

A painting of a mountain range with a path of stones leading through a forest. The mountains are white and jagged, set against a blue sky. The foreground is a dense forest of green trees, with a path of large, dark, rounded stones leading from the bottom towards the mountains.

Whole~Views

Beyond the New Age
into a New Vision

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Whole-Views

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Overview:

The term *worldview* is used throughout this text to denote a field of ideas, personal practices, attitudes, images, and goals that create a lens through which a person or group experiences the world and shapes individual or collective actions. Worldviews grow from specific historical conditions as people seek to understand, adapt to, and alter their environment. Civilizations emerge from the worldviews they hold. As environments change and as new information and insights lead to new understandings, people adapt in new ways giving rise to new worldviews. This is a function as old as humanity and one which never ceases. It is a robust process similar to the eruption of new languages, of which there are 6,800 currently spoken around the globe. (29 Kruger)

We live in a time when our physical environment is radically changing, population is exploding, species are vanishing, and our knowledge is expanding, giving rise to new threats and new opportunities. It is in such chaotic times that whole new worldviews emerge, sometimes very quickly. This is precisely what is happening now.

This section is about one such emergent worldview called the Incarnational Way. The purpose of this Thesis is to explain the context in which it is emerging, why it is doing so, what it is, and what it has to offer. This will be done by comparing it to a number of existing worldviews which make up the conceptual and philosophical environment in which the Incarnational Way is emerging, employing four basic human questions to guide this exploration.

Chapter One: Whole-Views

It could be said that, like any organic form, worldviews emerge as an adaptation and creative response to the specific conditions in which they are embedded. For instance, the mythology, stories, ceremonies and religious practices of the Inuit culture – a general term for a group of culturally similar indigenous peoples inhabiting the Arctic regions of Canada, Greenland, and Alaska – could be understood to be an adaptation and creative response of a people to many factors. These include the generally harsh conditions of ice and snow of the north, the need to find sustenance from the sea, the large variations in length of days from summer to winter, unusual natural phenomena like the *aurora borealis*, the deep history of their arrival to their land, their interaction with other human populations, the historical time in which the culture solidified, the appearance of great leaders, teachers and shaman, and spiritual influences and visions. The exact world view of the Inuit is so unique, precious and complex as to be totally unpredictable before it arose except in the broadest outlines. This is equally true of the new, not fully articulated, emerging worldviews.

What are the current conditions from which new worldviews are now arising? As in the example of the Inuit, the list is long and detailed but here are some of the key elements of these driving forces:

- Economic, social, cultural, religious and other types of globalization.
- Worldwide communication and information sharing through telephones, rapid travel, television, and the internet.

- New scientific understandings-especially chaos and complexity theory, quantum mechanics, evolutionary biology, genetics, and ecological awareness.
- Massive technological growth which has resulted in higher standards of living, extended life spans, widespread education, and more leisure time for some, but at the cost of ecological collapse and detachment from the natural world.
- Living in electromagnetic cocoons and imaginally derived environments which we call homes, cars, offices, neighborhoods and cities.
- Huge national and global disparities of wealth and well-being.
- An accelerating rapid pace of change.
- Appreciation of diversity.
- Greater freedom and widespread individualism.
- The possibility of extinction of Humanity through a variety of means which are planetary in scale.
- The awareness of and access to many existing and historical worldviews and their consequent suffusion into the general thinking of the culture.

What would a creative response to such conditions look like? What attitude should we look for to evaluate a candidate worldview for a new culture? I propose that at the very least it is holistic in its outlook. What does this mean?

When my daughter Chelsea was a teenager she had a job as a waitress near the beach in Grand Haven, Michigan. One evening she told me of her experience of taking an order from a family at one of her tables. There was a little boy, perhaps two or three years old, in the group. Chelsea asked, “and what would you like?” When he didn’t respond right away, his mother

chimed in, “Oh, he’ll just have a hotdog.” Chelsea continued around the table and then asked the toddler again, “Have you decided what you would like?” His mom repeated, “He’ll have a hotdog.” Not to be dissuaded, Chelsea, for a third time, trying to be diplomatic I’m sure, asked him again what *he* would prefer for dinner with the same result. Walking away, Chelsea heard the little boy say to his mother, “She thinks I’m real!”

This sweet but rather heartbreaking story illustrates the overall *attitude* that is fundamental to any emerging worldview that seeks to be truly responsive to our exciting and challenging time. It must treat everyone at the planetary table – human and non-human – as if they mattered, as if they represented a sentient point of view capable of contribution, as if they had moral rights, as if they were “real.” How else can we honor, respect and care for that which we encounter? We face historic problems, and our worldviews must benefit from a multitude of perspectives to be able to rise to the possibilities of the 21st century. If we have learned anything from the science of ecology it is that we cannot afford to ignore anything or anyone, however small. In short our worldviews must become “whole-views.” This is the meaning of being “holistic.”

A whole-view such as the Incarnational Way is not simply one that embraces all possible worldviews or visions with a false sense of unity for unity’s sake. It is a unique and specific perspective. As suggested in the title, it is a new vision that stands on its own merits and goes beyond the idealistic belief, often expressed in “New Age” circles, that all paths are essentially the same and that all routes lead to the mountain top where we all share the same understanding. This belief may take the form of “we are all one,” “separateness is an illusion,” “underneath all diversity is unity,” or, “all religions teach the same truths.” The effect of this way of thinking is to diminish the unique gift a specific worldview has to offer. If all paths lead to the same place, then any path will do. But in meeting our historical crisis and opportunity, some paths are

demonstrably more effective and appropriate than others. We have a survival need to be discerning in the worldviews we adopt for the future.

This is not to dispute that we are all interconnected or that we all share one sacred life. It is legitimate to say that we have much in common: our humanity, our planetary life, our cosmic heritage, and our spiritual roots. However, if we are actually to communicate with one another, it will require us to honor that which makes each of us unique, that which makes us different from one another, that which separates us. We need to learn to appreciate diversity as much as similarity. After all we already know how to get along with people who are just like us. The problem is that we haven't learned to traverse the treacherous, rocky contours of the edges that arise when we encounter what is different from us.

It does no real good to pretend that we don't have differences; they are as plain as the blood on the evening news. Humanity as a species needs to learn to negotiate the difficult boundaries which those differences create. We need to begin to nurture the unique terrain that appears whenever two or more are gathered in the name of wholeness and mutual support, thereby making transformation possible. We need a vision that will enable us to do that.

To understand the term *worldview* as defined in this text, a distinction needs to be drawn between a collage of unconnected segments of different worldviews (an eclectic approach) and an emergent new, whole worldview. The historical eruption of new languages makes a good analogy of this distinction. The following is a short examination of the flowering of "Creole" (from the Latin *creare* "to create") languages.

Throughout history people of differing languages have had occasion to meet and try to understand each other. The reasons are as variegated and complex as the human drama itself. Most times special useful phrases of a secondary language were absorbed into the primary one as

the constant evolution of languages continued. From time to time, however, whole new languages arose very quickly. In effect language speciation happened rapidly in a manner similar to what evolutionary biologist S.J. Gould describes in his theory of punctuated equilibrium. He provided evidence that new species could erupt as well in a very short geological time.

Throughout history but especially in the last 500 years, in part fueled by the slave trade, several ethnic groups speaking multiple languages were thrown together. They, like all humans everywhere, wished and needed to communicate. The effect was that in the first generation what is called a “Pidgin” dialect arose. This language was a mixture of many different words, phrases, and organizational structures. This Pidgin version varied widely from person to person and was cumbersome, awkward and slow as a means of communication.

In the second generation, though, something wonderful happens; a Creole language is born. These whole new languages erupt with vigor and are as complex and coherent as other more established languages. Here is what researchers have concluded in regards to the sophistication of Creole languages:

It is commonly assumed, a priori that, compared to other languages, creoles have a simpler grammar and more internal variability. However, these notions may be little more than prejudices. (Arends 9)

Pidgin had no rules or consistent structure, Creole was as structured as any human language ... For the more I read about other creoles, the more apparent it became that the similarities that I was finding between Creole in Hawaii and in Guyana were far

from unique. They were no more than a special case of what was happening throughout the world. (Bickerton 104, 108)

In other words, when human beings are faced with the challenge of a mixture of disconnected elements for which no continuity exists and the need is great, they create wholeness from those elements spontaneously in one evolutionary step. It does not take two generations or five or fifty. It takes one!

Creole languages are elegant and coherent systems in and of themselves, fully on par with the precursors from which they emerge. Some linguists believe that all languages have some Pidgin and Creole history. They serve the function of assisting the flow of a new culture emerging from chaos and discontinuity. They are not better or worse than the mother tongues from which they grew and do not necessarily replace the original languages or compete with them, especially outside of the specific region that gave them life.

So what is the analogy? It is simply this. Over the past 50 years or so there has been a widespread mixing of worldviews on a scale unprecedented in human history. This is especially so in the western, baby boomer cultures. This has lead, for those who have tried to grapple with the swirling variety of approaches, to a “Pidgin” worldview. This is how some might define the New Age worldview of the Sixties and Seventies. As a worldview, it is awkwardly eclectic, lacking in internal consistency, and generally not showing the grace, depth and beauty of the more developed worldviews from which it draws many of its insights. However, new “Creole” worldviews – what could be called second generation New Age worldviews – are emerging on the planet. They incorporate materials from older worldviews into a unified paradigm along with fresh spiritual insights and an analysis of the challenges and issues we face.

The focus of this text is that there are new worldviews emerging out of the conditions of the current times. Because they attempt to give a holistic picture of who we are, the problems we face, the capacities we have to meet those problems, and the interconnections we share with our world, they might be called *whole-views*. They might also appropriately be called *contemporary spiritualities* because in offering a truly holistic vision of life that includes the spiritual dimensions, they serve a function that traditionally has been the role of spirituality. The Incarnational Way is one such whole-view. While this worldview may be only the first shoot of a new garden – one of many growing around the world – it has reached a point of clarity and coherency where it has something unique to offer.

Our contemporary global civilization is by any standard extraordinary. We face situations and live lives our ancestors of just a few short centuries ago would find literally unbelievable. It is not hyperbole to say that humanity confronts unprecedented challenges that will determine the viability of our species and many others.

Yet the questions we ask are as old as language, perhaps older; they are metaphysical, epistemological and ethical questions which are interrelated and inextricably interwoven. These questions are the focus of chapter two and the rest of this thesis. By exploring them we can better understand the Incarnational Way through the answers it offers.

Chapter Two: Methodology

Chapter One presented three points: first, that complete new worldviews can emerge from environmental pressures; second, that a worldview that is a viable candidate for a new planetary culture that can meet and survive those pressures will be a holistic “whole-view;” and third, that the Incarnational Way is one such “whole-view” response to our times. But it is not only environmental pressures that condition an emerging worldview. Underlying all worldviews are attempts to answer the fundamental questions we are constantly asking as human beings. This chapter presents a methodology employing these questions to give a perspective from which to compare and place the Incarnational Way in the context of other more established worldviews. The mechanism to do this is the comparison of the response of various worldviews to four basic human questions:

1. Who am I (and how did I get here)?
2. How can I discover truth?
3. What kind of universe do I inhabit?
4. Why am I here and what should I be doing?

There are, of course, many other questions we ask about ourselves, each other and the world: questions like; “Is there a God?”, “What happens after I die?”, “Where am I in the grand scheme of things?”, “From where does evil come?”, “What makes something beautiful?”, “Is there a reason for my life?”, “How did life originate?”, “Is the universe benign?”, “Do I have

choice and freedom?” and many others. However, in the interest of brevity and clarity, this text will focus on the four given. Answering these primary four questions may provide clues to the probable answers to these others.

