fuels, rare minerals, arable land, and ocean fisheries, just as Ethiopia did not act fast enough to prevent its forest cover from shriveling from 30 percent to a mere 1 percent in 40 years (Kennedy, 1993). Powerful decision-making groups are ignoring those voices who sound an alarm. The private agendas of political, economic, and religious groups keep them from effectively addressing the profoundly important problems of our diminishing natural resources and their imbalanced distribution. Finding parallels with Easter Island, Diamond observes that corrective actions today are also blocked "by well-intentioned political and business leaders [who] are perfectly correct in not noticing big changes from year to year. Instead, each year there are just somewhat more people, and somewhat fewer resources, on Earth" (Diamond, 1995, p. 69).

WHAT WE HAVE THAT THE EASTER ISLANDERS DIDN'T HAVE

Will we learn from the failures of those who came before us? "The only thing we learn from history," observed the German philosopher Martin Heidegger, "is that we don't learn from history." Best then that we learn from past failures to learn. Diamond is more optimistic than Heideigger about our ability to self-correct, emphasizing a crucial difference between us and the ill-fated later Easter Islanders: "The Easter Islanders had no books and no histories of other doomed societies. Unlike the Easter Islanders, we have histories of the past -- information that can save us" (Diamond, 1995, p. 69). We also have communications technologies that can allow us to decisively utilize that information.

Electronic communications, mass media, and computerized information highways have abolished the walls that once kept families, clans, and entire nations separate from one another. These technologies, according to communications expert Joshua Meyrowitz (1985), have allowed information to "flow through walls and rush across great distances (p. viii)." With these developments, veils have lifted between children and adults, men and women, rich and poor, political leaders and their constituencies, blurring age, gender, class, and authority distinctions (p. 322). At their best, these technologies are capable of dismantling tyrannical hierarchies, preventing the abuse of power, and providing free and open access to information that could set us marching to a new myth that would support our collective survival and well-being. At their worst, information technologies manipulate social consciousness in the covert service of corporate greed and ominous political agendas. They also sustain an entertainment industry that has become the opium of the masses, pacifying us with pleasing images and appealing platitudes far more vigorously than inspiring us to our true potentials and offering insight into and guidance through the painful economic and social problems that plague us today (Mitroff & Bennis, 1993).

Unless we can begin to discern what is life-affirming and what is life-denying in what the media feeds us, we are in danger of being psychically annihilated by one of our most auspicious tools. If we are, on a global scale, to avoid the fate of the Easter Islanders, we are called upon -- individually and collectively -- to radically transform the myths that are leading us, with increasing certainty, toward our demise. As Ram Dass once asked an audience, "Do you ever feel you are part of a cattle stampede that is headed over a cliff?" Or as Mitroff and Bennis (1993) have observed: "We are preoccupied with unreality precisely because we lack a good myth . . . to give ultimate meaning and purpose to our lives. The old myths, the old stories, have collapsed and no new ones have emerged to fill the vacuum" (p. 193).

What guiding myths might fill the void? Joseph Campbell (1986) cautioned that "one cannot predict the next mythology any more than one can predict tonight's dream" (p. 17). Since he made that observation, however, tremendous advances in dream incubation (Delaney, 1991) and lucid dreaming (LaBerge, 1985) techniques demonstrate that it is entirely possible to consciously enter, as a co-author, the world of your dreams. Analogously, as this essay is proposing, we have the capacity to work in a conscious alliance with the deep forces shaping the culture's emerging mythology. That mythology, whose stirrings we feel as it begins to come to life within us, seems to be emerging in tandem with our capacities to develop a global mind and a new and active partnership with nature.

MYTH-MAKING BY A GLOBAL MIND

We have all seen the ability of the media to mobilize aid for disasters and to focus a collective attention on a heartbreaking crisis half a globe away. And we have seen people of all nations rally to give their support. Today's children can buy a low-cost computer that can retrieve a depth of data that was beyond the reach of U.S. military intelligence at the end of World War II. A 1996 Ford Taurus carries greater computing power than did the lunar-landing module.

Individual minds are also meeting through information highways across the globe. Uncensored, they are creating new pathways along which people with breakthrough ideas and the people who need those ideas can find one another. No longer must a tiny organization in one corner of the world remain isolated as it labors to clean the water in wells gone rancid from pollution. We can now link ourselves with hundreds of other communities worldwide who are fighting the same battles. In an instant, through the sharing of knowledge, commitment, and insight, we can learn what others have done to rectify the same problems we face -- an instant that, not that long ago, would have required years of research.

The *information age* has linked humanity in a way that computer scientist Peter Russell (1995) finds analogous to "the emergence of the first multicellular organisms one billion years ago" (p. 114). Although our human minds have been communicating through one form of media or another at least since the first cave drawings some 20,000 years ago, computer networks, webs, and bulletin boards are a development of a different order. They are more like synaptic connections in the "Global Brain," a metaphor used by Russell to describe "the linking of the billions of human minds into a single integrated network" (p. 141). "One world" is no longer a political ideology. It

is a given. Every large business enterprise is required to think globally if it is to succeed (Drucker, 1992), and the ramifications of our shrinking planet are filtering into every harbor of modern life.

As communications technologies become extensions of human consciousness -- the synapses of a vibrant, living Global Brain -- humanity is able to reflect upon itself, and its myths, in ways never before dreamed. Evolution, according to Gregory Bateson (1988), is the ecosystem's way of learning. He suggested that any self-correcting system can be thought of as a mind -- families, organizations, communities, and ecosystems all, like minds, perceive, evaluate, and plan. Communication technologies are connecting human minds into a single, self-reflecting, self-correcting global mind. They are rousing our cooperative intelligence, and they are making us aware of our gross mismanagement of the gifts bestowed upon us by nature.

It was probably inevitable that we would initially misuse the promethean powers of technology. When they first emerged, we had no way of knowing what had been unleashed. We had no way of seeing what a forest in Brazil, the Western taste for beef, and the world's atmosphere could have in common. Without awareness of these relationships, we simply see the Brazilian government in need of foreign investments, the bulldozer operator and rancher in need of work, the transporter in need of cargo, and the hamburger franchises in need of meat. As the forests are demolished to facilitate each link in this chain, however, the creatures of the world suddenly find themselves in need of oxygen, locked in a progression of events that is out of control. Without a global perspective, we are like children with machine guns, having no understanding that the technology we are using is a mortal threat to everything that supports us.

But we are rapidly attaining a global perspective. We can examine our collective motives and their far-reaching consequences; we are able to reflect on where our guiding myths are leading us. Instantaneously all around the world, we become aware of a war that started but moments ago, and we receive instant replays of its battles. We get thirty different points of view from thirty top experts in thirty different disciplines. No longer do one or two newspapers provide the perspective that those in political power would have us hold. Cable television, faxes, e-mail, and the World Wide Web provide competing and unregulated views. Information that unmasks the propaganda of those who would do our thinking for us is routinely disseminated through the new communications technologies. Unprecedented levels of awareness have been achieved as we form the opinions, motivations, and belief systems -- the myths -- that are driving our culture.

Not only are the distances between us shrinking, but also the time it takes to implement new ideas grows shorter every day. What once required decades of laborious work can now occur almost in the blink of an eye. Only 66 years after Orville and Wilbur Wright got their first aeroplane off the ground, Neil Armstrong stepped out of a rocket ship and walked upon the surface of the moon. We have come to a moment where it is necessary to dramatically update our perception of what is possible for us. We are challenged to surrender our pessimism and collectively recognize that we have the wherewithal and the technology to create a world that is desirable, sustainable, and compassionate if we so choose. And that is the focal mythic shift to which we the authors have dedicated our careers.

PERSONAL MYTH-MAKING

As a clinician, an artist, and a researcher -- each of us also an educator -- we have long been watching how individuals can learn to identify, work with, and vitalize the myths that rule their lives. We have seen how, when a person is able to embody a new myth, a sense of imprisonment can be transmuted into enormous upsurges in perceived freedom, fresh possibilities, and effective action. We have also come to understand that a person's mythology evolves according to lawful processes, a sequence of predictable psychological events.

The four "motors of change" in human systems identified by Van De Ven and Poole (1995) include lifecycle, teleological, evolutionary, and dialectical forces. Each motor plays a role in the maturation of an individual's, a group's, or a community's guiding mythology:

1. Lifecycle. A mythology passes through a series of necessary stages during the lifecycle (e.g., supporting the individual's, group's, or community's emergence, growth, peak, and decline).

2. Teleology. Personal, group, and community myths develop through a sequence of goal formation, implementation, evaluation, and the modification of old goals or the formulation of new ones.

3. Evolution. The social milieu provides the cultural ecology that selects and reinforces some directions for the evolution of a mythology and not others -- and even the "fittest" mythic structures must continually evolve if they are to prevail within a changing environment.

4. Dialectic. Prevailing operating assumptions form the thesis, or guiding mythology, within a community, a group, or an individual's psyche; an envisioned contrasting scenario forms the antithesis or "counter-myth"; and the two engage in a dialectical confrontation, eventually leading to a synthesis, which serves as the thesis in the next round of the cycle.

Because the dialectic motor emphasizes the inevitable tension between the operating mythology and a new, emerging mythology, which turns out to be the nodal point of mythic development (Feinstein, 1997), it is the central focus of our model. As personal and collective myths evolve, each of the other three motors -- or systemic forces toward change -- operates in tandem with the dialectic motor. Whether the focus is on moving from one stage of the lifecycle to another, from one goal to another, or one level of adaptation to another, the movement inevitably involves a shift from one set of operating assumptions (thesis) to another (antithesis/synthesis). The mythic dialectic involves a five-stage progression, and our model for working with the *iindividual's* mythology is patterned after these five stages:

1). Identifying the Mythic Conflict Underlying Psychological Difficulties. The first stage of intervening in an individual's mythology involves framing personal difficulties in terms of deeper mythological conflict. The consequences of a failed myth are generally quite evident to the person, but clinical detective work can reveal how the presenting problem may have grown out of a breakdown in a guiding myth. Repetitive dysfunctional behavioral patterns such as involvement in abusive relationship or chronic vocational failures, as well as clinical symptoms such as addictions

or hypertension, may provide an entry into areas of the person's mythology that are begging for attention. Dream symbols and other productions of the unconscious, such as drawings or free association, may also highlight such areas. The clients' presenting complaints, self-defeating behavioral patterns, and unconscious symbolism might each reveal deeper conflicts in the person's guiding mythology.

