

Matrix Shifts & *Cortesian* Consciousness

by
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I want to explore the notion that, amongst the great amount of interest generated around paradigm shifts, especially as apparent in scientific and social contexts, a critical point is being missed, or at least overlooked, in understanding what is really happening in the cultural transformation process. My contention is that major shifts in collective consciousness are in truth matrix shifts, and it is an overarching historically significant matrix, not paradigm, acting like an archetypal womb of possibility, that gives birth to new epistemological quests which subsequently form as paradigms. Furthermore, social/cultural paradigms emerge in form, structure, and function only out of a period of initial bonding to an archetypal matrix. Paradigms deal with surface structure issues of life. They fortify life with concepts, values, perceptions, and practices as these find use, like furniture in the large room of consciousness, to interpret and live in the world. Accordingly, both old and new paradigms can emerge, shift, and devolve within a given historical matrix; that is, their usefulness to form a stable, equilibrated, and constant vision of reality and to effect the collective mood of a culture/community can be continuously translated horizontally, akin to moving in new furniture or moving old furniture around in an old familiar room.

But growth and evolution of an individual or culture/community requires a fundamental experience of transformation of consciousness. In a sense, it is not enough to merely shift the contents of a room around, there must be a shift of the womb, a radical re-visioning of reality, mood, awareness, and connectedness to life. Failure or enough translation of old familiar structures leads to a tension and subsequent breakdown within those structures --- a vertical shift of select knowledge to a new level of awareness. Transformation is a regressive or progressive change in deep structures of consciousness and/or community. It represents a shift to a different, higher, and oftentimes wholly unfamiliar archetype within which to begin a new translation of reality. Regressive transformation, for example, may be a transformation back into old matrices of consciousness, into archaic/historically isolated realities in an attempt to relate to and understand contemporary social/cultural issues. Specific examples of old matrix transformations will be given later in this essay. Progressive transformation, however, moves one to higher, more integrated and organized structures of reality and consciousness --- a newer, more holistic matrix of translational possibility.

Tarnas, in an excellent essay on the transfiguration of the Western mind, attempts to cull from the revolutionary work of psychoanalyst, Stanislav Grof, and draw a parallel between paradigm/matrix shifts and certain perinatal dynamics which occur in both individual and collective humanity. The gist of Tarnas's hypothesis is that there is an archetypal dialectic

whose source is not human but nature, the universal unconscious that is bringing forth through the human mind and human imagination its own gradually unfolding reality. As Tarnas puts it: "The birth of every new paradigm is also a conception in a new conceptual matrix, which begins the process of gestation, growth, crisis, and revolution all over again. Each paradigm is a stage in an unfolding evolutionary sequence, and when that paradigm has served its purpose, then it loses its numinosity, it ceases to be libidinally charged, it becomes felt as oppressive, limiting, alienating, something to be overcome --- while by contrast the new paradigm that is emerging is felt as a liberating birth into a new luminously intelligible universe." (p. 14-15) He further purports: "And because the evolution of paradigm shifts is an archetypal process, this evolution takes place historically both from within and without, both 'subjectively' and 'objectively' . . . (and) it is recognized as superior, as true and valid, *precisely when that paradigm resonates with the current archetypal state of the evolving collective psyche.*"

Tarnas is keen to suggest that while history denotes a multiplicity of these perinatal sequences (as does the individual human throughout the whole maturation process), perhaps there is an overall archetypal dialectic in the evolution of human consciousness that subsumes all smaller sequences, one long meta-trajectory, as he calls it, beginning with the primordial *participation mystique* and, in a sense, culminating before our eyes. Tarnas's published hypothesis fascinates me if only in that it validates a narrative conjecture about the evolution of human consciousness which I outlined about six years ago and which was conditionally accepted for publication by a major publisher (until their editorial direction changed publishing priorities) under the title of **The Age of Bonding**. In a way, I have been thankful that the book was never published, for at the time I intuitively felt I wanted more concrete anthropological/archeological/historical/psychological information to support my claims.

And amazingly so, that an avalanche of environmental/ecological concerns have come forth --- an auspicious testimony to the current archetypal state of humanity and Earth's collective psyche. Indeed, we are presently witnessing a mind boggling shift in the collective connatus, serving as midwives, if you will, of a powerfully new matrix complete with its many accompanying exploratory paradigms and hypothetical models.

My task in this essay is rather complex and if anything, overgeneralizes the very hypothesis being proposed. Still in all, I am fascinated by its overall possibility to make sense. The reason (at least in my mind) is that there seems to be an incredible connecting pattern between what we know about bonding, significant historical matrices, the human soul's epistemological quest, and the evolution of the human's triune brain.

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