The concept of a worldview is broadly defined in this thesis. It is used synonymously with the phrase “Contemporary Spirituality” which usually includes only religious and spiritual approaches in practice today. However, we live in unusual times, and there are answers offered in the modern world to these four basic questions that go beyond what is putatively understood to be religious or spiritual. Therefore, secular and quasi-religious worldviews are also included. There is only one reality, and it is not segmented among the categories we have created. We should be willing as a matter of principle to consider the potential validity of any perspective to which many people ascribe and around which they organize their lives. As each worldview arose in its historic time and place it was, and for current followers still is, a numinous statement about the most fundamental facts of reality. It could be called a “whole-view,” a complete statement encompassing the most important things one should know about the world. Whether they explicitly acknowledge or reject divine powers, worldviews offer their adherents the same meaning, and direction to one’s life normally found in a religion or spirituality. Therefore the terms “worldviews,” “whole-views” and “contemporary spiritualities” are used synonymously in this text.

To have a complete description of any of these systems or to do them full justice is beyond the scope of this text. An attempt has been made, however, based on research, study, and personal practice, to see each of them as much as possible from the inside out and to fairly represent their point of view. At the end of this thesis is my biography which illustrates my experience as it relates to this material.

Here is the first Worldview Chart listing the different perspectives to be discussed and compared. It shows how the various systems of thought are defined and categorized for this text.

Worldview Chart: Categories

Worldview	Goal	Primary Practice	Attitude	Gift (Danger)
Tribal/ Indigenous/ Shamanic	Proper relations with natural forces	Ceremony	Duty & Gratitude	Community (Clan Exclusivity)
Religious	Salvation	Prayer	Obedience	Faith (Radicalism)
Mystical	Unity with God	Contemplation	Awe & Wonder	Ecstasy (Withdrawal)
Eastern/ Hindu	Liberation, Identification with Brahman	3 types of Yoga Duty, Worship, Meditation	Devotion	Acceptance (stultified social progression)
Buddhist	Self-awakening and liberation	8 fold path Wisdom, Ethics Concentration	Detachment	Compassion (Indifference)
Artistic	Beauty & Honesty	Artistic Expression	Passion	Reverie (Hedonism)
Scientific	Truth - Facts	Scientific Method	Doubt & Skepticism	Understanding (reductionism)
Psychological	Mental Health Self Integration	Therapy, self Reflection	Self Awareness Humility	Self Respect (Narcissism)
New Thought	Manifestation	Affirmations	Belief	Focus (Narrowness)
Esoteric/ Gnostic	Transcendence	Self Denial	Discipline	Wisdom (Madness)
Magical/ Alchemical	Power, Control Transmute Matter	Ritual	Balance	Enlivenment (Coercion)
Incarnational Way	Generate Wholeness	Grail Space	Partnership & Collaboration, Love	Blessing (yet to be determined)

Before we look at this in more detail, there should be clarity about what these charts represent and how they are being approached, as there are many ways worldviews can be

organized. The list of worldviews – sometime called *thought systems* – is meant to be suggestive not exhaustive. Many other equally valid lists could be made and defended. This is just one way to map the territory.

Because these are not all equivalent worldviews, each possessing the same characteristics, some allowances need to be made. For instance, including Artistic pursuits as a worldview poses some questions since there is no generally accepted overall cosmology. But if we see a worldview as a lens through which a person evaluates and engages with his or her world, then an artistic perspective on life certainly qualifies. And an artist may also be a scientist who is a deeply religious person with mystical leanings. The point is that these worldviews are not isolated but overlap in a variety of ways. They are held and shaped by the dynamics of individual lives. For this reason, it's important not to confuse the construction and reading of these maps with the actual terrain itself. These charts are just conceptual clotheslines on which to hang a clean laundry of ideas.

This list of worldviews is not sequential, with one evolving into another, or in any way hierarchical. I use the term *worldview* to mean a coherent domain of ideas, insights and practice. There are philosophies, such as the Integral thought of Ken Wilber and Spiral Dynamics, that use “worldview” to denote progressive stages in consciousness and cultural development as individuals and societies move from selfishness to more inclusive and global ways of thinking and being. (Beck, Spiral Dynamics) This may be a perfectly valid way of categorizing human development. It is different, however, from the approach taken here.

The perspective of this thesis is more akin to evolutionary biology which analyzes an organism as adaptive to an environment and as a unique expression of creative life. This is what is being done in comparing these worldviews. In this sense there is no ultimate truth in any one

approach any more than any one organism of the billions on our planet is more adapted to its environment than another. The quality of adaptation may vary from time to time but that is beside the point for our discussion. These worldviews are not considered in this text to be nested within each other anymore than a snail is nested within a raccoon. Just because several species happen to share common ancestral roots does not mean they are currently nested into that ancestor any more than children are nested within parents. Children, species, and worldviews can be seen to exist as existential entities – offering something of value in their own right – without reference to organizational schemes.

The adaptive environment for human systems includes many things such as the bioregion from which a particular system arises, the historical time, the specific genetic and cultural history of its originating group, and the presence and influence of competing worldviews. In short, as has been said earlier, a world view arises from specific circumstances.

Of course many truth-seeking systems make claims and assumptions about other systems. Scientists see alchemy as a precursor to chemistry and pagan rituals as mistaken attempts to predict and control circumstances and natural forces. Some see Judaism as superseded by Christianity and many Muslims view both as fulfilled in Islam. An esotericist might think religions are metaphorical views of the brighter, clearer reality he or she perceives, and the psychologist may see it all as compensation behavior. In this thesis there is no attempt to compare worldviews as subsets of each other or to find evolutionary linkages between them, looking for how one worldview may have emerged from an earlier one. The goal is not taxonomy, cartography, ranking or even categorization. The goal is to place the Incarnational Way in context in a living ecology with other worldviews currently active in the world in the attempt to demonstrate what it has to offer.

Worldview Chart: Who am I? (and how did I get here?)

Worldview	Permanence of Self?	Origin of Self	Locus of Self	Purpose of Self
Tribal/ Indigenous/ Shamanic	Yes	Nature & Spiritual forces	Held by Community	Maintain the natural order
Religious	Yes	God	Spiritual Domains	Love, Honor and Serve God
Mystical	Yes as Unity or identification with God	God	With God	Companionship, Intimacy with God
Eastern/ Hindu	Yes (Atman)	Brahman Cosmic Cycles	Spirit or Soul	Gain Experience Natural Rhythms
Buddhist	No – merge with all or non-being (Reincarnation)	Co-arising with phenomena	Within illusion of permanence	Unstated – none, illusion
Artistic	Yes- through completed work	Creative Work	Spiritual Domains	To create beauty, truth, intensity
Scientific	No	Physical Matter & laws Big Bang & Evolution	Brain and nervous system	Help in Survival, Environmentally Adaptive
Psychological	No	Psychological Processes	Body Structure	Organize experience
New Thought	Yes - Some attempt to deny reality of death	Divine Mind	Divine mind	To achieve
Esoteric/ Gnostic	Yes through transcendence	Higher Dimensions	Higher Dimensions	Escape Earth
Magical/ Alchemical	Yes (Reincarnation)	Cycles rather than Origins	In One's Magical Capacities	Redeem matter
Incarnational Way	Yes and No - At death human form dissipates but some parts of self incarnate in post- mortem realms with human life's memory and essence *See end of chapter	Sacredness – unmanifest & manifest as a systemic whole Emergent from interaction of parts	At the center of emergence within any and all incarnational domains	Surprise God with new discovery and experience. Increase the sentient surface area of sacredness

Chapter Three: Who am I?

(And how did I get here?)

According to the Greek writer Pausanias, the Ancient Greek aphorism “Know Yourself” was inscribed in the forecourt of the Temple of Apollo at Delphi. The question; “who am I?” has been intriguing us for many centuries. There are many answers to this question which are summarized in the rest of this chapter and discussed in the same order in which they appear in the charts.

The answer to “who am I?” determines much about how one sees the world. It develops out of an internalization of a worldview shaped by creation myths, assumptions, practices, and personal experience. Whatever the cause, if a person views themselves as a being of choice and power then certain consequences flow from that assumption. If a person views themselves as a victim of meaningless circumstances other consequences develop.

Tribal/Indigenous/Shamanic

Let’s take a look at the Tribal/Indigenous/Shamanic view. This view might characterize the self as a life force arising out of the natural and spiritual worlds much like the animals and plants. From within this perspective the origin of humanity and thereby of the self arise out of the interplay of embodied spiritual forces, natural powers, animals, plants, landforms and the like. “Native Americans, who are knowledgeable of their culture, see things in more than a human-to-human context. It is a perspective that involves human beings, animals, plants, the natural environment and the metaphysical world of visions and dreams.” (Fixico 2) The self is conceived as one manifestation of the circle of interweaving life as Black Elk, an Oglala elder (1863-1950),

illustrates when he says “All things are the work of the great spirit, we should know that he is in all things; the trees, the grasses, the rivers, the mountains and all the four legged animals and the winged peoples (Fixico 56, 57)

The person is a link in a lineage of tribal ancestors, an integral member of a clan or society and an intimate part of the natural environment. The Lakota prayer *Mitakuye Oyasin* which is sometimes translated “we are all related” acknowledges this understanding.

What is important here is not so much the individual but the life of the larger “nation” or tribe. The self is seen as imbedded in society. “The Wintu Indians of California philosophized that the person belonged to the society rather than the person and society being two separate entities.” (Fixico 51) Outside of this structure one ceases to exist and quite literally dies which is why banishment for many tribal societies was the ultimate punishment for a crime.

In some indigenous cosmologies a normal death results in the dismantling of the self into its constituent parts with some aspects going to the stars, some to idealized earth-like places, and some to animals, landforms and plants. This is a complex picture that does not exactly have correspondences in systems where the self is conceived of as one thing.

Generally speaking most of the creation myths of this worldview involve natural forces and beings of the immediate bio-region and larger, older, spiritual powers, beings and forces. Here is a creation story from the US Northwest:

Raven was so lonely. One day he paced back and forth on the sandy beach feeling quite forlorn. Except for the trees, the moon, the sun, water and a few animals, the world was empty. His heart wished for the company of other creatures. Suddenly a large clam pushed through the sand making an eerie bubbling sound. Raven watched

and listened intently as the clam slowly opened up. He was surprised and happy to see tiny people emerging from the shell. All were talking, smiling, and shaking the sand off their tiny bodies. Men, women, and children spread around the island. Raven was pleased and proud with his work. He sang a beautiful song of great joy and greeting. He had brought the first people to the world. (indigenoupeople.net)

Religious

From a religious point of view the origin and nature of the self is not in question. Whether one follows Mohamed, Krishna, Jehovah, or Jesus a human being is a creature crafted by a divine power in “his” image and able to exercise some degree of free will. The following statement pretty much sums up this concept. “And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.” (Genesis 2: 7)

Human activities are, however, constrained by divine law and providence. Ultimately the creator’s will, or providence, controls the universe and after death an accounting of the soul is promised.

Religious creation stories have God as the central player manifesting the universe out of whole cloth as it were. Here is the Judeo-Christian version of creation.

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the

darkness. And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day. *This continues in similar fashion through the creation of man on the sixth day* And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them (Genesis 1:1)

Mystical

For the mystic the true self is a spark of divinity; god manifesting itself as a person. Jesus stated this as, “I and the father are one”. Meister Eckhart (1260-1327) a Dominican friar and German mystic formulated the idea as follows, “I have a capacity in my soul for taking in God entirely. I am as sure as I live that nothing is so near to me as God. God is nearer to me than I am to myself.” (Field, Excerpt from sermon)

Dorothy Maclean, a modern mystic and one of the Co-founders of the Findhorn Community in Scotland writes of her experience:

With a clarity that extended beyond time into eternity, I knew that God was within. God was no distant figurehead defined by ideals and philosophies; God was within me, the core of my life, real, ever-present, inseparable. (15)

In a way it could be said that a mystic does not experience creation as a past event or death necessarily as a future one. Rather all is felt like a great continuous river of life. In the oneness a

mystic seeks, all time, past, present and future, dissolves into an eternal Now. Here is a delightful biblical quote showing the timeless nature of a mystic's view of human origins.