2) *Understanding Both Sides of the Conflict.* The second stage focuses on the roots of each side of the mythic conflict, excavating the foundations of the prevailing myth and of the counter-myth that is emerging to challenge it. Exploring the prevailing myth inevitably leads to an examination of the client's childhood and the conditions that made the old myth an adaptive choice, often a brilliant strategy for emotional survival (e.g., Miller, 1991). Psychodynamic healing and repair work around the circumstances that led to the old myth's formation can be effectively initiated here. During this work, the person should also be alert for new solutions the psyche is attempting to generate in the form of a "counter-myth," an antithesis that adjusts for the old myth's limitations. Counter-myths emerge in counterpoint to failing myths, supporting underdeveloped aspects of the personality, establishing new goals grounded in new ways of being, or revealing new possibilities within the environment. Their imagery may be creative and inspiring, but like wish-fulfillment dreams, to which they are psychologically akin, they are first framed in the primary process logic of magical thinking and immediate gratification. The task in this stage of the work is to bring these opposing internal forces into consciousness, to recognize and appreciate each, and to trace their roots in the individual's culture, personal history, and preconscious cognitions and imagery.

3) *Conceiving a New Mythic Vision that Integrates the Most Vital Aspects of the Old Myth and of the Emerging Myth.* The third stage further examines the dialectical conflict that naturally exists between the prevailing myth and the counter-myth, focusing now on its resolution. While the psyche naturally moves toward resolving psychological conflict, actively participating in the process can facilitate a more rapid, creative, and effective integration of the two sides. A basic balance is, in fact, shifting in the modern psyche, as consciousness becomes an increasingly potent agent in influencing inherited and conditioned responses to events (Feinstein & Krippner, 1997). By consciously recognizing the value of facing their own inconsistencies, for instance, rather than retreating into old myths or clinging to new but unproven visions, people can learn to work out their conflicts as dramas in their inner lives rather than having to live them out on the rack of their outer lives.

4) *Refining a New Mythic Vision and Making a Conscious Commitment to Live from It.* In the fourth stage, the vision that has been cultivated to this point is tested and refined until the person is able to affirm a commitment to a carefully articulated new mythology. The dialectic process needs to run its course, but a time also comes where consciously identifying with a sensitively crafted mythic image both shapes and hastens the resolution. Challenging the person to formulate an explicit choice at this point exercises an active participation in the evolution of the guiding mythology and leads to an enhanced sense of mastery in that process. In addition to a rational, cognitive-oriented analysis of the new mythic vision, techniques that utilize nonordinary states of awareness, such as dream work, breathwork, and guided visualization are particularly apropos as the client examines and refashions the newly formed mythic image.

5) Translating a New Mythology into Daily Life. The final stage of the model requires clients to become practical and vigilant monitors of their commitment to achieve a harmony between daily life and the renewed guiding mythology they have been formulating. This stage involves both an inward focus and an outward focus. The inward focus concentrates on internal images, self-talk, and other methods for imprinting the spirit of the new myth on the person's psyche. The outward focus weaves the threads of the new myth into everyday behaviors, thoughts, and actions. To accomplish these objectives, we draw particularly from the cognitive and behavioral therapies -- using techniques such as behavior rehearsal, visualization, the monitoring of sub-vocalizations, and contingency management -- in assisting people to integrate the new mythology into their lives.

Each of these stages, rather than being a clearly demarcated line, defines a set of tasks that must be accomplished for subsequent stages to be successfully completed. In actual practice, the tasks of two or more stages are often simultaneously engaged. While we have been refining this model for over two decades (Feinstein, 1979), the basic five-stage sequence presented above appears valid after our work with thousands of clients. Our task here is to refocus what we have learned in working with individuals onto a cultural and global canvas.

COLLECTIVE MYTH-MAKING

Just as individuals can mindfully and constructively shift their personal myths, so too can families, groups, organizations, cities, countries, and the whole of humanity -- with awareness and intention -- transform collective myths. The five stage process by which personal myths spontaneously evolve, parallels in several fundamental ways, the evolution of cultural myths. The principles we have garnered from working with myths at the personal level can inform efforts at the level of larger systems. Specifically, personal and social myths inevitably become outdated as circumstances change beyond that myth's capacity to adapt. Prevailing myths are then challenged by and engage in a thesis-antithesis dialectic with emerging myths, eventually moving toward a synthesis -- a new myth that ideally incorporates the best qualities of each. This new myth may finally be embraced and translated into the exigencies of daily life.

Organizational psychologist Anne Dosher (1982) describes a "reflexive relationship" between the myths of individuals and the myths of organizations and community groups. Her work (Dosher, 1982) was one of the first examples we witnessed that adapts to social concerns principles that parallel the five stage sequence we have identified for working with personal myths. In recent years, we have also been invited to work with larger systems and have found that organizational and community change efforts can be brought into sharper focus through the lens of our five-stage model.

Dosher attunes the leadership in a community organization to the group's operating mythology and teaches ways of assessing the practical consequences of that mythology. She uncovers links between the organization's myths and the personal myths of its early founders. She helps the organization's members to acknowledge and celebrate these mythic roots, and sometimes to ritualistically bid them farewell. The informal rewards and negative sanctions that reflect the organization's myths are delineated, and the fit between its myths and the personal myths of its

members is examined. Dosher also identifies competing myths -- both within the organization and between the organization and the broader culture. Such conflicts are often at the basis of organizational crisis. If the organization can grasp the mythological dimension of the crisis and respond constructively, it shifts the fulcrum toward the possibilities of emerging revitalized and capable of creatively and realistically envisioning a vibrant future.

Dosher's interventions frequently include ritual, such as when "the shadow sides of living myths are codified, recorded and ceremoniously burned as a way of 'exorcising' dysfunction" (p. 12). Her approach parallels our five stage model for working with the individual's mythology in that she 1) identifies the myths operating in areas of organizational difficulty, 2) traces the historical roots of prevailing myths and examines emerging myths, 3) mediates the dialectic between competing mythologies, and 4) assists the organization in refining and 5) implementing new mythic images that will constructively shift its direction.

FIRST STAGE: ZEROING IN ON MYTHIC CONFLICT

When you think about the mythic dimension of a problem, you invite solutions at its deeper levels. Faced with a rapidly deteriorating environment, a plethora of local wars, terrorism, narcotrafficing, and accelerating competition for limited resources by starving, desperate people, the world is in profound need of solutions to problems rooted in its conflicted, outdated, dysfunctional, yet still entrenched mythologies.

The guiding myth of Western culture has, for centuries, been what Gergen (1991) refers to as the "Grand Narrative of Progress" (p. 30). It is a story that teaches people how to move toward goals -- to acquire, improve, expand. Modern science is thoroughly enmeshed in this myth. While science does not try to answer questions about how its findings should be used, modern science was propelled, by the mythology of progress, to achievements that would have seemed impossible to earlier cultures -- carrying sounds over long distances, recording images on film, defying gravity, harnessing natural resources and the power of the atom, extending the human life span, exploring outer space. A modest home in a modern technological society has luxuries beyond the dreams of royalty in the Middle Ages. Science has been hailed for its steadfast logic while reverence for the sacred has been considered a hindrance to *progress*.

But as it continued to dominate Western cultures, as well as many other parts of the world, the Grand Narrative of Progress began to cast a malignant shadow on all it touched. The invention of the automobile was the quintessence of progress, but it left overcrowded highways, air pollution, and deforestation in its wake. Fertilizers increased crop production but also increased the growth of algae in lakes and canals. The discovery of DDT, first greeted with enthusiasm and a Nobel prize, led to the unintentional poisoning of fish, bird, and animal populations. When Western medicine, housing, clothing, and religion were brought to aboriginal people, the rate of infectious disease went down, but the rate of alcoholism, drug addiction, suicide, and spouse and child abuse often became endemic. Nuclear power plants increased available energy but led to storage problems, life-threatening contamination, and at least one accident whose noxious effects were felt around the world. The waste products of technological living began to choke great cities and foul once

pristine lands. In its wake, the Grand Narrative of Progress leaves us swimming in the social equivalent of an oil spill.

Nor can the Grand Narrative of Progress be indulged much longer. As resources diminish at a cataclysmic rate, the dreams it cradles rapidly tarnish. A 1995 Gallup Poll found that 60% of Americans expect the world of the next generation to be worse off than it is now. Like an aging quarterback's secret hope of playing another decade, the Grand Narrative of Progress is rupturing. According to Glendinning (1995): "Widespread radioactive contamination, cancer epidemics, oil spills, toxic leaks, environmental illness, ozone holes, poisoned aquifers, and cultural and biological extinction indicate that the technological construct encasing our every experience, perception, and political act stands in dire need of criticism" (p. 42). That construct, the "Grand Narrative of Progress," has already wreaked devastation humanity can ill afford, yet it remains the guiding myth, the measuring rod of success, in much of the world. Responses to the consequences of this single guiding myth influence all other events in the social arena.

SECOND STAGE: ILLUMINATING OLD AND EMERGING MYTHS

The second stage in our model for mindfully intervening in an outdated or socially dysfunctional mythology focuses on the roots of the mythic conflict identified in the first stage. The foundations of the prevailing myth are excavated, and the forces driving the counter-myth(s) that come forth to challenge it are examined. Wherever a guiding myth has become detrimental, compensatory forces spontaneously emerge in the cultural ecology. Fresh visions may appear in all corners -- from the dreams of artists to shifts in market appetites -- to correct for the shortcomings of a failing myth.