Yahweh created me when his purpose first unfolded

Before the oldest of his works

From everlasting I was firmly set

From the beginning, before earth came into being

I was by his side, a master craftsman,

delighting him day after day

ever at play in his presence

at play everywhere in the world

delighting to be with the sons of men (Proverbs 8:22, 23, 30, 31)

Eastern/Hindu

Hinduism dates back 5,000 years or more and is not a single set of beliefs. Many variations have developed from Hinduism over the years, and many non-Hindu cults and religious movements gained their inspiration from Hinduism, hence the designation for this worldview as *Eastern/Hindu*. (Laderman, 119)

There are some beliefs common to nearly all forms of Hinduism. Two of these are the existence of an enduring soul, called the Atman, that transmigrates or reincarnates from one body to another at death, and the law of karma, a principle of moral cause and effect, that determines one's destiny both in this life and the next. The Self (Atman) is considered to be one with

Brahman (God). As it is stated in the Bhagavad-gita, one of Hinduism's many sacred texts, "Never was there a time when I did not exist, nor you, nor any of these kings; nor in the future shall any of us cease to be." (2.12) And, "That which pervades the entire body is indestructible." (2.17)

The ultimate goal of all Hindus is release from the cycle of rebirth into a state called *Nirvana*. For those of a devotional bent, this means the ecstasy of God's presence, while those more philosophical look forward to uniting with God as a drop of rain merges with the sea.

Hinduism has many creation stories. Here is one of them from the Rigveda. (10.90) These myths have a consistent pattern of a kind of cosmic recycling rather than an eruption of something from nothing. This sheds light on the Hindu/Eastern conception of self as having always existed and as something that always will exist.

The Man (Purusha) has a thousand heads, a thousand eyes, a thousand feet. He pervades the earth everywhere and extends beyond for ten fingers' breadth. The Man himself is all this, whatever has been and whatever is to be. He is the lord of immortality and also lord of that which grows on food. Such is his greatness, and the Man is yet greater than this. All creatures make up a quarter of him; three quarters are the immortal in heaven. With three quarters the Man has risen above, and one quarter of him still remains here, whence he spread out everywhere, pervading that which eats and that which does not eat. From him Virj was born, and from Virj came the Man, who, having been born, ranged beyond the earth before and behind. When the gods spread the sacrifice, using the Man as the offering, spring was the clarified butter, summer the fuel, autumn the oblation. They anointed the Man, the sacrifice, born at the

beginning, upon the sacred grass. With him the gods, Sdhyas, and sages sacrificed. From that sacrifice in which everything was offered, the clarified butter was obtained, and they made it into those beasts who live in the air, in the forest, and in villages. From that sacrifice in which everything was offered, the verses and the chants were born, the metres were born, and the formulas were born. From it horses were born, and those other animals which have a double set of incisors; cows were born from it, and goats and sheep were born from it.

When they divided the Man, into how many parts did they disperse him? What became of his mouth, what of his arms, what were his two thighs and his two feet called? His mouth was the brahmin, his arms were made into the nobles, his two thighs were the populace, and from his feet the servants were born. The moon was born from his mind; the sun was born from his eye. From his mouth came Indra and Agni, and from his vital breath the wind (Vyu) was born. From his navel the atmosphere was born; from his head the heaven appeared. From his two feet came the earth, and the regions of the sky from his ear. Thus they fashioned the worlds. There were seven, enclosing fire-sticks for him, and thrice seven fire-sticks when the gods, spreading the sacrifice, bound down the Man as the sacrificial beast. With this sacrifice the gods sacrificed; these were the first dharmas. And these powers reached the dome of heaven where dwell the ancient Sdhyas and gods. (O'Flaherty 27-28)

Buddhist

From a Buddhist perspective the self is an illusion of separateness, a ripple on the sea of non-being. The self is an ephemeral mist, a sequentially co-arising of perception with that which is perceived. It has no permanence in and of itself. Here is general formulation of this concept, found in over a dozen canonical discourses:

When this is, that is.

From the arising of this comes the arising of that.

When this isn't, that isn't.

From the cessation of this comes the cessation of that. (Bhikkhu, SN 12.61)

This is admittedly a difficult concept but according to this way of thinking by letting go of identification with the permanence of self one also detaches from suffering and perpetual, Sisyphean striving. Here is a more recent version of this line of thinking showing the derivation of the ego or personal self. *Note: the following could also derive from a Hindu/Eastern worldview*

No ego can last for long without the need for more. Therefore, wanting keeps the ego alive much more than having. The ego wants to want more than it wants to have. And so the shallow satisfaction of having is always replaced by more wanting. (Tolle, 46)

The Buddha did not think too highly of the question of the origin of life. To this and many metaphysical questions he responded with the parable of the poison arrow: A man is shot with a

poison arrow, but before the doctor pulls it out, he wants to know who shot it (Does God exist?), where the arrow came from (Why is there something rather than nothing?) why that person shot it (the quest for meaning), etc. If the man keeps asking these questions before the arrow is pulled out, the Buddha argued, he will die without answers. Regarding the origin of life and the fact that he ignored the question the Buddha said,

And why are they undeclared by me? Because they are not connected with the goal, are not fundamental to the holy life. They do not lead to disenchantment, dispassion, cessation, calming, direct knowledge, self-awakening, Unbinding. That's why they are undeclared by me. (Bhikkhu, MN 63 PTS: M i 426)

Artistic

To the artist the self is that which creates original works of beauty and meaning. It may be in the fields of music, painting, sculpture, architecture, flower arranging, cooking, or some other means of expression. Of course individual artists may hold all manner of differing philosophic abstract views of self but here the focus is on the artist experiencing self as an artist. Pablo Picasso said it succinctly, "Painting is just another way of keeping a diary". And what is a diary but a record of the experiences of self and a way to survive mortal death. Here is another way of stating this principle, "An artist cannot talk about his art any more than a plant can discuss horticulture."¹⁶ (Cocteau, Newsweek)

Note the complete identification of the self with the activity of art in these comments. The question of "who am I?" is indistinguishable from the art itself.

Obviously there would not be a specific creation story for an artist although Rudolf Steiner comes close when he says, “Art is the creation of an organ through which the Gods are able to speak to mankind.” (160) In a way the artist is much like the mystic in that they see themselves as participating in the original act of creation. They are always writing the creation story!

Scientific

To the scientist the self is an epiphenomenon, perhaps useful but nevertheless an emergent consequence of the natural processes of physics, biochemistry and biomechanics of the body. The personal self is considered one version of Homo Sapiens; a self-reflective organism, a bipedal primate, a mammal, one of the animals occupying one of the branches of a cladistic tree of organic life on planet earth. No more-no less.

Stephen Jay Gould (1941–2002) a prominent American paleontologist, evolutionary biologist, and historian of science seeks to explain human behavior, that is, actions of the self, in evolutionary terms:

Sociobiologists have broadened their range of selective stories by invoking concepts of inclusive fitness and kin selection to solve (successfully I think) the vexatious problem of altruism – previously the greatest stumbling block to a Darwinian theory of social behavior. . . . Here sociobiology has had and will continue to have success. And here I wish it well. For it represents an extension of basic Darwinism to a realm where it should apply. (257-269)

The purely scientific view is that the self is a function of the body and the bio-electrical-chemical activity of the brain. When the brain stops functioning so does the self. The self and self-awareness are believed to have developed under the pressure of selective evolution and presumably have some advantages that enhance survivability and increase adaptive function.

Science, the prevailing worldview of our time, presents a creation story of a big bang of unimaginably high heat and energy occurring a little less than 14 billion years ago from an infinitesimally small point or singularity resulting perhaps from quantum flux. A long march of subatomic, chemical and biological evolution followed along with gradual entropy or movement from overall order to disorder. This is compelling intellectually and no doubt substantially true. It is an awesome tale told by exotic priests of hyper-dimensional mathematics and super-string astrophysicists. It is rather a lot of fun to view the foundations of the physical universe through the scientific lens.

Psychological

Psychology covers a broad range of ideas. Speaking generally the self is seen as an inner state of awareness which seeks to give meaning and organization to internal and external experience. It is an amalgamating function composed of unconscious elements, instinctual drives and functions, behavioral conditioning, biological imperatives, and conscious drives and motives.

“Internal Family Systems” a model created by Richard C. Schwartz describes the self as a family of sub-personalities potentially able to integrate and cooperate. The self can be made whole by that part of the self which is unaffected by trauma acknowledging and accepting the reality, roles and functions of the parts that are disaffected. (Schwartz)

In the extreme view the behavioral psychologist B.F. Skinner, in his book “Beyond Freedom and Dignity” put forth the notion that Man had no indwelling personality, no will, intention, self-determinism or personal responsibility. Along this line of thinking some branches of psychology and psychiatry are more strictly speaking branches of physics and chemistry as they conceive of the self simply as a biochemical function.

On the other end of the spectrum Carl Jung describes an intensely personal, almost mystical phenomenon of self. He considered that the goal of life is to realize the self or individualize. To him “wholeness not goodness” was the prize. This consisted of bringing into ego awareness aspects of the personal unconscious (suppressed memories and the like) and elements of the collective unconscious, the reservoir of our wisdom as a species.

The closest thing to a creation story in psychology might be the development of the self in evolutionary terms as Carl Jung describes in his book “The Development of Personality” or in the work of writers like Abraham Maslow who described a hierarchy of self development in his paper, “A Theory of Human Motivation” (370-96) This development can be shown as a pyramid with the physiological needs at the bottom (top of list) and working up as follows:

Physiological needs

Safety needs

Social needs

Esteem

Self-Actualization

Self-transcendence

Success of offspring

New Thought

William James, the pragmatist philosopher, described New Thought and the Positive thinking movement as follows:

It [New Thought or Mind-cure] is a deliberately optimistic scheme of life, with both a speculative and a practical side. In its gradual development during the last quarter of a century, it has taken up into itself a number of contributory elements, and it must now be reckoned with as a genuine religious power....

One of the doctrinal sources of Mind-cure is the four Gospels; another is Emersonianism or New England transcendentalism; another is Berkeleyan idealism; another is spiritism, with its messages of “law” and “progress” and “development”; another the optimistic popular science evolutionism of which I have recently spoken; and, finally, Hinduism has contributed a strain. But the most characteristic feature of the mind-cure movement is an inspiration much more direct. The leaders in this faith have had an intuitive belief in the all-saving power of healthy-minded attitudes as such, in the conquering efficacy of courage, hope, and trust, and a correlative contempt for doubt, fear, worry, and all nervously precautionary states of mind. (92, 93)

One of the most quotable sayings coming out of this movement, “whatever the mind of man can conceive and believe it can achieve,” (Hill, *Think and Grow Rich*) succinctly illustrates the belief in the power of mind over circumstances typical of this worldview.

Although New Thought describes the essence of self as spiritually based, as a practical matter the self is operationally known through the preeminence of mind and imagination.

There is a strong transcendent element in the New Thought movement and life after death can take the form of existence in other, higher dimensions, reincarnation, or more traditional views of heaven.

It is interesting to note the recent success of “The Secret” (Byrne) a slick new packaging of positive thinking. Although this work is a pale reflection of the whole field of New Thought it shows that it is alive and kicking in the twenty-first century.

This worldview does not see creation so much as a past event as a manifestation of the divine mind. Here is Charles Fillmore, the founder of Unity Church.

MAN IS an idea in Divine Mind. He is the epitome of Being. Man is the apex of God’s creation, created in His image-likeness. Ideal man is the perfect man, the Christ, the offspring of Divine Mind. Before there could be a man there must have been an idea of man. God, the Father, Divine Mind, had an idea of man, and this idea is his Son, the perfect-man idea, the offspring of God-Mind. This Son is the Christ, the only begotten of the Father. The Son, being the expressed image-likeness of the Father, is perfect, even as the Father is perfect. All that we find in Divine Mind we find in its offspring.”

(43)

Esoteric/Gnostic

To the esotericist or Gnostic the true or authentic self is a higher order being named soul, monad, atman, spirit, or something else occupying or trapped in a body as a vehicle for learning,

service or some other goal. The self in the body is described metaphorically as driving a car or riding a horse. In effect this answer kicks the problem upstairs as it were. It defines “who I am” as something unseen (or dimly sensed) and unknown but potentially seen and knowable.