The Old Myth in Historical Perspective. The cultural myth that beckons toward "progress" traces back to the time when humanity shifted its view of itself from being *a part of* nature to being able to *act upon* nature. In his 1988 Memorial Address for Joseph Campbell in New York City, Sam Keen described the shift from nature-harmonizing to nature-dominating myths, and his statements in this discussion are abridged from an audio tape of that talk (Keen, 1994-a). Keen observed that as human beings first came "into consciousness, they asked themselves `How do we live within this surround? How do we live here harmoniously? How do we understand that within which we live?' As different myths emerge to answer these questions, the first thing we find is that the tribe -- and the first mythogenic zone is the tribe, it isn't the individual -- understands itself as a part of the natural world." By understanding themselves as a part of nature, groups of people aspired to repeat the patterns of nature and maintain their traditional ways rather than attempt to innovate new ways of being. There was no concept of "progress"; to do anything for the *first time* was to insult your ancestors and turn away from nature. You simulate natural cycles because, Keen continues, "wisdom is in the natural order itself. You submit to that natural order and you find out how to harmonize with it. Heroism is fidelity to the ways of nature."

Then something new began to emerge into history. Images of deities were separated from nature, and the natural world came to be understood as having been created by the will of transcendent gods. This led to a new type of heroism, a heroism which gave human beings (usually male human beings) permission to join with their transcendent gods to act upon nature and,

according to Keen, "to change it, and yes, to dominate it." With the arrival of the transcendent gods came "the permission to be actors and changers and co-creators of history." Will and volition replaced harmony and surrender. In the Middle East's Fertile Crescent, invaders swept down from the north, their warrior gods destroying the garden of the Earth goddess. Parallel developments occurred in many other parts of the world.

Monolithic male deities, such as Allah, Aton, and Jehovah, appeared as human volition became more fully developed. They gradually replaced the polytheistic panoplies of nature gods and goddesses, animal guides, and spirits, along with the myths that kept people in harmony with their environment. The Grand Narrative of Progress is rooted in these historical developments where humans could, like their deities, transcend and act upon nature. Like a new dawn, or a devastating virus (depending on the mythology of the one passing judgment), the myth of progress, initially a Western notion, has permeated much of the inhabited world.

Humanity's shift from myths that supported harmony with nature to myths that fostered its domination involved a transition that occurred at differing rates and in diverse ways on various parts of the planet. Coinciding with this fundamental change in humanity's relationship with nature were also changes in the structure of the human psyche, and thus not only were our myths transformed, but also our manner of myth-making. The separation of personal identity from nature and from the group, the emergence of the individual ego, and the appearance of the Western hero myths, were the psychological attendants to the Grand Narrative of Progress. While these accomplishments were painstakingly achieved, the success of the Grand Narrative of Progress was intoxicating, and preoccupation with the isolated self on a heroic journey became the norm. The conquering heroes of the contemporary era ripped themselves away from nature, spearheaded by belligerent personal egos and supported by increasingly sophisticated technologies. Wilber (1981) explains the contemporary dilemma in terms of the relationship of humans to their biological nature, the mythical "Great Mother":

> The ego, in the necessary course of its emergence, had to break free of the Great Mother or biological nature embeddedness. That is all well and good -- the ego, in fact, did manage to break free of its attachment and subservience . . . and establish itself as an independent, willful, and constellated center of consciousness, a feat represented in the Hero Myths. But in its zeal to assert its independence, it not only *transcended* the Great Mother, which was desirable; it *repressed* the Great Mother, which was disastrous. And there the ego -- the Western ego -- demonstrated not just an awakened assertiveness, but a blind arrogance . . . no longer harmony with the Heavens but a technological assault on Nature. . . . It is one thing to gain a freedom from the fluctuations of nature, emotions, instincts, and environment -- it is quite another to alienate them. (187 - 188.)

The fiercely independent nationalism that emerged hand-in-hand with the Grand Narrative of Progress -- the individual ego writ large -- although still an obsession in many parts of the world is rapidly losing its feasibility as a social form. Yet the promises of the Grand Narrative of Progress were generous and remain seductive. Its scientific promise held that with the proper application of reason and observation, the "truth" about everything would become known and nature would fall within the dominion of human control. Its political promise held that a just society would emerge from the ashes of the unjust society once the proper revolutions took place,

the right laws were passed, and/or the correct redistributions of power, income, and jobs were accomplished. Its religious promise held that people could perfect their lives, bring a touch of heaven to earth, and attain salvation by following the canons of the true faith. But the fanatical devotion to material progress led to what Saul (1992) labelled the "new holy trinity" of organization, technology, and information, and the emergence of a new priesthood, the technocrats who understand the organization, make use of its technology, and control access to information.

Can the "new holy trinity" lead humankind into its yearned for Promised Land? Like pilgrims shuffling on their knees toward a sacred shrine, the modern world has trod the path of progress in all earnestness, often sacrificing delight, pleasure, and comfort for the sake of generating technological achievements, fighting for societal betterment, striving for economic advantage, or proselytizing for righteous creeds. After all the struggles, how disheartening it is to look back on a world where there are more illiterate, hungry, and oppressed people than ever before. The best intentions all too often have led to social cataclysm, bloodshed, desertification, pollution, decimated rainforests, dead lakes and rivers, poisoned wildlife, and contaminated food. Each desecration was an inadvertent result of the Grand Narrative of Progress. Not from science, nor technology, nor politics, nor economics, nor religion did prophets emerge who could divert the world and its inhabitants from this accelerating fallout. Even as its devastating price comes due for collection, however, humanity is still borrowing against the Grand Narrative of Progress, and its assumptions continue to enjoy an exalted place on the altar of the contemporary ego.

Counter-Myths on the Cultural Horizon. When people sense that a core guiding mythology is threatening their own future or the future of their children, unrest ensues and counter-myths abound. With growing numbers of people reluctantly compelled to recognize the breakdown of the Grand Narrative of Progress, what counter-myths are challenging it? Philosopher Michael Grosso (1995) has studied the mythic response of societies when the old order is challenged and a vision for a new order emerges. He uses the term "Millennium Myth" to describe the characteristic responses. The visions of a new order tend to be more dramatic and pronounced at the end of a century, and even more so at the end of a millennium.

Upbeat versions of the Millennium Myth portray a New Golden Age, the New Jerusalem, the Peaceable Kingdom, the Age of Aquarius, or the City of the Sun. In some of these scripts, heaven has come down to earth or at least has been cloned. Other narratives foretell the Arrival of the Messiah, Jesus, Matriaya, Pahan, Quetzalcoatl, or the Healing Spirit of the Goddess. As one optimistic myth-maker writes, "By the year 2011, humankind will have reached the due date for the cohesion of its collective consciousness. By then, the telepathic frequency of the rising awareness will converge within a more numerous, aware, and interconnected global population" (Carey, 1995, p. 100).

Pessimistic myth-makers may grimly envision a world devastated by comets, by floods, or by fire, and a human population decimated by war, by starvation, by infectious diseases, by the Antichrist, or by the collapse of the ozone layer. Some religious leaders have always viewed this sinful world as being beyond redemption: people are hopelessly degenerate, and entry into the "other world" is humankind's only chance of salvation -- a salvation limited to "true believers," the "chosen ones," those "predestined" to enter it, or those who have "worked through their karma." Their followers often equate the modern myth of progress with sexual license, televised

imperialism, and cultural homogenization. They want to keep their diet pristine, their women veiled, their holy places inviolate, and their homes free from rock music, fast food, and such contaminating influences as intoxicating beverages, lurid magazines, and unfamiliar ideas. Neither the global village, the information highway, nor the new world order for them. Instead of expending their labors on behalf of economic and political changes, scientific and technological advances, or even religious good works, they prepare for Armageddon, the Apocalypse, the Last Judgment, or the Pole Shift.

Sustainability vs. the Grand Narrative of Progress. While flamboyant Millennium Myths, both optimistic and pessimistic, tend to capture the cultural spotlight, a deeper and more basic process is, according to growing numbers of informed observers, also occurring. For the first time in history, the survival of our entire species is, clearly and imminently, tied to the choices we are making and the myths that shape them. The fate of the planet may well hang on the fate of the Grand Narrative of Progress.

Challenging the Grand Narrative of Progress is a mythology that ranks sustainability as *the* guiding value upon which all other choices must be measured, akin to the Iroquois tradition of assessing how a given decision is likely to affect "the seventh generation to come." While sustainability is not particularly glamorous to egos that have been raised on the greatest explosion in history of mesmerizing gadgets and genuine advances in comfort and productivity, survival is a compelling objective.

Keen (1994-b) believes we are required to make a fundamental "shift from the myth of progress to a myth of sustainable growth" (p. 237) if we are to create a political order able to avert humanity from its course toward self-destruction. He warns that the time is fast approaching where we "*either* learn to care for each other beyond the old lines of nation, class, and religion, *or* self-destruct in the economic-military warfare of each against each" (p. 236). He identifies some of the radical changes in values and political principles that would be required to bring about the move to a myth that supported sustainable growth: shifting personal identity from the ego-centric individual to the communally rooted person; shifting from economic competition to cooperation; shifting from sanctified violence and the myth of "just wars" to nonviolent means of conflict resolution; shifting from population explosion to zero population growth; shifting from nationalism to an effective world federation; shifting from a secular view of nature as raw material to the resacralization of nature; and shifting from a world divided between the poor and the rich to a more just distribution of wealth (p. 237).

Acknowledging that his list of objectives may appear naive and idealistic, Keen (1994-b) cites studies (conducted by the World Game Institute) indicating that a mere one-fourth of the world's military expenditures could "prevent soil erosion, stop ozone depletion, stabilize population, prevent global warming and acid rain, provide clean safe energy, provide shelter, eliminate illiteracy, eliminate starvation and malnourishment, provide clean water, and retire developing nations' debt" (p. 239). These studies, even if overly optimistic, lend support to the assessment that solutions to even the most hazardous of the challenges faced by humanity are still within the reach of a guiding myth that would crystalize collective action toward a sustainable future.