One of the more modern versions of this comes through the work of Alice Bailey. She contended that her writings were inspired by a Tibetan “Master”. She taught that man consists of a soul, working through a personality—a term used to describe the physical, emotional, and lower mental bodies taken as a whole. These aspects of the human being are defined as partial expressions of the Soul, which is itself an emanation of the higher Monad. (Initiation, IV) Full understanding of these deeper aspects of Self only can be experienced, in the Bailey cosmology, through stages of initiations attained through discipline and service. Reincarnation and Karma are generally regarded as the mechanisms which gives time and experience for the soul to mature.

Here are two other parallel versions of this same idea of self. “All of us have to get rid of our own Ego, the illusory, apparent self, to recognize our true Self, in a transcendental divine life.” (Mahatma 478) This second quote is from H.P. Blavatsky’s famous theosophical book “The Secret Doctrine”:

From the First-Born (primitive, or the first man) the Thread between the Silent Watcher and his Shadow becomes more strong and radiant with every change (re-incarnation). “... the “Watcher” and his “Shadows” – the latter numbering as many as there are re-incarnations for the monad – are one. The Watcher, or the divine prototype, is at the upper rung of the ladder of being; the shadow, at the lower”. (Vol I, Stanza VII, sloka 6, p. 264)

One of the Gnostic conceptions was that the true self was literally trapped by a lesser demi-god on earth and kept prisoner by the demands of the flesh. To escape the prison of earth one needed to practice extreme discipline away from earthly desire.

To the Gnostic Christians the biblical account of creation in Genesis was not historical but allegorical. In their writings, the “Nag Hammadi” found near the dead sea scrolls, Adam and Eve represented two principles within every human being. Adam was the embodiment of psyche, or soul, while Eve stood for the *pneuma*, or spirit. Soul, to the Gnostics, meant the embodiment of the emotional and thinking functions of the personality, while spirit represented the human capacity for spiritual consciousness. The former was the lesser self, the latter the transcendental function, or the “higher self,” as it is sometimes known. Eve is by nature superior to Adam. Eve’s numinous power is evident in her role as Adam’s awakener.

I entered into the midst of the dungeon which is the prison of the body. And I spoke thus: “He who hears, let him arise from the deep sleep.” And then he (Adam) wept and shed tears. After he wiped away his bitter tears he spoke, asking: “Who is it that calls my name, and whence has this hope come unto me, while I am in the chains of this prison?” And I spoke thus: “I am the Pronoia of the pure light; I am the thought of the undefiled spirit. . . . Arise and remember . . . and follow your root, which is I . . . and beware of the deep sleep.” (Apocryphon, Codex III)

Magical/Alchemical

In the Magical/Alchemical world view the self is a being of power capable of affecting the outer world through inner activities because it occupies a universe in which all things are alive and have sentiency. The self is a reflection of (or in the language of chaos theory, a fractal of) larger processes and therefore capable of affecting the world through inner changes. In the words of the ancient *Emerald Tablet of Hermes Trismegistus*, “What is above is like what is below, and what is below is like that which is above. To make the miracle of the one thing.” (sacred-texts.com)

The self, then, is intimately connected to the creative processes and activities of the cosmos. Since much of cosmos is cyclic, many who follow this worldview believe in some form of reincarnation. Here is a current description of self from a practicing magician and religious scholar Lee Irwin:

In a magical universe, the self is an intersection of possible worlds, beings, and creative, imaginative, artful projects supported by a credible science of human existence and development. The self in this universe, in this multidimensional habitation of spaces great and small, from the infinitesimal relativities of the speed of light to the maximal solidity of a mountain or a granite monument, is relative and permeable. We are each a perishable work, a continuity of awareness united to a complexity of relationships and bodily interactions that are fallible and limited by the mental and emotive horizons we each inhabit. Our nature is not immortal, but transformative; not simply perishable, but metamorphic and embedded in a vast cosmos of permeations beyond our immediate, incarnate understanding. What we each

are, at this moment, is not a static image or an unchanging bodily form. We are each in process, engaging the magical universe to a degree resonant with our development and maturity. (103)

and

On the Hermetic path, the value of being an individual is not paramount, but the very process of transformation is a process of individuation, a becoming whose actualization is unique to the individual. This is not a secondary point, but a central, defining characteristic of a Hermetic pathway. As a “middle path” it teaches that the value of the individual lies in his or her ability to fully realize the unique and sacred capacities that best express an individual realization of Spirit. (14)

Again, any individual identifying themselves as a magician of whatever nature might hold a variety of philosophic views about the self. But, as magician, the self is seen as a locus of power and influence. In the words of one of the most famous practitioners from the 19th century Violet Firth (pen name Dion Fortune):

It is a well-known cosmic law that everything moves in circles, and whatever forces we send out, and whatever thought-forms we extrude from our auras, unless absorbed by the object to which they are directed, will return to us in due course.” (77-78)

Here is a similar view expressed by R. Swinburne Clymer (1878-1966) an influential and high-ranking Rosicrucian who founded The Rosicrucian Brotherhood in Quakertown, Pennsylvania in 1902.

Whatever man does or desires will always produce a corresponding reaction both upon himself and all things with which he is allied or connected. He who benefits others in dire need is actually helping himself, while he who works injury to another, though ever so slightly, is decreeing his own punishment. The acts of men are the external manifestation of their own interior existence, and every thought and act as a natural tendency to repeat itself. (Occult Laws, 115)

Here is an overview of the Hermetic tale of creation from the first book of the *Corpus Hermeticum* as entered into Wikipedia.com:

The Hermetic tale of creation begins as God creates the elements after seeing the Cosmos and creating one just like it (our Cosmos) from its own constituent elements and souls. From there, God, being both male and female, holding the Word, gave birth to a second Nous, creator of the world. This second Nous created seven powers (often seen as Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, the Sun and the Moon) to travel in circles and govern destiny.

The Word then leaps forth from the materializing elements, which made them unintelligent. Nous then made the governors spin, and from their matter sprang forth

creatures without speech. Earth then was separated from Water and the animals (other than Man) were brought forth from the Earth.

The Supreme Nous then created Man, hermaphroditic, in his own image and handed over his creation. Man carefully observed the creation of his brother, the lesser Nous, and received his and his Father's authority over it all. Man then rose up above the spheres' paths to better view the creation, and then showed the form of God to Nature. Nature fell in love with it, and Man, seeing a similar form to his own reflecting in the water fell in love with Nature and wished to dwell in it. Immediately Man became one with Nature and became a slave to its limitations such as gender and sleep. Man thus became speechless (for it lost the Word) and became double, being mortal in body but immortal in spirit, having authority of all but subject to destiny.

Incarnational Way

The contribution that the Incarnational Way offers to the discussion of self and its origin is that we are an emergent phenomenon, a dynamic process arising from engagement with the energies and ecology of the natural worlds, formative subtle inner forces and the "I" which is viewed as individualized sacredness or as the unmanifest projecting itself along a spectrum of manifestation in an eternal now. We are not so much a thing as an activity, more verb than noun participating in the incarnation of all life. There are layers of self; personality and inner incarnational processes and formative functions, soul (our immediate inner proximate cause), and domains beyond soul much like there are interrelated and nested systems in the body, but none are more real, authentic or important than another. Everything is considered real and

necessary for us to be here. We are a whole confluence of processes concentrating attention on being human. In a way this conception includes elements of all of the other previously described images of self as there are both metaphysical and physical aspects at work. One advantage of this approach is that it does not favor one state over another but seeks to achieve systemic flow, communication, health and engagement with the subtle and natural worlds. It is “Incarnational” in that it values the experience of being human as intrinsically as noble (and sacred) as any other state of being. It is not favoring transcendence.

Who am I? How did I get here? There are two answers to this question from an incarnational perspective which throw light on why this view is called what it is. The first is that we come to the world out of a primal act of love, service and joy. Who I am is an act of love. This is discussed more fully under question four in chapter five.

The second answer is more of an engineering type response. The act of particularization, of becoming a human being and squeezing our multidimensional selves into fewer dimensions of space and time creates a differential of energy – much like a weather system that is fueled by low and high pressure systems. The effect of this is to create flow and generate energy. This is a very important idea since it says that the act of incarnation generates something of value for the whole system. In other words we are participating in a basic creative process which gives rise to life. We are fractals of the one manifestation of the great generative mystery. We are co-generators of sacredness. We, like Jesus, can say, “I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly” (John 10:10)

The main point is that as an emergent fractal of the grand manifestation of the cosmos we participate in all of the processes that bring life. The incarnate self is a generative source in its own right – someone who can offer something of value to the world.

Here are two definitions of self from David Spangler:

PERSONAL SELF:

This concept can be interchangeable with that of our everyday self ... and sometimes I use the two terms synonymously. But for me, it is also something more. I definitely use it to mean more than just the personality.

The personal self is that unique field of consciousness and being that emerges from the particularizing forces and conditions of the Incarnate Realm. It is a space of consciousness within which and for which uniqueness is a vital characteristic for the learning and creative experience such uniqueness can provide. It is the sense of “I” as separate from other “I”s, which is complemented by the sense held by the Transpersonal Self of the connectedness and unity of all “I”s within the universal field and experience of Identity. It is “me” as distinct from “you,” which is often an important distinction to make. It is the locus of a particular point of view, the Sacred acting through the lens of particularity and difference. It carries a creative power embedded in the quality of being different and being separate. It is one half of our Holism, the other half being the Transpersonal. In my cosmology, Transpersonal is neither “higher” nor “better” than Personal, nor is it actually the source of the Personal, though the latter may be drawn from the substance of the former and be nested within it. Personal and Transpersonal selves are different manifestations of a deeper and more comprehensive or basic phenomenon which is “Self.” They are both nested spaces

within the larger meta-space of Self. (As a metaphorical example of what I mean here, our children are formed from the substance of the bodies of my wife and myself and emerge from my wife's womb, but once born, they are sovereign beings in their own right and are not simply "lower" extensions of us.) The Personal Self may be seen as embodied Soul, the Soul-as-a-body. (Glossary, 18-19)

"SELF: The Sacred or Generative Mystery manifesting as Identity. I think of Self as the capacity to hold boundary, identity, relationships, and emergent possibilities in a space of coherent and interactive wholeness. A function that focuses will, love, and intelligence through a particular lens of being, expression, and creativity. The function of Self makes possible the functions and expressions of Individuality and the "I", which in turn make possible our own unique selves as fractal manifestations of that function in their own right." (Glossary, 23)

In addition, it could be said that all of the dimensions of soul (the immediate cause of our incarnation) do not really fit into one dimension of time and three of space. This being the case part of us does not incarnate into our bodies but into the larger world as a whole. Because of this the incarnating earthly self is not really confined strictly to the body but is spread out through all of planetary life.

As you can see from the Incarnational Way perspective the self and the primary creation story are ongoing, dynamic and co-mingled. To be consistent, though, a kind of creation story might be the following.

SACRED: The Generative Mystery. God. The Unity in which all things have their being and are connected; the Holism of the Cosmos; that which holds, supports, fosters, and nourishes in all possible and appropriate ways the will-to-be within all incarnations, which are, after all, fractals and expressions of Its own will-to-be and incarnation. Any and all acts, however humble and particular, that also express (or are fractals of) this universal and primal act of holding, fostering, supporting, and nourishing the Will-to-Be—the core beingness—of another’s incarnation. (Glossary, 23)

*(as referenced in the second chart) Incarnation is usually thought of as taking on flesh or in some way inhabiting a physical earthly body so a worldview that names itself the Incarnational Way probably needs an explanation of its view of death. Here is one view:

The Incarnational Way would agree that there are functions of the self that transcend physical death—call it soul, spirit or whatever. It would also agree that the emergent being which we commonly name ourselves, the DNA-identified self that is an exact confluence of earth and spirit ceases to exist at death. How could anyone really argue against that? Science is correct as far as it goes. This can be viewed from a Buddhist perspective as non-permanence of the self. This makes everyday life and experiences unique and inestimably valuable as one of a kind, never to be repeated—something to be cherished, honored, and fully appreciated in the moment.

It is also true that something is gained from living, the echoes, memories and essence of which live on in the earth, in the para-physical worlds, in the body of the soul and in the life of the sacred. As science is fond of pointing out, nothing is ever lost, only changed. And, this all

can be viewed from a re-incarnational perspective. When the part of the self that does retain a memory of earthly life reengages this earth; habits, feelings, thoughts, skills, attitudes etc. come alive, much like returning to a former home or friend. Too, as a divine spark the self never went anywhere anyway so, much like returning from reading a good novel, it remains.

As might be surmised “Incarnation” is seen not just as taking a physical body here on earth but any act of engagement of the soul with any and all domains of life.

Worldview Chart: How can I discover truth?

Worldview	Method	Best Result	Subject to Correction & Revision?	Level of Assumed Subjectivity
Tribal/ Indigenous/ Shamanic	Vision, Dreams & Ceremony	Clear grasp of message and meaning	Yes, to some degree in the interpretation	Low: Dreams and visions have independent reality
Religious	Scripture, Prayer Faith	Understanding of God's will	No	Zero - revelation
Mystical	Contemplation, Prayer	Experience of Unity with God	Always new yet familiar	Low or Zero Experience feels rather absolute
Eastern/ Hindu	Karma, Jnana and Bhakti Yoga	Remove the illusion of separateness	Yes, through reincarnation	High until Zero at Enlightenment
Buddhist	Meditation, Observe internal processes, Detachment	Understanding of the impermanence of truth	Perception of a fixed reality considered to be an error	High
Artistic	Performing Art	Beauty, insight into culture and humanity	Yes, new art is always emerging	High
Scientific	Scientific method	New knowledge about the physical world	Yes, (always in theory if not in practice)	Works to be Zero
Psychological	Therapy, Analysis Self observation	Self Knowledge	Yes	High
New Thought	Goal Setting Affirmations Belief	Demonstrate that "Energy follows thought"	Yes, although one is told to dispel disbelief	Low
Esoteric/ Gnostic	Clairvoyance Clairaudience Visions Intuition	Knowledge of the Higher worlds	Initiation, direct knowledge thru intuition	Low to Zero Intuition always correct
Magical/ Alchemical	Imagination Visions Dreams	Understanding of the processes of Transformation of Self & World	Yes - focused on real results shown in the physical world	Moderate: The Magician works with real but non-physical phenomena
Incarnational Way	All methods above plus shared identity with other Life	Understanding of the processes of Crafting Wholes and incarnation	Yes – no source of knowledge is considered absolute	Moderate: The goal is not objectivity but Collaboration

Chapter Four: How can I Discover Truth?

The methods and assumptions we bring to the discovery of facts about our world, the meanings behind these facts, and the construction of truth – with a capital T or small t – tells us as much about our worldview as the world itself. Different approaches yield different information. This should not be surprising in a universe where light has been demonstrated to reveal itself as particle or wave depending on the question asked by the experimenter.

Shown on the chart is a shorthand version of the aforementioned list of worldview's approach to knowledge and truth. What follows is a discussion in greater detail of the approach of the various worldviews. The Incarnational Way is then described in terms of what it has to offer to epistemology.

Tribal/Indigenous/Shamanic

Vision, Dreams and Ceremony are the primary methods for discovering truth for a person viewing the world from within a Tribal/Indigenous/Shamanic worldview. This is balanced and mitigated by the overall structure of the group, the longstanding traditions, and revered elders. For instance, in some Native American traditions it is expected that a vision, before it is considered real, is danced or enacted out before the whole community. It can then live and have its effect for everyone. In our predominantly urban, western culture the Shaman can be viewed as a lone wolf, living on the edge of the tribe and exploring the nether regions for himself. Nothing could be further from the truth. The shaman plays a vital role in tribal society and the work he or she does to journey into otherworlds is on behalf of the overall health of the people. Truth, in other words, while initially encountered individually and subjectively is eventually a shared phenomena arising out of the whole culture. It is a consensual understanding.

Religious

For a person living a religious life one of the ways of finding truth is following the structure and dictates of church doctrine. Obviously there are many different religions but what holds them together epistemologically is the reliance on faith, some inner knowing of the rightness of a particular dogma. C. S. Lewis exemplifies this when, after contemplating the Christian story, he reflects that *it did not have the ring of just story*. In other words, it had, for him, a deeper reality. In some situations, like Catholicism, these catechisms or teachings are mediated by a church hierarchy and put forward as law or canons.

While other religions may be less formal than Catholicism, all tend to move in the direction of written guidance and a priestly interpretive caste of some sort. Holy Scriptures are also a major part of the religious worldview. Finding truth, which is considered objective and part of a divine construction, is a matter of correctly interpreting writings from inspired prophets and what are considered the direct words of God. Like Martin Luther, however, the final arbiter of truth for many religious people is not the word of another but their own personal experience and interpretation of God's truth as it comes to them through prayer and contemplation of a holy book. This is by no means a frivolous pursuit and many of humanity's greatest minds would have considered themselves deeply religious. This includes Charles Darwin who nearly became a cleric.

Mystical

For the mystic there is only one truth worthy of living, that of union and identity with the sacred. The method is generally some kind of contemplation of the mystery of the inner life and

may include many of the trappings of a religion. This is not necessarily an aesthetic life but it is one that is devoted to continually turning to the god within. It is difficult to describe the method here because for most if not all mystics the quest begins with some sort of divine experience which demonstrates the living reality of this process. In the words of the 14th century Spanish mystic St. John of the Cross:

This divine knowledge of God never deals with particular things. This sublime knowledge can be received only by a person who has arrived at union with God, for it is itself that very union. It consists in a certain touch of the divinity produced in the soul, and thus it is God Himself who is experienced and tasted there... This knowledge savors of the divine essence and of eternal life. (St. John of the Cross, Bk. 2. Ch. 26. #5)

Truth, within this worldview is not something subjective or objective like facts and knowledge but more akin to an experience of deep meaning.

Eastern/Hindu

There are three basic Eastern/Hindu methods of pursuing truth which in this case means dissolving the ego or personal self and achieving unity with the All That Is, the one life. These methods are expressed as three kinds of Yoga (some say four as Raja and Jñâna Yoga can be seen as separate paths); Bhakti Yoga, the path of love and devotion, Karma Yoga, living a good and ethical life and fulfilling responsibilities, and following a path of study and meditation which is Raja or Jñâna Yoga. The three are not considered exclusive of each other and can be practiced

simultaneously. Material, psychological, mathematical, or philosophic truth is considered ephemeral, relative and unsubstantial. They are by nature illusory. Only escape from the cycles of incarnation reveals objective truth with a capital T all other forms are subjective illusion. (Brodd)

Buddhist

Buddhists use various methods to liberate themselves and others from the suffering of worldly existence and to discover truth. These include: ethical conduct and altruism, devotional practices, ceremonies, the invocation of bodhisattvas (enlightened teachers), renunciation, meditation, the cultivation of mindfulness and wisdom, and physical exercises. The Buddha (563-483 B.C.) put it succinctly, “The whole secret of existence is to have no fear. Never fear what will become of you, depend on no one. Only the moment you reject all help are you freed.” Joanna Macy, a Buddhist scholar and deep ecologist, describes a central teaching from the Buddha called *Paticca Samuppada* or Dependent Co-arising thus,

According to this apparently simple set of assertions, things do not produce each other or make each other happen, as in linear causality; they *help* each other happen by providing occasion or locus or context, and in so doing, they in turn are affected. There is a mutuality here, a reciprocal dynamic.” (58)

Buddhists generally consider normal subjective human perception as a deluded clinging to an illusory selfhood and to the things that we consider the cause of happiness or unhappiness.

Suffering ceases and truth is revealed when craving ends, when one is freed from desire. This is achieved by eliminating all delusion, thereby reaching a liberated state of Enlightenment.

Artistic

Art as a worldview may not have one system of epistemology since truth, beauty, and process are intertwined. It is probably fair to say that to an artist, practicing art is a kind of investigation into meaning and truth. Arthur C. Clark, responding to a question about the meaning of his book and movie 2001, replied, “Read the book, see the movie and repeat the dosage as often as necessary.” This pretty much sums up the artistic approach to finding truth.

Art begins to be great when it communicates a truth about a state of the world or the human existential condition that is meaningful to others. The artist lives in a state that says that truth cannot be completely known objectively, that we are part and parcel of crafting truth.

In the poetic words of Goethe, “He to whom nature begins to reveal her manifest secret yearns for art, her worthiest interpreter.” (Seddon 156). Truth objectifies itself through the subjective process of art.

Scientific

For a scientist there is one and only one way to discovering truth and that is the scientific method. While individual scientists may have grand intuitions, visions, dreams, and flashes of insight, in public discourse any hypothesis is put to the test using accepted scientific practice. An objective truth is considered to be “out there” to be discovered. Here is one description of the method from the Journal of American Society for Information Science.

The scientific method is a way to ask and answer questions by making observations and doing experiments. It is important for an experiment to be a fair test which can occur when only one variable is changed at a time.

Steps:

1. Define the question
2. Gather information and resources (observe)
3. Form hypothesis
4. Perform experiment and collect data
5. Analyze data
6. Interpret data and draw conclusions that serve as a starting point for new hypothesis
7. Publish results
8. Retest (frequently done by other scientists)” (Stucki 223-228)

Mathematics, which is strangely parallel to reality for unknown reasons, is the ultimate language of science. It can be used to construct theory, but if something is posited that cannot be tested and made known to the sense world, it is not science and is not admitted as a possibility. Truth, for the true scientist, is always open to question, modification and improvement. This commitment to the possibility of falsification, and the openness to let anyone question authority, are two valuable gifts to humanity.

Psychological

The essential method for discovering truth for Psychology is individual or group therapy. Therapy is, in one form or another, an enhanced and supported method of self observation and self reflection. It may take the form of dream analysis which could extend into the realms of collective human knowledge characterized by Carl Jung as archetypical.

Truth within this sphere is confined to what one may learn about oneself and the activities of the subjective human psyche and its behavior. In this sense psychologists are looking at the mechanisms that all of us use to conceptualize and understand our world. To the degree that a psychologist looks at consciousness as a result of brain chemistry or as strictly external behavior, they are more scientist than psychologist and they would probably want to be named such. I think it is fair to say that many psychologists would see human perception as a limited vehicle for comprehending any kind of absolute truth. There are innumerable studies demonstrating how the context in which information is gathered, sleep deprivation, trauma, excitement, brain chemistry, attitudes, expectations, immediate past events and the like, can alter awareness. Given the observed plasticity of perception it would be hard for a psychologist who did not also accept deeper ways of knowing to rely on human perception for truth of any kind.

Truth, by psychological standards is always a relative phenomenon and graded according to its capacity to help a person live a functionally healthy life.

New Thought

In a way the New Thought movement turns the question of finding truth inside out. It starts with the assumption or faith that all is mind in various guises, that thoughts are objective things, and that whatever I believe strongly will come to pass. There are elements of this worldview that

tend towards the belief that we create our own reality. This has been one of the criticisms of the “New Age movement” but it primarily derives from the positive thinking maxim “energy follows thought” wedded to the eastern/mystical idea that we can merge with God. It is a short step to say I am god and my thoughts will come to manifestation if I believe strongly enough. Charles Fillmore, one of the founders of Unity Church was said to believe that it was possible to overcome death if one’s belief in health and youth was strong enough.

Truth then, in this conception, might be considered to be whatever I deeply believe it to be.

Esoteric/Gnostic

For an esotericist or Gnostic the five senses are lesser, unreliable ways to gather knowledge. The physical body’s sensations, the only valid means for the scientist, may in fact be considered impediments to gaining true objective knowledge. It is taken as fact that other human facilities can be developed which give more clear information and understanding and ultimately a kind of deep Truth. Rudolph Steiner called these “supersensibilities” in his book, “The Evolution of Consciousness”.