Connection vs. the Personal Ego. The Grand Narrative of Progress is fueled by competition among individuals, among groups, among organizations, and among nations. Competition requires people to draw a boundary that separates them (whether as individuals or groups) from others, and to amass within that boundary all the resources they possibly can. It is more than a coincidence that the Grand Narrative of Progress and the fiercely independent ego developed in tandem. It is more than a coincidence that one of Keen's central recommendations for developing a mythology that promotes sustainability is to accomplish a shift in personal identity "from the ego-centric individual to the communally rooted person." It is more than a coincidence that the last evolutionary leap of the human brain was in the part of the cerebral cortex involved with language and inference capacities, allowing thought to leap beyond the constraints of the biological self (Gazzaniga, 1985, p. 154). It is more than a coincidence that the ascendence of the Grand Narrative of Progress corresponded with the exultation of individualism in the West (from the individual ego to the sovereign nation) and the slackening of connections (from connections with the primordial self to connections with neighbors to connections with the planet) (Anderson, 1990, pp. 113 - 115; Coan, 1987, p. 87).

At a deep level of the cultural psyche, the counter-myths challenging the twin myths of the Grand Narrative of Progress and the exultation of the autonomous ego are, also operating in tandem, a counter-myth emphasizing *sustainability* and a counter-myth emphasizing *connection*. The needs for sustainability and for connection interact in a potent alchemy. Just as we must recognize that our societies are organized in a manner that will not sustain human life for many more generations, we must also recognize that our psyches are organized in a manner that separates us from indispensable connections with others, with nature, with our very souls.

The development of the personal ego -- a self-asserting identity -- is perhaps the most extraordinary achievement of the Western world if not of evolution itself. Even more extraordinary, however, was the development of whole societies where each citizen is operating, not from within a subservient personality structure, but out of a self-asserting ego. As Neumann (1970) has emphasized, at one time individuals endowed with greatness "possessed a consciousness and stood for the collective in the role of leader," but the further course of evolution involved "a progressive democratization, in which a vast number of individual consciousnesses work productively at the common human task" (p. 434). Individual expression, and thus a strong personal ego, was encouraged for the masses around the fifteenth century, when "the new mood of the Renaissance pushed individualism out into broad new areas and democratized it" (Gilman, 1985, p. 24).

With the diffusion of personal autonomy came an explosion of new possibilities. Traditions that at one time persisted until challenged by a king, a priest, a shaman, or by social necessity were now questioned from a thousand directions. As individual autonomy was unfolding, the social atmosphere cultivated the rational mind and its fateful capacities. This sharpening of our reasoning abilities was an evolutionary leap, and the human mind has been honed into a cutting edge that is carving its signature onto everything it touches.

The evolution of the personal ego reflects the interplay between the individual and the culture. For the vast majority of human history, cultural myths imprinted themselves on the individual's construction of reality in an essentially unilateral process, uncomplicated by self-

reflection. Most members of a tribe or clan were bred to be conformists -- only chiefs, shamans, and priests had the right, the ability, and the responsibility to influence the culture's mythology. The conforming psyche was not well differentiated and did not have a strong sense of selfhood. As clans became larger, and leaders more powerful, the psyche became more ordered and hierarchical, the personal ego more prominent. The psyche, as always, modeled itself after its society.

The personal ego, according to Greenwald (1980), is indeed characterized by biases that are strikingly analogous to totalitarian information-control strategies. Like totalitarian regimes, the ego organizes knowledge in a way that exalts itself, distorts new information, and revises past experiences to justify its own premises. The personal ego resembles the totalitarian empire forged at the individual level. The model of organization provided by the totalitarian ego is, as Gilman (1985) has observed, the "top-down hierarchy" in which an autocratic leader directs the activities of obedient followers, and the strategy for success is "to win by *defeating others*" (p. 23).

If societies provide the prototype for the organization of the psyche, their own organization would tend to stay an evolutionary jump ahead of the psyche. When people lived in smaller clans, the psyche was less differentiated. Later, with the totalitarian empire as its prototype, the Western psyche spawned the free-willing ego. Then societies had to reorganize themselves to manage free-willing individuals. Democracy emerged as the new social form. The evolution from autocratic rule to democratic nations was a vital response as the well-developed personal ego became a possession of ordinary people. From a mythological perspective, democracy may be described as a social arrangement where individuals consciously and collaboratively choose the mythic visions that are to be collectively embraced. Democracies, ideally, are designed to accommodate the pluralistic needs of freely-willing egos. Meanwhile, the ego is still modeled after the totalitarian regime, and the next evolutionary jump will involve a more democratically-organized psyche.

Connection vs. Patriarchal Values. Even in democratic cultures, authoritarian methods are used to control beliefs and behavior (Kramer & Alstad, 1993), where the official mythology is overtly and covertly implanted into people's emotions, outlook, and aspirations. Kramer and Alstad believe it is essential for a "new paradigm" to bolster people's trust of their own experiences instead of accepting unexamined assumptions and values, and that the paradigm itself must be "open to challenge and self-correction via the experiences of living people" (p. 3). They are, in their own terms, speaking of the democratization of the totalitarian ego.

The democratization of the family has been the battleground on which this new paradigm is being forged. As recently as the 1960s, patriarchal rule was still largely unquestioned in the family and the workplace, even in Western nations that espoused the ideals of democracy in their political system. But patriarchal assumptions have been persistently challenged. The mythologies that define identity are vastly different for men and women (Gilligan, 1982). Whereas male myths typically have focused upon the tasks of separation and mastery of self over environment, female myths typically have been more concerned with caring and connectedness. The culture's revaluing of typically feminine principles, a shift in the cultural teutonic plates whose most recent tremors began in the 1960s, and the resulting turbulence in gender roles and family relationships, may be seen as self-corrections in contemporary democracies.

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Pogrebin (1983) has argued that "the traditional patriarchal family is democracy's `original sin'; it is the elemental flaw in an otherwise perfectible political system. . . . Very simply, it is impossible to achieve the exalted goals of the democratic dream and the free and full development of every person so long as the basic unit of our society, the family, is undemocratic and unfree" (pp. 18-19). Upheavals in family structure and gender identity are reverberations of increasingly democratic reflexes in the culture's mythology, pushing their way to the family and individual levels, where they lead to radical and unsettling changes.

Available evidence from studies of contemporary families does indeed suggest that the happiest marriages are egalitarian, while marriages typified by one partner's domination are correlated with marital dissatisfaction (Gray-Little & Burks, 1983). In the predemocratic marriage that was the reigning model in the 1950s and earlier, each partner's commitment was toward fulfilling a prescribed set of gender-linked role expectations. In the marriages that seem to be emerging, the commitment is increasingly toward the integrity of a relationship between equals. Although the vestiges of patriarchal arrangements are still tightly gripped by many families and in many areas of the world, their failure to actualize important potentials of both women *and* men becomes increasingly dysfunctional in most parts of the world. Pogrebin has emphasized that "just as the authoritarian family is the authoritarian state in microcosm, the democratic family is the best training ground for life in a democracy" (p. 18). The recalibration of our myths from the stereotypically male emphasis on autonomy toward the stereotypically female emphasis on caring and connection may be the old myth/counter-myth dialectic that is at the heart of today's mythic turmoil.

Connection with the Global Community. Joseph Campbell (1986) believed that if humanity is to survive, at least one archaic but dominating myth must be transformed. While all mythological systems direct the "expansive faculty of the heart" toward the in-group, they deliberately direct toward the out-group "every impulse toward violence" (p. 16). The emblem of the mythology begging to be born is, for Campbell, the photo from outer space showing the Earth as a beautiful, blue, but utterly indivisible home. The shrinking globe dictates that humanity can no longer afford to use "out-groups" as containers for its projections and destructive impulses.

Connection with Nature. As our total dependence on the planet and the interdependence of our happiness with the state of its environment have become glaring, it also becomes obvious that humankind cannot for long continue to treat nature as anything but "in-group." In the "Gaia myth," named after the primordial Greek Earth goddess, the planet is viewed as an intelligent organism that works through feedback mechanisms. And, as Anderson (1996) has emphasized, humanity has become a dominant player in those feedback systems: "We are in the midst of a profound evolutionary transition -- happening right now, within us and all around us . . . the world is becoming a bionic planet -- remodeled, wired, and networked by information systems that monitor its health, forecast its future, and govern its ecosystems" (p. ix). If we serve as neurons in Gaia's information control center, the opportunities and responsibilities are enormous. Cooperating with rather than dominating nature may be an alien strategy within the Grand Narrative of Progress, but as is becoming urgently apparent, it is the only avenue on the map that doesn't lead to a dead end.

Connection with Our Spiritual Roots. Modern science is the zealous expression of the rational mind in its collective form, and it exhibits both the extraordinary benefits and liabilities of

an emphatic empiricism. Science has long served as the culture's dominating mythology. But science spawns an incomplete mythology. Myths traditionally have served four essential functions: explaining the external world, guiding individual development, providing social direction, and addressing spiritual questions (Campbell, 1990). While modern science has adeptly fulfilled the function of providing explanations for observable phenomena, it has not, for the most part,

> created new rituals to mark life's developmental stages; it has not found ways to fulfill people's needs for interpersonal intimacy or meaningful work, or their hunger for spiritual fulfillment through unity with a schema greater than themselves. Modern science . . . has impressive explanatory power but [it] is better at demolishing older mythic constructs than establishing new concepts to replace them. [Science] rarely addresses itself to the developmental, social, and spiritual needs that were traditionally filled by cultural myths. (Krippner, 1991, p. 135)

While the scientific worldview has been narrowly empirical, spiritual development can be described, without metaphysical speculation, as an enhanced attunement to the subtle patterns and hidden forces in nature that comprise the wider context of human destiny. May (1981) defined human destiny as "the design of the universe speaking through the design of each one of us" (p. 90). As decisively as we carry the genes of our parents, we carry the design of the universe. To reflect upon this relationship is to reflect upon the spiritual realm of existence; to perceive it through direct experience is to open to the deepest sources of our being; to collectively connect our behavior with the deepest sources of our being would turn upside down the mechanistic mythology that has been increasingly guiding our culture since the days of Newton.