A simple reflection will show that a man’s true being, his inner activity as an individual, cannot be found in the world that holds good for the senses. For directly he passes through the gates of death, he is given over as a corpse to the laws and conditions of the supersensible world.” (p.5)

These facilities include higher senses analogous to the five physical senses and are sometime called together clairvoyance or clairsentience. In addition, visions of higher realities,

lucid dreams, and other kinds of direct knowing sometimes called Intuitions are other avenues for para-physical perceptions. In this view the sense organs of the higher dimensional bodies when employed can be the route to comprehending the deeper mysteries of life, meaning and consciousness.

Magical/Alchemical

Truth in this worldview is multilayered and interactive with imagination and perception. It can “show up” in many guises depending on the skill and clarity of the practitioner.

Lee Irwin speaks eloquently for the Magical/Alchemical way of knowing:

The power of the imagination is great; it can reveal and it can conceal, open or close capacities and provide new ways of being, or reinforce fear and anxiety. Like all abilities, it can be abused and misused or be a means for transformation. On the Hermetic path, imagination plays the central and crucial role of providing the visionary basis for opening to new worlds and perceptions, not in an unreal sense but in actuality through a spiritual use of imaginative ability. The first step is to pay attention to all spontaneous mental imagery both while awake and while asleep. It is important to practice being as fully conscious of mental activity as possible, particularly spontaneous and uncontrolled activity. The stream of consciousness is broad and active and a keen observer of consciousness will quickly learn how active mind is on multiple levels of awareness. Even as I write, the imagery flows around the words and beneath the meanings and opens into powerful currents of visual association through images and spontaneous connections, all of which have particular meanings and significance.

Self-knowledge requires real awareness of this inner activity and the ability to control and direct it without forcing the stream into channels cut by purely rational logic or communal beliefs that inhibit the spontaneous growth of mind and soul. To grow and develop, there must be an inner cultivation of perception, not a passive acceptance of norms or external beliefs. Continuous awareness is the goal, a free-flowing attention that works within multilevel consciousness to promote ever deepening integration and inner continuity.” (23-24)

and he goes on to say

The horizon of our understanding is relative to our experience and to our exposure to alternative ways of perceiving and knowing the world. In a soulful, centered knowing, the magical universe is unfolding with incredible dimensionality, revealing an ever-layered sense of infinite capacities yet unrealized through the human form in its full potentiality. (103)

Incarnational Way

As the chart shows the Incarnational Way accepts all methods of assembling truth as valuable contributions to a larger understanding. This is not an attempt to be inclusive and non-confrontational. It is a natural consequence of this system of thought. It is interested in knitting together wholes, not deconstructing self or world. The question for incarnational theory is not so much, “what is true?” as, “when is something true and from what vantage point?” Take, for instance, the understanding of the life and function of another species on the planet, say a bat.

One way of learning about a bat is to observe it in the wild. Another is to catch one and observe it in the laboratory. Or we could wait until it dies and dissect it learning all about its structure, biomechanics and the like. In short we could approach it as physical scientists using all the tools of physics, chemistry, evolutionary biology, and the like. Note that however we approach the bat from a scientific angle we ourselves have introduced a new, subjective element – ourselves!

We could also take a shamanistic approach and try to communicate with the bat or a bat spirit. This assumes it is a conscious, sentient being with rights and power. This could be done through ceremony or could happen spontaneously through visions or dreams. How might this information be different or complementary to what we had learned earlier? What are the indigenous legends of the bat? What taboos have they inspired?

We might also consult Holy Scriptures to see what they say about animals, mammals, bats and man's relationship to the natural world. This might give us insight into the ethics of our scientific methods. We could pray to be given insight into the life of the bat.

We could take a mystical view and appreciate the bat as one of God's creatures and an expression of creative love. What is it saying about the nature of life on planet earth and God? What would deep contemplation of a bat as divine expression reveal?

We could see the bat as an ephemeral arising of itself in relationship to my perception of it. What does it say to me about us, about permanence, about life? Does compassion arise from our sharing of a moment of temporary existence? What would we learn from a lifetime of meditation on a creature like the bat?

Perhaps someone takes it upon themselves to draw or paint or sculpt a bat. What will they learn from the process that they could not gain from any other method? Many a scientist has

done just that. What music is inspired? To love the form of a bat is knowledge that cannot be gained in any other way.

And what psychological processes are stirred from seeing a bat. What fear, what joys, what thoughts? What does someone learn about themselves from seeing a bat on the wing at dusk fluttering about?

Does the bat teach anything about manifesting a life, catching dreams, hunting in the dark, or about adaptability in the pursuit of goals?

Is there a way to see the bat with deeper vision? What does a Clairvoyant see or hear around a bat? Did you know that a single bat mother can find her child upon returning from a hunt in a cave crammed with millions of bats? This was once though impossible but has been proven to be true. How do they do that in the dark amidst the cacophony on radar? What sight are they actually using?

What are the magical correspondences that a bat might conjure? Is it the moon or one of the planets? Is it one of the vital elements; earth, air water or fire? What is its role in the transformation of consciousness and of matter?

Taken together these questions create a picture of the bat which is robust, alive and full-bodied. It builds on a broad base of feelings and understandings to construct a multidimensional view of this organism. It can lead to the following experience, which could be described as an “incarnational” way of knowing that has powerful implications for creating a more human and sustainable world.

When I was a boy, about 10 years old, sometimes I would go out at dusk in the field in back of our house in Grand Rapids, Michigan and throw a boomerang. When I did, frequently the bats in the area would dive at it, perhaps attracted by the whooshing sound it made as it went through

its arced return flight pattern. Many years later as a grown man, I found myself entering a visionary state in which I was standing in these same fields in back of my old house watching a bat fly and found myself spontaneously merging with it. I was conscious of sharing the chase of insects in the air from within the sensorium and consciousness of a bat. This was quite wonderful as the air was like a gel in which I could sense the movement of the insect as if they were connected to me by a string. I remember the moment of catching one of the insects (but not tasting it - probably a good thing as I might have developed a taste for mosquitoes). We landed, and I stepped out of the body of the bat and looked back. There stood the “real” bat; as tall as me and constructed of living silver light, like moonlight or starlight. We were in a primeval forest, his mate was nearby and he was giving homage to the giant breathing trees. His life was like a living prayer, a reverent supplication and benediction to the deep spirit of the land, the forest, nature, the earth, and life itself. This vision lasted for time, and then I found myself back in my normal human state.

This experience, together with other ways of knowing previously described, creates a deep connection to the organic world in which we are imbedded. And, needless to say, it changed my feelings and understanding of bats. I love them to this day even to the point of accidentally bringing one into a cottage at night riding in my hair a couple of years ago in the Canadian northeast woods.

The foregoing illustrates the possibility of another kind of knowing; that of shared being. The ability to identify with, collaborate, to partner with, to intimately connect, engage and bless another life is one of the hallmarks of the Incarnational Way. It is one of the core practices.

This experience of shared life and perception is not unique to me. Other examples of this approach to knowledge are emerging in science, education and literature. Dr. Arthur Zajonc, an

optical physicist in the physics department of Amherst College, recommends that we change from “an epistemology of violence” to an “epistemology of love,” which is at the heart of the method I just described. In his book, *Meditation As Contemplative Inquiry: When Knowing Becomes Love*, Dr. Zajonc lists several key elements as necessary to achieve this end:

- Respect
- Gentleness
- Intimacy
- Vulnerability
- Participation
- Transformation
- *Bildung* – Education as formation
- Insight

He is in the tradition of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe who said in his book *Maximen und Reflexionen*, “There is a delicate empiricism that makes itself utterly identical with the object, thereby becoming true theory. But this enhancement of our mental powers belongs to a highly evolved age.”

Here is Rudolph Steiner, a Goethe scholar, making a similar point in a lecture in 1921.

Goethe’s thinking was mobile. It followed the whole growth process of the plant and followed how one plant form is a modification of the other. Goethe’s thinking was not rigid with inflexible contours; it was a thinking in which the concepts continually

metamorphose. Thereby his concepts became, if I may put it this way, intimately adapted to the process that plant nature itself goes through.

American educator and author, Parker Palmer suggests that,

Knowing of any sort is relational, animated by a desire to come into deeper community with what we know. Why does a historian study the “dead” past? To reveal how much of it lives in us today. Why does a biologist study the “mute” world of nature? To allow us to hear its voice speaking of how entwined we are in life’s ecology. Why does a literary scholar study the world of “fiction”? To show us that the facts can never be understood except in communion with the imagination. (54)

And one final reference to this “identification” way of knowing written by a figure out of the Arthurian legends; the 6th century poet Taliesin:

I have been a blue salmon,

I have been a dog, I have been a deer.

I have been a goat on the mountain,

I have been the trunk of a beech tree.

I have been an axe in the hand,

I have been a pin in the tongs...” (Constant Search 156)

The point of all is that from an incarnational perspective all of the methods of appropriating truth can be employed, BUT it is important to know how to bring them together and when to use what tool. And it is more than that. Recognizing a variety of epistemological approaches informs and changes all of them in subtle but profound ways that give birth to a gestalt of knowing that is difficult to achieve with any one method. It allows us to recognize that the fellow beings whom we study also have consciousness, the potential for partnerships, sentiency, and moral rights. How different the world would be if we simply followed this suggestion.

Worldview Chart: What kind of Universe do I inhabit?

Worldview	Matter Alive?	Para-physical Beings?	Life after death?	God?
Tribal/ Indigenous/ Shamanic	Yes	Yes, nature full of conscious forces	Yes	Yes, Many and varied
Religious	No	Yes, Angels and Demons	Yes (reward or punishment)	Yes, One and only, Omniscient and omnipotent
Mystical	Yes as part of divine expression	Perhaps, but should be ignored to go to God	Concerned with an eternal now - death and life one flow	Definitely – an intimate, living, and loving Omnipresence
Eastern/ Hindu	For some animist branches	Yes, many Gods and Goddesses	Yes, trans-migration of soul Reincarnation	Yes, One and/or Many
Buddhist	No - Illusion	Maybe, but should be avoided	Reincarnation but ultimate goal is enlightenment	Unclear – Buddha did not answer the question
Artistic	Alive as beauty	Artistic Muses	Not personal but as artistic heritage & masterpieces	Yes as Inspiration
Scientific	No – only biological life	No – nothing beyond physical observable facts	No or at best Unknowable	No or at best Unknowable
Psychological	No	No-most systems inner contact seen as insanity	No special theory	No special theory
New Thought	Not necessarily alive but responsive to thought	Yes, mostly as guardian angels and helpers	Some believe death and disease result from negative thoughts	Yes - Higher mind, Ultimate Consciousness
Esoteric/ Gnostic	Lower vibratory state of spirit (hides reality)	Yes, arranged in a hierarchy of evolution	Reincarnation until ascent to higher planes	Yes, Ultimate Designer and Planner
Magical/ Alchemical	Yes, sleeping & can be awakened	Yes, & corresponding to physical matter and processes	Some form of Reincarnation or deeper plane existence	The One Life and Source
Incarnational Way	Yes	Yes	Yes * See chapter 1 Reincarnation	Yes, Generative Mystery

Chapter Five: What kind of universe do I inhabit?

“The universe seems neither benign nor hostile, merely indifferent.” So wrote the late astrophysicist and cosmologist Carl Sagan. This pretty much sums up the scientific worldview in regards to a caring, sentient universe. But not all perspectives share this assessment. Shown on the previous page is a chart outlining a variety of views of the cosmos. What follows is a narrative expanding the basic ideas of the chart. Again, let me emphasize that these descriptions try to show how the system itself views a question not how an individual practitioner would respond.