New Tools for Connection. Even without mortal threats emanating from prevailing myths, such as those forcing us to rethink sustainability and connection, counter-myths also emerge simply because a readiness for them has unfolded. In a study of the tools that have helped humanity survive and prosper, from the stone axe to the computerized information network, Burke and Ornstein (1995) show how the interaction between innovation and the brain has continually reshaped not only the world, but more importantly, the way people think. Each major innovation has invited fresh mythologies, igniting shifts in how people conceive of themselves and their world. Burke and Ornstein note that electronic communications technology, in particular, makes possible new forms of social organization. They see in these possibilities a route for overcoming the trends that have brought the world to the brink of destruction, suggesting for instance that worldwide webs of knowledge could, ironically, "make small communities viable once more," functioning in a way that could "become commonplace all over the planet" (p. 309). The new information technologies may make it possible for communities to easily and swiftly visualize patterns of change, to envision the effects of one option or another, and to decide which to pursue "on the basis of more foreknowledge than our ancestors ever had" (p. 310). Around such possibilities, counter-myths congeal.

In summary, the twin myths of progress and autonomy are being challenged by the twin counter-myths of sustainability and connection. Just as the life goals of a newly diagnosed cancer patient refocus toward survival, a realistic assessment of the global situation requires a rapid and radical shift from the myth of progress to a myth that is oriented around sustainability. And just as the development of the autonomous personal ego and the sovereign nation pushed progress

forward, the revival of connection with the deepest forces of the psyche, with nature, and with a global community are required if sustainability is to be achieved.

THIRD STAGE: CULTIVATING A UNIFYING MYTHIC VISION

The complementary dialectical tides of *differentiation* and *integration* are recognized as primary mechanisms in a wide range of psychological theories of personality development (e.g., Epstein, 1994; Kegan, 1982; McAdams, 1993; Wilber, 1995). Similarly, mythic thought moves from an awareness of contradictions toward their resolution (Cavendish, 1980). Myth and counter-myth, as thesis and antithesis, reflexively engage one another in this basic dialectical process. Lévi-Strauss (1979), concluded that the most durable myths reconcile dichotomies, contradictions, and fissures in a society's fabric. To the degree that the foregoing analysis is accurate, humanity is weaving its fate on the warp and woof of the two fundamental and related dialectics of *progress vs. sustainability* and *autonomy vs. connection.*

In our work with several thousand individuals toward the resolution of personal mythic conflict, we have come to recognize a number of principles that also apply at the societal level. For instance, the wholesome resolution of inner mythic conflict is rarely accomplished by a retreat into old forms or by a blind leap into the currents of psychological development. So too with the forces shaping social conditions. Neither progress without sustainability, nor sustainability without progress. Neither autonomy without connectedness, nor connectedness without autonomy. The ideal alchemy retains the strengths of both the prevailing myth and the counter-myth while transcending their limitations. Sustainability does not abandon but rather reconciles itself with progress. Connection becomes a post-individual, not pre-individual affair, where rather than losing our hard-earned sense of self, we affirm and transcend it (see Wilber's, 1995, discussion of the "pre/trans" fallacy, pp. 205 - 208).

When a counter-myth that is correcting for the limitations or other inadequacies of the prevailing myth is suppressed effectively enough and long enough, its thrust for expression becomes explosive. It will find any available route to upset the system's equilibrium, as if screaming for attention. At the personal level, nightmares can be a relatively inexpensive warning that the forces for necessary change are being stifled. More costly are the self-destructive behaviors that may come out of a mid-life crisis (the gap between the time when the mythology that governed one's young adulthood is failing and a new guiding mythology takes hold), such as when a man forsakes his family and his career in favor of a fling with his young secretary. At an extreme, the loyal milquetoast employee shows up at work with an uzi. Physical symptoms may also be the manifestation of mythic conflict gone foul. Donna Eden, a mind-body healer known for her ability to literally see what she calls the "body's energies" and, based upon what she sees, to identify physical problems in a manner that reliably corresponds with medical diagnoses, has observed: "When a myth doesn't work anymore, a point is reached where its energy gets very murky. I can see the energy of an old myth doing all it can to hold on, like hot tar. If it gets stuck that way for a long period, physical illness often follows" (cited in Feinstein, 1998). More often, the tar-like energy of an outmoded myth finds expression in a progressively dysfunctional yet compelling "subpersonality."

A *subpersonality* is an ego state -- an intermittent mode of identity that controls consciousness and behavior -- that is governed by a specific personal myth. A woman may be sweet and accommodating around the men she dates while tough and aggressive in her work as a corporate executive. Neither ego state is necessarily an act; each may be the expression of a semi-autonomous element of her character structure, a subpersonality. The societal analog of a subpersonality is a cohesive group or network with a distinct identity, bonded around one of the culture's prevailing myths or counter-myths. Disadvantaged groups, like repressed forces in the psyche, tend to challenge the prevailing mythology. Sometimes, their only available avenue to command the collective's attention is to become so dysfunctional that the society must respond to them, perhaps coming to recognize injustices caused by the dominant mythology. More often, dysfunctional groups are blamed, discounted, and further disempowered. The ills of personal depression, writ large, tend to follow. Or anger: terrorism is often the violent call of a mythology forcing itself to be more broadly felt. Terrorism can never be condoned by a civilized society. Nevertheless, the fact that more terrorism has not been perpetrated by those who feel they "are part of a cattle stampede that is headed over a cliff" is actually more surprising than the fact that terrorism has become a significant force in the culture's evolving mythology.

Amidst the myriad cultural "subpersonalities" in modern technological societies -- groups passionately expressing one side of a social conflict or another -- the dialectic process is at play. The paired conflicts of *progress vs. sustainability* and *autonomy vs. connection* are the underlying themes in many of the most impassioned struggles: the patriarchy vs. the resurgence of feminine values, the exploitation of the planet's resources vs. ecological policies, "objective" science vs. a spiritual worldview, fundamentalism vs. "New Age" thinking; corporate greed vs. humanitarian social choices, a nationalistic vs. a global perspective. The explosion of such conflicts, which are so heavily taxing the modern psyche, is in part the consequence of a shift in the relationship between psyche and society. Where the psyche, as discussed above, was for most of humanity's evolution modeled after the society in which it was spawned, individual psyches are today, and for the first time ever, consciously and collaboratively shaping the society that envelops them.

Postmodernism and Mythic Conflict. This process is at the heart of what has come to be called "postmodern" thought. Anderson (1990), in his cleverly titled *Reality Isn't What It Used to Be*, describes the keys to postmodern thought as 1) the *realization* that "all explanations of reality are themselves constructions -- human, useful, but not perfect," and 2) the *ability* to "step out" of our constructions of reality and see them as such (p. 256). Without both this realization and this ability, the systemic forces in a society run blind, and when they are propelled by the technological engines indigenous to modern societies, their potential consequences exceed our worst nightmares. Unchecked by our ability to step out of socially constructed reality, multi-national corporations alone will lead us down an excruciating path into oblivion.

Conflict and diversity generate fire in the crucible of social change (Mindell, 1995). Embattled social groups are the concrete manifestations of a mythological dialectic, the culture's underlying mythic conflicts pushing toward a larger vision. Noting the ever present lethal dissension between groups such as pro-choice and pro-life advocates, Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland, Arabs and Israelis in the Middle East, and the cultural mainstream versus a myriad of fringe groups, Gergen (1991), one of the pioneering postmodern thinkers, recognizes that both sides of such conflicts are deeply embedded within social traditions. Even neo-Nazis, cocaine

dealers, and the Mafia, he observes, represent ways of life that seem "coherent, intelligible, and even moral for the participants" (p. 256). But social traditions fall into a new and radically different context in a postmodern world where all explanations of reality are understood to be social constructions and where the capacity to step out of those constructions is becoming a prized ability. The psyche can question social reality as never before, and its ability to do so is amplified many times by the communications media.

Tension and antagonism among social groups are probably an unavoidable ingredient of civilized life. A unifying mythic vision incorporates the most viable elements of each perspective while transcending their limitations. At the personal level, facilitating a unifying inner vision involves focusing on the adverse elements in the underlying mythic conflict, appreciating the strengths and dispassionately assessing the limitations of each, and fostering internal cooperation and creative compromise (Feinstein & Krippner, 1997). These activities each have a social analog. Gergen (1991) has identified three corollaries of postmodern thought (pp. 257 - 259) that could, if appreciated by all parties, move conflicting groups toward achieving a unifying mythic vision and a constructive resolution of their conflicting needs and goals.

1). *Principles Tend to Eclipse People During Times of Social Conflict.* Conflicting social forces have traditionally been approached in Western culture by bolstering one's own position with an abstract system of justification, moral principles, or rules of logic. Postmodernism recognizes that *any* moral injunction or rational principle "may be applied anywhere if the participants have the negotiating skills" (p. 257). Rather than fortifying the sense of righteousness and denigrating the opposition by taking refuge in abstract systems of justice, laws, or moral codes, Gergen urges direct interchange with the other, entertaining questions that bring out the mythic differences beneath the conflict, such as: "What is the worldview within which their actions are intelligible and good? What place do we hold in that worldview? How do they perceive our view and their place within it?" He emphasizes that it is important to expand the possibilities for dialogue even with persons and groups who are alien and despised. When Israeli Prime Minister Menacham Begin and Egyptian President Anwar Sadat met with Jimmy Carter at Camp David, sharing pictures of their grandchildren was an important preliminary step to the historic peace accord between two peoples whose episodes of enmity extend back to ancient times.

2). *Language Tends to Build Walls Instead of Bridges During Times of Social Conflict.* Postmodernism emphasizes the enormous power of language to create the illusion of irreconcilable differences. Dissent in religious or political beliefs "may have little important bearing on more general styles of life" (Gergen, 1991, 258). Many conflicts are more a matter of banner-waving, battle cries, and facade than actual differences in lived values. The bloodshed in Bosnia has been blamed on long-standing antagonisms that are part of the Balkans' turbulent heritage. But a more perceptive analysis of the evidence reveals the important role played by cynical political and military elites who reframed a thousand years of Balkan history to serve their own purposes, ignoring the frequency of intermarriage and the tradition of multi-ethnic communities that had lived peacefully (Silber & Little, 1995). Conversely, new historical narratives that demonstrate similarities of heritage and bring causes closer together can break down barriers, reduce differences among antagonists, and allow disparate myths and belief systems to meaningfully commingle.