Tribal/Indigenous/Shamanic

The world inhabited by a Tribal/Indigenous/Shamanic person is filled with living beings and forces. These may be associated with the land, the flora and fauna of the area, the spirits of ancestors, evil and good magicians, gods and goddesses and perhaps an overlighting benevolent spirit. Pantheism or animism are words sometimes used to describe this perspective. This is a powerful way to experience the world which creates an intimacy between a person and the world not usually felt in industrialized, technical cultures. Here is John Matthews, author of over 60 books on Shamanism, Celtic legend, Merlin, King Arthur, The Holy Grail and other subjects commenting on the meaning of Taliesin’s poem “The Hostile Conspiracy”. This gives us insight into the worlds a shaman can inhabit:

This is a catalogue, not only of knowledge, but also of shamanic wisdom and understanding. Its author understood the rhythms of the seasons, the mystery of life itself, and had travelled deeply into the very fabric of creation. He is in absolute harmony with the natural world. This remarkable poem is filled with a sense of elemental power. Taliesin is master of the weather, of winds and waves; he has the strength of the bull, the keenness of sight that belongs to the hawk, the wisdom of the salmon, who has swum in the Pool of Knowledge; and he knows the way to and from the Places of Peace - that is the Faery Mounds - where he has learned to wield the fire of inspiration that burns in the head. He is wise also, in the lore of the heavens, knowing the ages of the moon, the rising and setting of the sun, and the dancing of the stars in the heavens. He wields air, water, fire and earth, and binds all to him through the elemental fire of his inspiration. All of these abilities are those of the worldwide shamanic traditions. (151)

Religious

The religious view too can perceive a world filled with angels and demons but it is not as intimate a relationship as a shamanic one. In this view a person is not really expected to be able to see through to truth in this world but hope is held for clarity in the next. As St. Paul said, “We now see through the glass darkly but will in heaven see all things clearly” (Corinthians 1:13) The material world is taken more or less at face value as the handiwork of God, as a place of testing for the next life following death, and a place created by God for man’s well-being. Overall reality is seen as a dramatic stage scene, a morality play in which we participate by choosing sides.

Mystical

The mystic sees all of life as a direct expression of the divine. Consequently, he or she can be very interested in the physical forms and interior life of things as everything has the potential to be a doorway to the sacred. I want to emphasize here that this is not a speculative thing for a mystic but rather an undeniable (to them) experience of kinship with all life. The mystic, from time to time, occupies an ecstatic world of exquisite intimacy with core creativity, love, joy and expression of a universal source.

Eastern/Hindu, Buddhist and Esoteric/Gnostic

This might be an overgeneralization but I would like to lump the Eastern/Hindu view of the universe with the Buddhist and Esoteric/Gnostic perspectives. This is justified, I hope, by the fact that all three see the material world and some of the subtle ones as well as a kind of veil or illusion or as a delusion of the senses. The religious mindset might also be included here. The Esotericist might be separated out in-so-far as he or she might see a gradation of increasing reality running up a hierarchical ladder of subtle perceptions. In none of these systems would the physical senses be considered capable of encountering meaningful truth. In all three systems there is an assumption of actual dimensions of gods and goddesses, angels and demons, faeries, elementals, and natural forces, and the like that go beyond what physical science would agree is real. The Buddhist and the mystic would counsel caution in the encounter with these non-physical forces as they distract from the goal at hand but they both would agree that some level of reality exists beyond the common senses.

Artistic

The true artist is in resonance with the world as it is and as it could be. Although we are saturated with the image of the suffering artist disconnected from society, when the artist is moved to paint, sculpt, play music, write poetry or otherwise express herself the underlying motivation is a feeling of connection to world or personal conditions. Therefore the universe an artist inhabits is not limited to “what is out there” in an objective sense. Rather the artist experiences a condition and lives in a fluid state of transformation of that world into one of beauty, meaning and expression. In other words the artist’s universe is codependent with the artistic act.

Scientific

For the scientist, of course, any talk of co-dependent or co-arising or self-created realities is nonsense. There is an objective world beyond the self waiting to be discovered. A tree falling in a forest actually makes a sound whether someone is listening or not. The facts of the universe are what can be garnered through the senses and perceived by the instruments extending those senses. Reality is described and approximated by hypothesis, proof and repeatable experiments available to the physical senses.

The universe that a scientist experiences may be downright weird in the case of sub-atomic physics, awesome in size and subtle in function but it is usually considered to be hard and fast and fixed as to its nature and having intrinsic properties unaffected by consciousness. However, some of the experiments and theories of quantum physics have opened the door to an interactive universe that shows different faces depending on the question being asked.

Psychological

For the psychologist, at least one trained in the west, there is a clear distinction between healthy perception of reality and an unhealthy one. In the opinion of psychology someone exhibiting mental health generally agrees with the consensus of objective society as to what is “real” and what is not. Anyone reporting seeing faeries, hearing inner voices other than their own, and seeing ghosts would be suspect of psychiatric malfunction. The psychological worldview is a nuanced one of competing biological, social and personal pressures. This view highly values the ability to navigate interpersonal and subjective encounters in a way that benefits the individual and society as a whole.

New Thought

The person within the New thought movement views physical reality as responsive to their mind and imagery. The world is seen as malleable to some degree and amenable to changing shape from a strong impression of focused attention. The world that one encounters is something of an echo of past thoughts and actions. As promoter Rhonda Byrne advertizes on the home page of her web site, “Without exception, every human being has the ability to transform any weakness or suffering into strength, power, perfect peace, health, and abundance.”

(<http://thesecret.tv/index.html>)

Magical/Alchemical

The magician or alchemist can view the world much differently than most. Here is a description from Lee Irwin of one form of magical perception,

The soul-centered life is a life of rhythmic expansions and contractions, a rhythm that builds on its own experiences and on its relationships with others (and their rhythms) in order to sustain an increasingly open, interactive horizon of awareness. Part of this process involves entering visionary space, entering into the vaster life of the cosmos through an inner capacity to sustain the visionary mode. By this I mean the capacity to enter altered states of awareness, to receive visions, visionary dreams, or illuminations as a means for enhancing human awareness. Simply stated, visions and mystical experiences are valid and highly significant modalities of human knowledge, modalities that can open the horizons of perception far beyond ordinary sensory awareness. The visionary mode is a spontaneous condition of opening, either in waking or sleeping states, that allows the visionary to behold the far more complex dimensionality of the “inner” as it connects and reciprocates with the “outer.” In many ways there is no inner-outer distinction other than what we ascribe through conventional attitudes toward the physical and the spatial. But seen from the visionary mode, these distinctions become artificial and redundant; in the visionary mode, the world opens into a vast embeddedness of Spiritual presences, powers, and possibilities. This is the threshold of the *Mundus Imaginalis*, the Imaginal World of visionary illumination facilitated through inner self-development. (116-117)

Incarnational Way

The contributions of the Incarnational Way to the inquiry into the basic nature of the universe are three as follows.

First is the reaffirmation of the intelligent sentiency of matter, plants, animals, natural processes and anything else that can be named. In other words where physics see everything as an expression of energy ($E=MC^2$) the Incarnational Way sees everything as an expression of *I-nergies* (a word coined by Spangler), having a form of living beingness and consciousness. Now, of course, this consciousness can look pretty confined in the light of our relatively free experience but none-the-less basic matter, even a stone or atom, has some form of sentiency. This establishes the “I-Thou” relationship, to use Martin Buber’s phrase, as a foundational connection with all things. We are all kin capable of some level of communication. Given the current world situation where we treat the land, plants, our fellow animals and each other with consistent brutality and violence, reestablishing respectful relationships would be a welcome change.

Second, the Incarnational Way affirms the existence of a vast ecology of para-physical life. This inner life is seen as vital to the functioning of the whole of the planetary existence and not just as some side parlor game of personal guides and wise counselors giving us real estate tips. The Incarnational Way posits that the proper way to interact with this “second ecology” is to stand strong in our humanity as a worthy partner for the healthy functioning of the larger world. We have something to offer as well as receive from the hyperdimensional realms.

Third, the Incarnational Way affirms the need and possibility for partnership and intimacy with the creative, loving, holding, Ground of Being underlying the manifest worlds. Call it what you will; God, Divinity, The One Life, Sacredness, The Force, Allah, The Beloved, or some other name, the Incarnational Way holds forth the possibility of experiencing oneself as a fractal of this fountainhead of Being, participating in the generation of sacredness.

Worldview Chart: Why am I here and what should I be doing?

Worldview	What are my Responsibilities?	Consequences of Failure	Potential of Success	Arbiter of Success
Tribal/ Indigenous/ Shamanic	Be a contributing member of my group, clan, tribe or nation. Tradition	Being ostracized	Respect of the group	Elders & authority figures
Religious	Follow God's will, guidance and commandments	Hell or degraded reincarnation	Heaven, or escape from the cycle of pain	God
Mystical	To seek an experience of the divine	Destitution, Dark nights of the soul	Ecstasy, Union with God	Oneself (God not variable)
Eastern/ Hindu	Social Duty, Remove ego identification with separate self	Reincarnate in a lower form	Merging with oneness, the all, Brahmin	Karmic Law
Buddhist	To understand the roots of suffering,	Locked into a cycle of suffering	Enlightenment compassion	Innate structure of beingness
Artistic	Create Beauty discover aesthetic truth	Lack of artistic production or quality	An artistic masterpiece	Public, and oneself
Scientific	Discover facts about nature and how the world works	Frustration, lack of professional success	New knowledge of the world	Peer review
Psychological	To become self aware, self actualized & integrated	Lack of mental health, insanity, dementia, depression	Psychological wholeness & integration, Self actualization	Oneself, Family, Friends & Therapist
New Thought	To become healthy and wealthy and help others achieve	Disease and lack of resources	Health and wealth	Society, Oneself
Esoteric/ Gnostic	Discipline the body, emotions and the mind	Remain trapped on the earth and within matter	Initiation into a higher reality	Structure of Earth, Demiurge
Magical/ Alchemical	To redeem matter and oneself	Physical, psychological, & spiritual constraint	Physical, psychological, & spiritual transformation	Universe
Incarnational Way	Craft and generate wholeness or "Grail Space"	Ecological disaster, social collapse, war	New Heaven and a New earth	Gaia Humanity

Chapter Six: Why am I here and what should I be doing?

One of the basic questions nearly all people try to answer is, “What are my responsibilities to life?” or more simply, “Why am I here?” This is not necessarily seen as a philosophic question although it frequently is. It always has deep moral and ethical undertones. However the question presents itself, most of us try to find and give purpose, meaning and direction to our lives.

Shown on the previous page is a chart of worldviews outlining responses to the question of duty and responsibility by various worldviews. This is followed, once again, by a narrative expanding the ideas of the chart.

Tribal/Indigenous/Shamanic

To a person held sway by the Tribal/Indigenous/Shamanic worldview they exist to be a contributing member of a group, clan, tribe or nation. To hold a tradition in sacred trust as it has been passed down from the ancestors is what gives meaning to life. But it is more than that. People living close to the land and the root organic processes that give rise to the stars, moon, sun, and mother earth might say they help hold the world, both physical and non-physical, in fertile balance. The ceremonies are not only for the well-being of the tribe and its individual members but for the health and continued functioning of the whole world. To help hold up the universe is a noble deed indeed which imparts value and dignity to the person and culture. The work of the actual shaman, the working spiritual leader of the tribe, is much more demanding.

Here is John Matthews again:

Much of the shaman's work involves transformation - of the self, of the soul, and of the intelligence. This can be terrifying and life changing if we are not prepared for it, and it requires a discipline that leaves most of us gasping. This is why so much of the imagery in which the shaman's experience is traditionally couched, takes the form of battles with demons, of titanic struggles against monsters, of dismemberment, death and re-birth. This is by way of telling us that the experience is often profoundly unsettling, that it can leave us feeling broken and distraught. But this is not the whole story. If we persevere, if we continue in the face of opposition, both inner and outer, we can break through into a new sense of wholeness and visionary awareness. (157)

Religious

For a person on a religious path the charge is to follow God's will, guidance and commandments. This may come down to them through studying scripture, church hierarchy, prayer, and other means. However it comes, one is responsible to choose the righteous way. In some religions, but not all, it is important to evangelize. Most religions have injunctions to serve both God and fellow humans. The overall responsibility, though, is for a person to save their own soul and be worthy of rewards in the afterlife.