3). *Antagonists Holding Irreconcilable Convictions Can Find Common Ground in Real-Life Situations.* With its recognition of the dangers inherent in linguistic exchange, postmodernism urges that groups "*press beyond dialogue*" (Gergen, 1991, p. 258). Attention can shift "from the linguistic negotiation of reality to the coordination of actions in everyday life" (p. 258). Gergen offers as promising examples athletes and musicians from all walks of life who generate effective teams or musical groups, business executives from diverse backgrounds who work together to create fertile international efforts, and scientists from disparate cultures who succeed in cooperative research ventures. Seemingly irreconcilable ideologies and life-styles can no longer be considered unbridgeable.

While it may be difficult to imagine extremist groups deciding to live by such rules, the collective can lock onto a limited number of new principles and arrange incentives that make them compelling. Nearly all people pay their taxes, purchase their groceries, and stop when the light turns red. Most groups and organizations abide by consensus, allow dissension, and recognize the need to coexist with rival groups. Militia members and advocates of gun control, for example, frequently collaborate in community councils to determine the regulations for the hunting season. If Gergen's three principles could be elevated to cultural norms through social policy and institutional practices, the natural dialectic processes at work amidst conflict would be given a significant boost. A major strength of democratic forms of government is, in fact, that the dialectic process is built into their structure, ideally promoting constructive resolutions among conflicting social forces and competing social visions.

Psychologist Carl Rogers was a pioneer in applying such principles. He proposed that leaders in international negotiations should not criticize an adversary's position before having stated the opponent's view to the satisfaction of the other. In conflict resolution efforts with opposing groups in some of the world's most difficult trouble spots, such as Northern Ireland and South Africa, he demonstrated such an approach with encouraging results (Greening, 1987). Policymakers could routinely be educated to find both sides of an ideological conflict within themselves. Today, numerous organizations are embodying principles based on discourse that seeks common ground, transcends ideology, and pushes beyond dialogue to coordinated action, such as Search for Common Ground, Pathways to Peace, the Institute for Multi-Track Diplomacy, and the Harvard Negotiation Project. These are a few of the many organizations trying to develop a creative synthesis of the mythic conflicts, such as progress vs. sustainability and autonomy vs. connection, that are bedeviling people's lives at the personal, community, and national levels.

The Collective Shadow. Perhaps the most challenging dimension of the social dialectic involves "the collective shadow." Zweig and Abrams (1991) have observed: "While the personal shadow is an entirely subjective development, the experience of the collective shadow is an objective reality, which we commonly call evil. Unlike the personal shadow, which gives hopeful signs when engaged by moral effort, the collective shadow is not touched by rational efforts and therefore can leave one with a feeling of utter and complete powerlessness" (p. 165). Throughout history such social maladies as poverty, violence, oppression, illiteracy, and abusive child-rearing practices have elicited the most malignant potentials of human nature. A society's most evil and offensive members are at least in part the offspring of such social ills. They carry the society's shadow side, and in the classic pattern of the social shadow, the society then projects its rancor their way. While personal responsibility for individual behavior must be built into the social

structure of any effective culture, projecting all of the blame onto those who carry the culture's shadow blinds the masses from recognizing their complicity in the roots of their society's evils. A mythically informed approach to social change probes deeper than the surface manifestations of evil.

Psychiatrist Stanislav Grof (1985) points to the senseless tragedy that can be wrought when repressed forces of the psyche govern a people unchecked, and he urges that the culture draw upon the expertise already available for constructively teaching people to encounter the roots of their own intrapsychic turmoil and violence. He has both argued for and demonstrated, in large group sessions using "holotropic" techniques that stimulate abreaction, imagery, and nonordinary states of consciousness (Grof, 1992), the creation of "safe and socially sanctioned situations in which certain toxic and potentially dangerous elements of the human personality structure can be confronted and worked through without any harm or damage to others or society as a whole" (Grof, 1985, p. 413).

The creative potential of the individual's "dark side" sometimes foreshadows an evolutionary breakthrough in the culture's mythology. Neumann (1969) observed that "not infrequently a sensitive person falls ill because of his incapacity to deal with a problem which is not recognized as such by the world in which he lives, but which is, in fact a future problem of humanity which has confronted him and forces him to wrestle with it" (p. 30). A study of humanity's changing self-image, commissioned by SRI International, supported a similar conclusion: "Often those individuals who bring the new reconceptualizations to society have had personal problems that were similar in form or were significantly related to those of the larger society. In resolving their own problems, they presented viable resolutions to the problems of their culture" (Markley, 1976, p. 218).

By establishing more opportunities for sensitive people to work out their troubles in a manner that is attuned to the mythological basis of deviant and disruptive behavior, a society could divine pertinent instruction from the psychological conflicts of its members. Such awareness would also sensitize people to leaders and social movements who are unconsciously working out archetypal themes or disowned elements of a personal shadow. Grof (1985) cautions against the appeal to the individual's unresolved intrapsychic problems by politicians who convert their own emotional turmoil into a program of revolutionary violence. Political leaders could reasonably be expected to have undergone substantial exploration of their own unconscious motivations and to evidence an advanced level of emotional maturity. For Grof, the real problem is to raise the consciousness of the general public so it is capable of recognizing potential leaders whose policies mask their own inner conflicts.

To implement an understanding of the shadow dimension of social processes, a culture would need to appropriate time and space so its members were encouraged to routinely engage in such internal exploration. By reframing inner work as an activity that transcends the medical model of illness and treatment, working with one's primordial urgings and personal shadow could be not only destigmatized but honored. If destructive aspects of the psyche can be played out in a protected arena, the culture can assume a mythic and compassionate rather than superficial and defensive posture in confronting the developmental crises of its members. Assessing the degree to which a new mythic vision or chosen leader embodies repressed rage, guilt, despair, or other shadow elements is a vital consideration in refining a mythic vision for a sustainable future.

In summary, the social dialectic emerges out of the inevitable tension between prevailing and emerging myths, as embodied by conflicting social groups. While conflict and diversity are inevitable, the postmodern realization that all explanations of reality are themselves constructions suggests that it is both possible and necessary to step out of one's own local mythology in order to more effectively encounter those of other groups. Many organizations are, in fact, seeking common ground that transcends ideology and pushes beyond dialogue to coordinated action. For such efforts to be effective, they must also grapple with the social shadow, both with its darkness and with the disowned treasures it contains.

FOURTH STAGE: COMMITTING TO A SHARED VISION

The fourth stage of our model for working with the individual's mythology extends the dialectic by submitting early formulations of a synthesis to further examination. A well-crafted new myth is one of the most empowering remedies available today for countering the disorienting grip of a world in mythic turmoil. The essential tasks in this stage include analyzing the fledgling new myth, refining it, and finally articulating its vision in a form that inspires in the person an ardent commitment to it. In the process, a developmental sequence that normally occurs with little awareness is advanced through mindful attention. Ideally, an inspiring vision that resolves previously entrenched mythic conflict is achieved. Such visions hold power. Czech President Václav Havel calls himself "an ambassador of trust in a fearful world." He has articulated a mythic vision that affects not only his own self-image and the choices that grow out of it, but that also shapes how he is perceived and understood. The vision begins to bring itself into being.

Members of groups that generate decisive social change also tend to be unified by a common vision. The people across the globe who make up Amnesty International, for instance, are committed to a world where humans are treated humanely, intimidation is not a favored form of social control, and torture has vanished. Such an organizational vision becomes mythic for individuals when it resonates with something fundamental in each of their psyches. Often, it is moral outrage. Such outrage may attach to any number of visions for its expression, some constructive, some more outrageous than the circumstances of which they were born. Are there criteria for judging when a new mythology is constructive and worthwhile?

At the individual level, it is not possible to establish absolute "rules" for assessing a personal mythology because the specific principles for a robust personal mythology themselves shift with different levels of the individual's development. We have, however, formulated a broad set of criteria that is consistent with existing psychological research. For instance, a mythology that emphasizes the possible solutions to personal dilemmas rather than dwelling on the obstacles to constructive change is more likely to lead a person toward success and fulfillment. A cultural mythology that incorporates such "learned optimism" (Seligman, 1990) is also more likely to lead to constructive and effective actions. The choice to actively change the pessimism that is endemic to a mid-life crisis, or to massive social change, may not be consistent with the "value neutral" stance of Newtonian science. However, as modern physics has been emphasizing, the observer has an impact on what is observed. Therefore the choice to challenge our pessimism is an empirically supported position for applied social scientists who are involved with individual or cultural change.

Based on a review of existing psychological research, Feinstein and Krippner (1997) have suggested that a guiding mythology which fosters personal effectiveness and fulfillment tends to:

* support "learned optimism" rather than "learned helplessness"

* highlight options that realistically give people greater control over what happens to them

* foster realistic self-appreciation and self-critique

* accurately take into account the facts of the person's abilities, circumstances, and level of maturity

* embrace repressed elements of the psyche at the developmentally appropriate time

* balance openness and flexibility with commitment and resolve

* promote gratifying relationships, more rewarding social activities, and greater social support

* lead to a creative involvement in a social world that is larger than the individual's self-concerns

* encourage a wholesome degree of rest and personal solitude

* cultivate the person's physical fitness

* prompt the person to revel in small delights

* inspire a present-centered absorption in the flow of life

* reconcile conflicting internal forces, opposing subpersonalities, and contradictory aims and visions

* creatively transcend the limitations of both prevailing and emerging myths while retaining the most functional, most adaptive, most positive elements of each myth

Criteria for Refining a Social Vision. A social analog for each of these criteria could be stated as an empirically testable proposition. The social analog of a mythology that prompts the person "to revel in small delights" would involve media that highlights achievements of the human heart rather than violations of human sensibilities, and it would develop incentives and ceremonies that foster them. The impact of such practices could be measured. The social analog of a mythology that embraces "repressed elements of the psyche at the developmentally appropriate time" would involve developing a creative relationship with the shadow elements of the culture. The social analog of a mythology that accurately takes into account "the facts of the person's

abilities, circumstances, and level of maturity" would promote a balance between inspiring visions and realistic constraints.

Each principle, translated into a social context, also takes on additional dimensions. Learned optimism, for instance, is the antithesis of personal depression, hopelessness, and helplessness. Institutions and governments could select optimistic people to fill their ranks, placing them in key positions, and teaching other people ways of thinking that capitalize on the strengths of a realistically optimistic outlook. The ebullient Franklin Roosevelt was a welcome antidote to the economic Depression in the United States, and Winston Churchill's inspiring oratory rallied the British during the dark days of World War II. Learned optimism counters the tendency to believe that when something bad happens to oneself, one's group, or one's nation, it will be permanent, pervasive, and that remedies are not possible. Teaching optimism accentuates a constructive dialogue and can help people replace such disempowering conclusions as "This fiasco was out of our control, so there is nothing to do but brace ourselves against the next one" with empowering ones, such as "We can all learn from this sequence of events and use what we learn to prevent it from occurring again."

Beyond such criteria as asking if the new myth supports "learned optimism" rather than "learned helplessness," bolsters community esteem, promotes more fulfilling relationships, balances flexibility with resolve, accurately takes into account the facts of community members' abilities and circumstance, or paces development as the society become more complex -- three additional criteria emerge in larger systems: the degree to which the new social vision embraces "superordinate goals," embodies synergy, and is attuned to the psychology of social change.

Superordinate Goals. A superordinate goal is a mutually beneficial outcome that transcends the separate interests of conflicting parties. Superordinate goals lead to conditions in which actions that benefit one individual or group simultaneously benefit a potentially competing group. Cooperation between opposing groups is maximized when both recognize a superordinate goal, desirable for both groups but attainable only through cooperation. In a classic study by Sherif and Sherif (1966), two groups were formed of the 12-year-old boys at a summer camp. When the activities called for competition between the groups, the relationships among members of the different groups degenerated into hostility, name-calling, and scapegoating, culminating in an all-out riot. Then, when conditions requiring mutual cooperation were set up, such as having to collaborate in emergency situations, the hostile feelings abated and friendships were made across the groups.

One of the most successful approaches for breaking the poverty cycle for people in the Third World has been developed by the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh (Bornstein, 1996). By making one-year loans, averaging $120, to help people begin small businesses (such as to purchase a cow or a sewing machine), the individuals are given an opportunity to step out of the grip of poverty. Not only does the Grameen Bank make such loans, 98% of its loans are repaid due to a simple arrangement that establishes for the businesses the support of shared *superordinate goals* with other businesses. Rather than having each borrower be responsible for repaying the loan, a small peer group of borrowers meets regularly and scrutinizes one another's business plans. If one member defaults on the loan, the others have to repay it. Cooperation, creativity, responsibility, and success are significantly boosted by the arrangement.

Superordinate goals lead to "win-win" conditions where actions that benefit one individual or group simultaneously benefit a competing individual or group. As a mythic battle achieves resolution through an equitable dialectic, the new myth synthesized from the conflict will act as a superordinate goal, capable of serving both sides.

Synergy. Superordinate goals are also at play in a dimension of social arrangements that social scientists refer to as "synergy." Where superordinate goals lead to cooperative actions that simultaneously benefit inherently competitive individuals or groups, synergy supports actions that simultaneously benefit the individual or group and the *collective*, as was glorified in former GM executive Charles Wilson's famous if self-serving statement to a Congressional subcommittee: "What's good for the country is good for General Motors, and what's good for General Motors is good for the country." In cultures with a high degree of synergy, the society is organized so that an individual, in one act, serves his or her own advantage as well as that of the community. In groups that are low in synergy, social arrangements create a pronounced opposition between the needs of the person or group and the needs of the collective. Cultural anthropologist Ruth Benedict (1970) found that people in "high synergy" societies were secure, benevolent, and high in morale; people in "low synergy" societies were insecure, surly, and low in morale.

Maslow (1971) noted that societies high in synergy are those in which social institutions are organized so as to transcend the polarity between selfishness and altruism. He describes his observations during a Northern Blackfoot ceremony. In this ceremony, the men whose accumulations were abundant in a given year piled up mounds of blankets, boxes of food, cases of Pepsi-Cola, and other valued possessions. They took turns telling of the achievements during the year that had resulted in their wealth, and then, with a gesture of pride which was magnanimous without being humiliating, they gave the pile of goods to the widows, the orphaned, and the handicapped. At the end of the ceremony, the wealthy tribal members had given away their accumulated wealth, but in that process they had demonstrated their generosity and earned the respect and admiration of the other members of the tribe. In contrast to technologically advanced Western cultures, the hoarding of wealth was looked down upon, and the actions required for gaining social esteem were explicitly beneficial to others.

Political scientists have analyzed the factors that distinguish "high trust" and "low trust" societies (Fukuyama, 1995). "High trust" societies have longstanding cultural traditions that encourage people to work cooperatively, fostering the development of a prosperous private sector, while in "low trust" societies, people trust only their relatives, making it difficult for family businesses to grow into professionally managed corporations. Private litigation and government regulations have weakened the customary American "high trust" pattern of settling matters without lawyers and bureaucrats (Fukuyama, 1995), and the culture's synergy is one of the victims of this adversarial trend.

Attunement to the Psychology of Social Change. In addition to criteria for assessing a social vision such as the degree to which it promotes realistic optimism, synergy, and superordinate goals, the psychology of social change must also be considered if the vision is likely to reach fruition. Macy (1995) describes the emotional entanglements that keep people tied to visions that have proven destructive and inhibit necessary changes. Focusing on denial, she observes that "we tend

to live our lives as if nothing has changed, while knowing that everything has changed" (p. 243). Concerned with the environmental crisis and the deep and largely unacknowledged rage, guilt, and despair about it that prevent effective responses, Macy's (1983) work demonstrates that the act of unblocking and processing such repressed feelings clears perception, releases constructive energy, and "reconnects us with the larger web of life" (p. 252). Approaches that help work through repressed feelings promote trust, interdependence, and openness rather than suspicion, competition, and adherence to fixed positions.

A growing number of programs that are attuned to the psychology of social change are appearing in governmental, business, and labor institutions, and within community settings (Bunker & Alban, 1992). The successful programs reconcile the requirements for both progress and sustainability. They assess the needs of the community, understand the local ecology and cultural context into which change will be introduced, elicit community support for the change, and initiate a step by step program through which innovation can be sustained without exacting an unacceptable price from local resources.

Many examples exist where the synthesis of progress and sustainability has been successfully maintained (Zaltman, Duncan, & Holbeck, 1973). A dramatic example of the dilemmas involved in attaining such a synthesis is afforded by the notorious results of the importation of chickens from the United States into Nigeria in the late 1960s. Millions of baby chicks were sent within the first three years of the program. Protein consumption in the national diet increased, and the local poultry farmers reaped handsome profits. Before he left the country, the director of the program was awarded a hero's medal by the president of Nigeria. Two weeks later, a poultry epidemic swept through the country, killing all the imported birds. The only survivors were the wild village chickens, which were immune to the disease. Instead of using these wild chickens as stock and improving their yield through breeding, the American experts had ignored them, assuming that American birds were superior (Rogers, 1995, pp. 341 - 342). Because the program was initiated in an ecology that could not sustain it, not a single U.S. chicken survived, and the heroic project ended in disaster. In this fourth stage of our model, the new myth must be adjusted according to the various criteria proposed above, particularly as those propositions are validated by scientific research.

FIFTH STAGE: FROM COMMITMENT TO CONSEQUENCE

Once a new myth has been articulated, examined, and a commitment to it has been established, the final phase of its development requires the translation of its premises into the context of daily life. Social action that effectively promotes a new guiding myth contains at least three elements. It *embeds and multiplies images of the new myth within the culture*, as in education, ritual, art, and the use of media. It *directly and concretely incorporates the myth's vision into social reality*, as with specific reforms, model programs, and impassioned causes. Effective social action also *creates changes in social conditions so the new myth is more effectively reinforced*. These processes have probably driven social change for as long as human beings have used language. For the first time in history, however, they can be shaped by deliberate human initiative.

New social policies, new funding priorities, new institutional designs, and new standards of progress could be mindfully established. A growing number of economists, for instance, have suggested that the Gross National Product is a deeply flawed gauge. New measures have been specified that factor in quality of lifestyle indicators, such as the level of literacy, infant mortality rates, crowding, access to clean water, and the degree of homelessness (Henderson, 1991).

The arenas for social action to establish a new mythic vision are as varied as the cultures in which they might be instituted. The collective actions that would promote more constructive connections within a sustainable future in technological cultures are complex and interconnected. Such actions would, for instance, create incentives that curb the population explosion. They would engender strong family cohesion and family-oriented values. They would inhibit conspicuous consumption. They would develop alternative fuels. They would root out the complex conditions that are widening the gap between the rich and the poor, making class warfare a tangible threat. They would provide new cultural bridges among people of different racial and ethnic backgrounds. They would retrain the unemployed and underemployed. They would impede the diffusion of lethal weapons and militaristic adventures. They would decisively allocate resources for AIDS prevention and other forms of responsibility for personal health. They would encourage ecology-friendly business ventures. They would promote literacy and champion education. They would enhance the self-determination of local communities.

The underlying myths that would galvanize people to take such collective action range from:

* an agonized emphasis on the risk that the world's ecological systems are becoming so severely damaged that they can not support human life, to

* an enterprising vision of the possibilities held by humankind's expansion into space, enabling such benefits as the discovery of new mineral resources, to

* a spiritual ethos that binds humankind together while transcending national, racial, and ethnic identities, to

* a fervent determination to eliminate both the causes and the manifestations of violence at the level of individuals, communities, and national states.