Mystical

The mystic's one responsibility is to know god, not as knowledge in an intellectual sense but in the biblical sense of experiencing intimate union. In the words of Rumi, a 13th-century Persian poet,

Why should I seek?

I am the same as He.

His essence speaks through me.

I have been looking for myself! (xx)

Eastern/Hindu

There are many traditions and practices of the Eastern/Hindu way. There is a strong ethic of acceptance of current conditions and social place fueled in part by a belief in karma and reincarnation. So, as a practical matter one might feel a need to discharge duty, show devotion, mediate and study the Vedas. The overall responsibility though, whatever the path taken, is to dissolve the ego and merge with the underlying oneness of being, to escape the wheel of rebirth.

Buddhist

A Buddhist's answer to the question of why am I here and what should I be doing might simply be: To understand the roots of suffering. It is believed that the true answer to this question leads to enlightenment and freedom. Another interesting aspect of Buddhist thought is the idea of the Bodhisattva. This is a person who, having achieved enlightenment, remains to help until all are free. So there is a strong ethic within this stream to show compassion for others and not just understand suffering but to alleviate it as well.

Artistic

The artist lives, no doubt, to do art. They feel a driving mandate to be in the flow of creation. Frequently, in order to accomplish this, the everyday norms and graces dictated by

society and common sense may be put aside, leading to the common stereotypes of the “wild” or unconventional artist. There is a telling story of the architect Frank Lloyd Wright when he was destitute and close to starving. After receiving a nice commission for a new design, he took the money and bought a harpsichord.

Scientific

The scientist devotes his or her life to uncovering facts of the manifest universe and the fundamental laws that make it so. Because of the devotion to truth any falsification of data is viewed harshly. There have developed some ethical boundaries around experimenting on humans but precious few protecting other species and the natural environment.

Psychological

Psychology seeks to understand the human psyche and heal the wounds it encounters. It is the responsibility of the practitioner to understand themselves so that they can see as clearly as possible the functioning of another. There are accepted ethical standards within the profession that guide the actions of the therapists and researchers. A psychologist’s primary responsibility is to the mental health and maturing of their clients and themselves.

New Thought

New Thought is aptly named since its allegiance is to the preeminence of mind. Moral concerns are considered in the light of natural causal effects, the rebound effect of negative and positive thinking. The responsibilities of a person within this worldview are to become able to use their mental capacities to become healthy and wealthy and help others achieve the same.

Secondarily it is to demonstrate the reality of the maxim, “energy follows thought”. The underlying purpose is to actualize the creative potential of the person.

Esoteric/Gnostic

The primary responsibility of a person within the Esoteric/Gnostic viewpoint is to ascend to higher dimensions; to evolve. This involves discipline of the body, emotions and the mind. In some systems the selfless serving of others is part of the mechanism of release from the earthly dimension.

Alchemical/Magical

What are the work and responsibilities of an alchemist or magician? R.J. Stewart, a scholar, practicing magician and prolific author writes as follows:

By conscious sacramental work with the spiritual forces of the UnderWorld and OverWorld, we may transform the elements and metals within our body and blood..... This is the true alchemy from within, which in turn enables transformation of the outer world of nature. (143)

Incarnational Way

When creating this chart corresponding to this chapter it was a surprise to consider the material about the Incarnational Way. While it is true that each of the systems offer hope in their own way for a better society, it is interesting to note that none of the other systems have, as an

explicit consequence of success, a healthy world and no other sees failure as ecological disaster, social collapse and continuing war. The Incarnational Way is unique in this regard.

Why is this so? Primarily because it sees its fundamental task and practice as generating or crafting wholeness. To do this requires true ecological thinking. One can forge functional systems with military-like hierarchy and coercion but not health and wholeness. Health, of a body, an ecology, an economy, a political system or a planet demands that the parts work together synergically, allowing diversity of function and supporting the integration of each of its interactive parts. What *emerges* from these conditions is wholeness, new life, vitality and health. As an emergent phenomenon wholeness cannot be imposed or even really planned for in specific form.

Another reason that the Incarnational Way has strong cultural effects is that it honors not only the parts of the system as sentient life with inherent value but the whole physical plane as a sacred expression equal to any in existence. This is not to say that there are no higher dimensions or beings, only that none of them are any closer to sacredness than this one. It is difficult to build a new society if one believes the world and the function of interaction with it (the ego) to be illusion, merely quantum flux, fuel for an apocalyptic fire, disgraced, or something to be transcended. The Incarnational Way does not have these conceptual limitations.

Finally the Incarnational Way has a peculiar understanding of spiritual unity and oneness as a goal. While not denying the possibility of such a state, it is seen as only one type of spiritual experience. Instead of trying to eliminate differences and seeing us all as one, the Incarnational Way affirms the value of sovereignty, boundaries, specificity and diversity. These are seen as sacred engines of creativity, energy and new life. Here is David Spangler speaking from the Incarnational Way perspective as to why we are here:

Another scientific discovery, the hologram, gives rise to yet another important insight: Everything that is part of a larger whole replicates within itself the essence of that larger whole. The whole is contained in the part, even as the part is contained in the whole.

Thus, if God—the cosmic whole—so loved the world and the cosmos that He gave His only son for its salvation, as the Christian tradition states, or if the Ultimate Being so loved the idea and potential of creation that it gave its own self to be the body of a universe, then that act of loving surrender and sacrifice lives in us as well.

We are also giving ourselves to the world, to one another, to the future because we love the world; we are participating in that great sacrifice from which worlds are born and, if necessary, redeemed.

So, we are here on earth in part because of love, because the world has value, and we have value, and we wish to nourish and succor this. We are here because of that unique gift that only each of us can give to the world, each in his or her own way. I cannot love the world for you or sacrifice you for its well-being. Only you can do that for yourself, as only I can do that for myself. Only each of us can give the unique gift of love inherent in our individuality

We are here because the Big Love recognizes our value and knows what we can become, what we can give, what we can do that will bring new life, new vision, new spirit, new love to the world. (Call 24-26)

Chapter Seven: Conclusion

Ultimately all worldviews are a unique universe of one. No two people completely share the same window to the world just as there are no two animals that look and act exactly the same. However, as has been shown, there is a significant difference between a stitched together “Pidgin” approach and a coherent, “Creole” worldview.

Wholeness as manifested by healthy worldviews, ecologies and species usually – perhaps always – takes time to develop. There is an incubation period. The whale did not become a whale the first time a single land dwelling Pakicetid of the Eocene period some 50 million years ago decided to try swimming. Yet paradoxically, wholeness emerges in the blink of an eye once gestation is complete. The explosion of the myriad of new forms of multi-cellular life around 525 million years ago illustrates this fact.

This thesis has attempted to show that the Incarnational Way is just such an emergence of wholeness following an earlier Pidgin period of the intermixing of worldviews and world conditions. It embodies the essential qualities of a candidate whole-view as it seeks to honor human incarnation and all other life as valuable in their own right not just as a means to some other end.

This text has given an overview of an emerging new worldview. Yet, it is impossible to convey with the few words, phrases and processes presented here the depth and breadth and wealth of material of the emerging “Creole” worldview that is the Incarnational Way. In addition, no worldview is truly a living whole-view, a contemporary spirituality capable of informing the 21st century, if it is static and closed to new thoughts, energies, perspectives and

approaches. As a consequence the Incarnational Way continues to emerge. This thesis is only a grainy, black and white snapshot in time of a developing, complex and colorful worldview.

Once again it should be stated that the categories we have been using are just one possible system among many for highlighting the perspectives of the Incarnational way and placing it in context. Other equally valid systems could be used. If I have left out or mischaracterized a practice, religion, spiritual technique, idea, or worldview, I apologize. The world is more complex than these few chapters have made it out to be. Werner Heisenberg was probably right when he said, “Not only is the Universe stranger than we think, it is stranger than we can think.”

Finally and most importantly, at the heart of the Incarnational Way is a profound and personal experience of the dynamic sacredness of life. This life is emerging moment by moment out of an impenetrable mystery yet expressing itself through individuality as its generative, creative and engaged agent. An experience of this phenomenon was triggered from my first encounter with this emerging worldview in 1976.

I experienced through this encounter that the universe is crafted moment by moment by a fountainhead of creativity in which we are all participating all the time. We are literally constantly held and engaged by the generosity and sacredness of the cosmos. We both embody and are in the midst of primal creative energies every moment of our lives. This is analogous to the concept in quantum physics of the Dirac Sea—that particles are constantly emerging from an infinite flux of virtual fecundity. It is not too far from the Buddhist concept of the ceaseless co-arising of perception with the perceived, as well.

In this way, the Incarnational Way offers a dynamic, physical, mental and spiritual experience of our own sacredness – our sovereignty – in loving relationship to an ocean of Sacredness.

The Incarnational Way offers hope for a new culture. The basic practices of this worldview lead to appreciating ourselves and honoring others as living, sentient beings who also share this fountainhead of creative life. Honoring others is the foundation for community and the cornerstone of a more humane civilization.

Fundamentally the problems we face are the consequences of our lack of skill in crafting whole and ecologically healthy, sustainable systems and communities. This is true within ourselves, between humans, between humans and the natural world, and between us and the subtle worlds of spirit. This is what an incarnational practice is designed to do: to consciously engage the process of weaving wholeness and to inspire participation in the generation of spiritual energies at the boundary of our interactions. It is about standing as a focus of blessing.

So often in spiritualities oriented to the transcendent and the mystical, the human body and personality are collectively regarded as the “little boy” in the family whose opinions don’t matter and who needs to be told what to do. This attitude can even be extended to nature so that the physical side of reality may be regarded as “unreal” or “illusory.” A worldview that takes a whole-view attempts to respond to the conditions of our time and change this. It attempts to see all parts of us and all parts of our world as important, valuable, and “real” much as my daughter Chelsea saw the little boy in the restaurant as real and worthy of consulting.

The Incarnational Way offers a fresh experience of our own divinity and the vision of a wonderful new culture based on that experience, but it may be hard to grasp its particular concepts and practices. This confusion may not be unique to this particular worldview; it may always be true when a new whole-view first appears and familiar concepts are restructured and morphed into new roles. The difficulty may also come because this worldview reimagines centuries of religious and spiritual teaching and practices which viewed humanity as flawed,

incapable of generating goodness, needing redemption, or in some other way stuck in the spin cycle of God's dirty laundry. It challenges the idea that "all the good stuff" resides somewhere else: after death, after countless incarnations, with the angels, in the Masters, post initiation, beyond ego, and so forth.

It encourages and empowers individuals to take up the heavy lifting, to learn the skills of crafting a holistic self and culture here and now, and to generate sacredness. It does not wait for a second coming; it requires common everyday people to fill those sandals!

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Brought up as a strict Baptist, Jeremy was steeped in a fundamental religious attitude powered by faith. Drafted into the US Marine Corps he graduated first in his boot camp series, served in Viet Nam and was awarded three purple hearts. As a young salesman, positive thinking and the new thought movement were one of his pursuits. He has studied Eastern thought and practiced meditation for many years.

One of his early influences was Kurt Stanley, a “Master” esoteric teacher, mystic, seer and healer of the Coptic fellowship of America. Subsequently, he lived in a “spiritual” community for four years which was steeped in esoteric thought and the Alice Bailey “Tibetan” material.

Jeremy's co-major in college was psychology and he has studied of Carl Jung extensively. He has had a ring side seat to spiritualist channels, psychics, energy healers, visionaries, and the like for most of his adult life through his affiliation with various metaphysical groups.

He is an avid science reader and tries to keep up on new scientific trends and thinking. He was trained as an architectural designer and holds a patent for a panelized arch structural system. His work in energy efficiency and earth sheltered construction has been well publicized. His professional life led him to be Dean of Jordan College's Energy Institute which specialized in environmental technologies.

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