At the personal level, mindfully weaving the new myth into everyday existence involves both an outward focus and an inward focus. The outward focus emphasizes practical methods for incorporating the spirit of the new myth into the person's environment and conduct, such as contingency management, behavior rehearsal, and personal contracts, as pioneered by cognitive and behavioral psychotherapists. The inner focus highlights changes in the person's self-talk, guiding imagery, and "mythic field." While developing the means for incorporating new guiding images into public consciousness has long been a thriving industry, employed by diverse groups ranging from advertisers to politicians to reformers, the notion of directly intervening in a mythic field warrants special discussion.

Mythic Fields. Like attitudes and beliefs, personal myths are grounded in human biochemistry. It is not an exaggeration to say that they are biochemically-coded models of reality. As a result of our work with individuals, groups, and social systems over the past two decades, we have slowly become aware that personal myths are also coded in what we have conceptualized as *fields of information* that impact consciousness and behavior. We have concluded that consciousness is not merely an epiphenomenon that emerges from biochemical events in the body, any more than the morning news originates only on the television screen. Indeed, the news is produced by both the television set (a "bottom-up" influence) and a series of transmission waves (a "top-down" influence). Consciousness is also produced by "bottom-up" and "top-down" influences. It emerges from the brain in the sense that it broadcasts *up* to awareness and, as a body of evidence suggests (Feinstein, 1998), it also emerges from "fields of information," broadcasting *down* into conscious awareness. Personal myths, as *biochemically coded organizing models*, exert a "bottom up" influence on conscious awareness and the resulting activity; personal myths, as *fields of information*, exert a "top down" influence.

While this hypothesis is still quite recent in our own thinking, increasing numbers of neurologists (Libet, 1994), physicists (Bohm, 1980; Penrose, 1994; Tiller, 1993), systems theorists (Laszlo, 1995), engineers (Jahn & Dunne, 1987), biologists (Sheldrake, 1988; Weiss, 1939), physiologists (Hunt, 1995), psychologists (Larson, 1987), anesthesiologists (Hameroff, 1994), and mind-body healers (Eden, in press) have, based on findings from within their respective disciplines, postulated the existence of a large variety of information fields that might impact consciousness and behavior. Laszlo (1995), for instance, has described a fifth physical field to account for the transmission of information beyond the limits of space and time as understood in the four established fields of modern physics: electromagnetic, gravitational, and the strong and weak quantum matter fields. He describes it as an information-rich holographic field that can allow a thought to be simultaneously available at distant locations. Several theorists (e.g., Hameroff, Laszlo, Tiller, and Sheldrake), in fact, believe that the fields that influence consciousness share with quantum matter fields the property of "non-locality," where an effect is *instantaneous, unaffected by distance,* and *impervious to shielding.*

Such fields could account for a range of anomalies, such as 1) laboratory evidence that human activity can influence mechanical devices from a distance; 2) laboratory evidence that visualization, prayer, and meditation can influence another person's anxiety level, speed of healing, and even the activity of blood cells in test tubes; 3) the abundance of sophisticated laboratory studies demonstrating the existence of telepathy; 4) similarities in myths and symbols across cultures; and 5) the parallel symbolism observed in clinical situations (this evidence is summarized by Feinstein, 1998).

"Mythic fields" become established when new patterns of understanding and motivation are initiated and repeated. Once established, they tend to maintain the psychological themes that typify an individual's habits of thought and behavior. Based on our preliminary clinical observations, strategies for directly embedding a new mythology can be designed around the presumed influence on the mythic field of: setting an intention; visualizing the qualities of the new myth; shifting self-statements; behavioral rehearsal; imagery journeys to the past that psychodynamically rework dysfunctional myths; imagery journeys that seed the future with a new myth; and rituals that focus directly on the "mythic field."

Collective Mythic Fields. Shifting the mythic field that is the presumed psychophysical underpinning of an ineffective guiding mythology may be a subtle but potent way of supporting its transformation. The hypothesis that mythic fields influence feelings, thoughts, and behavior, if supported, would hold far-reaching implications. An understanding of the way that mythic fields act upon the psyche would make it possible to more effectively tailor, for desired changes, a range of psychodynamic and behavioral techniques. More dramatically, the idea that fields of information affect consciousness would augment our understanding of collective myth-making, suggesting in fact a physical infrastructure for the Global Brain that may now be emerging.

If habits of thought occur in concert with "non-local" fields of information, it is not a huge leap to postulate that, just as two aligned magnets form a shared field, an idea that is held by many people would also exist in tandem with a collective field of information. Such a collective field might be rapidly intensified by increasing the numbers holding the idea, as when an idea is multiplied on an electronic web. With communications media, we are able to interact more consciously than ever before with the fields that conceivably underlie our collective thoughts, to recognize them as tangible if subtle entities, and to open new vistas for participating in their evolution (Feinstein, 1998).

What is the *social* equivalent of transforming a *personal* "mythic field"? McLaughlin & Davidson (1994) suggest that when five percent of the population accepts a new idea, the idea becomes "embedded"; when twenty percent accept it, the idea becomes "unstoppable." Fifty percent of the population, however, must be *aware* of the idea before it reaches the five percent who will actually work to implement it.

McLaughlin and Davidson trace how the idea of sustainability, which a few years ago was extolled only by small groups of environmentalists, has become a topic that is high on the agenda of corporations and nations. The idea went through a number of "stages of germination" that parallel our model of mythic development, from the first "visionary environmentalists in the late 1960s," to support from "progressive thinkers and artists who created ideas and art forms around it," to the promotion of environmental ideals by activists and the media, emblemized by such international events as Earth Day, to an acceptance by many corporations who are making environment-friendly products a practice of consumer marketing (p. 400).

They emphasize the potential power of individuals and groups in contributing to a "positive energy field":

> * By holding a positive, hopeful image of a national leader or a major world event, we may be helping make it easier for the person or event to express the highest good.

> * By seeing a problem from a broader perspective and understanding its deeper causes, we may be making a positive contribution toward finding a lasting solution.

> * By refusing to become entrenched in a polarizing position on a controversial issue, and clearly and objectively affirming the positive in each perspective to create a higher synthesis, we may help bring greater healing and unity into our world.

* By insisting that questions of ethics and universal spiritual values remain connected with public life, we may help restore a collective sense of wholeness and spiritual strength. (pp. 146 - 147)

While these suggestions might seem more like wishful thinking than reliable strategies for effecting change, they may nonetheless reflect elusive but critical mechanisms of mass influence in society. Consider the evidence, for instance, of a growing number of laboratory studies demonstrating that by focusing their attention, certain individuals can reliably influence mechanical systems, such as random number generators (Jahn & Dunne, 1987). Researchers at the School of Engineering at Princeton University (Nelson, Bradish, Dobyns, Dunne, & Jahn, 1996) found that the output of random-event generators was also affected when the devices were simply placed in the presence of organized groups of people. The effect was strongest during periods when the group's attention was focused, when the group's cohesion was high, or when the group's members were sharing a common emotional experience. Well-controlled studies have also demonstrated at an extraordinarily high significance level (2.6×10^{-14}) that people can, through the use of calming or activating imagery, influence the relaxation or anxiety level of targeted individuals, unawares, in other locations, as gauged by spontaneous changes in their electrodermal activity (Braud, 1992).

What if a thousand, or a million, or a billion people coordinated via mass media (an estimated one billion people in 120 countries viewed the live television broadcast of the 1995 Academy Awards), simultaneously concentrate on eliminating world hunger or bringing peace to a trouble spot in the world? Such endeavors are beginning to occur. Shortly before the peace agreement was negotiated in Bosnia, thousands of people around the world were meditating for a peaceful resolution to the conflict at a prearranged hour each week. The GaiaMind Project in Mill Valley, California, regularly organizes "global meditation and prayer" that attempts, through "shared intention [to] move toward the emergence of a new planetary awareness." In an "adopt a leader" program, individuals and groups select a leader who is carrying the seeds of a vision they wish to support, and they send that leader their positive thoughts, letters of encouragement, feedback, and love (McLaughlin & Davidson, p. 418). Preliminary investigations, such as the effects of an infusion of meditators on a city's crime rates and other quality of life indicators (Assimakis & Dillbeck, 1995; Dillbeck, Cavanaugh, Glenn, Orme-Johson, & Mittlefehldt, 1987) have been provocative if not conclusive.

By understanding collective myths as subtle but discernible fields of information, new dimensions open for efforts to incorporate a more vibrant mythic vision amidst social chaos and resistance. By utilizing the communications media that make it feasible for humanity to collaboratively formulate myths that can sustain and connect us, those myths can be anchored into the collective fields called *social reality* at a rate never before imaginable. Our future rests not only in our hands and hearts and minds, it is inextricably linked to our myths as well.

CONCLUSION

Evil triumphs, Edmund Burke observed, when good people stand by and do nothing. Such was the formula for the demise of Easter Island, and we repeat it at our peril. Amid even the

crumbling social structures that besiege us, enormously thoughtful and creative visions for action are being articulated -- a new mythology is being born in the collective psyche. And not only are our myths changing, but also our minds; individual psyches have become capable of reflecting upon, analyzing, and redrawing the maps by which we navigate our way through swiftly changing territory. As billions of human minds are linked into a single integrated network, a Global Brain, unimagined possibilities open for shaping our collective perceptions, understanding, and choices -- for actively participating in the creation of the myths that live themselves through us. This essay has outlined five sets of tasks that are involved in the evolution of both personal and cultural myths. By understanding and consciously engaging these tasks, the cacophony of mythologies competing for the cultural spotlight becomes less daunting.

And compatible mythic images that promote a promising future for humanity are arising in every society on the planet. The 1995 report of the independent, international, UN endorsed Commission on Global Governance (1995) identified specific, achievable recommendations for promoting international security, enhancing global cooperation, managing economic interdependence, and strengthening the rule of law worldwide. The report concludes that there is "no question of capacity" to take the actions required to establish "better global governance -- better management of survival, better ways of sharing diversity, better ways of living together in the global neighbourhood that is our human homeland. . . . There is only a question of the will to take that action" (p. xix). In brief, new myths that would foster humanity's survival are being articulated, the tools for actualizing them are available, and the outcome is still in our collective hands.

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