

Chapter 3

A new look at the old story

“Stick to your story and you’re stuck with it.”

— **Swami Beyondananda**

A STORY ABOUT A STORY

A friend of ours, a psychologist in his mid-50s, found himself in the midst of a family crisis concerning his aging parents. The situation had nothing to do with illness or infirmity. The tumultuous issue was far more unusual. After having been divorced for 50 years, remarried and then widowed, our friend’s parents decided to reconcile their differences. In their mid-80s and in reasonably good health, they reunited and chose to spend whatever time they had left together.

What a great story! So what’s the problem? Simply this: the children from the original family and from the two new families the parents had started were being asked to make a great adjustment. After having heard about acrimony and betrayal all their lives and having made this story their own—and having spent thousands of dollars and years in therapy talking about it—they now had to adjust to their parents’ sudden reversal! The children had to come to grips with the fact that their parents, at a point in their lives when every moment is precious, decided it was more important to share a few years of happiness than to hold on to an old story that no longer served them.

We humans live and die by our stories. We are a meaning-making species, and the meaning we make becomes as important as life itself. Consider what happened back in the late 1930s when Orson Welles broadcast his

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famed radio program “War of the Worlds.” Those who tuned in a few minutes late thought the fictional broadcast was an actual news report informing them that Martians had invaded Earth. The result was mass hysteria and panicky evacuation of neighborhoods. Some people even considered suicide because this change in story was too devastating to handle.

We build our lives on the foundation of our stories. And the more we invest in a story, the more important it becomes to continue investing in that story, even after it’s clear the story no longer works. Consider the Palestinians and Israelis in the Middle East or, until recently, the Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland. Animosity continues because each death or indignity builds the story one story higher.

Many of our stories have been with us for millennia. But what if those supposed truths we learned about the world were wrong? What if we have it backward? What if the struggle we’ve been taught is natural turns out to be the most unnatural thing we could be doing? What if the social darwinists were mistaken? What if cooperation, not competition, is the key to survival?

Today, as the doomsday Clock creeps inexorably toward the Midnight Hour, might it be that our collective story has delivered us to this dangerous precipice? Might we learn something from our friend’s elderly parents who decided their old story could no longer serve them in their remaining precious days?

Now our entire species faces the same choice: your story or your life? Our storied history is filled with familiar tales of war, feuding, exploitation, and mistrust. In front of us, however, is a new story that holds the key to our survival as a species. Do we go down with our old story, or do we wise up and rise up with a new one?

Insanity has been defined as “doing the same thing over and over while expecting different results.” Therefore, we pose a provocative question: what would happen if our insane world went sane?

HOW TO CHOOSE AN “OFFICIAL” TRUTH PROVIDER

To fully understand our current story, how to change it, and why we must change it, we must first look at the history of stories.

Since the dawn of human consciousness, we have sought to answer three perennial questions:

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1. How did we get here?
2. Why are we here?
3. Now that we're here, how do we make the best of it?

Whoever or whatever entity provides the most satisfactory answers to these questions becomes society's "official" truth provider. But from time to time, the privilege of holding that title has changed hands. At certain pivotal points, civilization has faced challenges for which old answers no longer sufficed. At such times, humans reached out for new and more functional explanations of life. Society seems to be at such a time now, on the threshold of adopting a new worldview and yet still stuck in old metaphors and explanations.

Throughout history, people have applied two different descriptors on the nature of human existence: static and dynamic. Static stories show the world as unchanging and cyclical. Often these stories are based on predictable, repeating patterns of Nature and the stars, along with the belief that whatever happened last year or over the last ten thousand years will likely happen again. An icon that best represents the character of a static civilization would be a circle or, better yet, a snake circling back to bite its own tail.

dynamic stories demonstrate progress, based on evolution and learning. History clearly reveals that humans profoundly changed behavior when they encountered new information and experiences. Our ancestors discovered fire, made tools, invented the wheel, learned to hunt and plant seeds, created weapons, and built dwellings. In the past one hundred years, technological innovations have not only changed our lives, they've impacted every species on the planet. An iconic image for a dynamic human existence would be a moving arrow as a vector of progress or, better yet, a zooming rocket.

So which story is true? do we live in a cyclical, ever-repeating pattern? Or do we evolve and grow? The answer is yes. And yes. Both situations occur simultaneously.

Aboriginal people and those who live close to the land survive by maintaining harmony with the cycles of Nature. Living in balance provides for survival but does not encourage or, for that matter, require technological progress.

However, Western civilization and a growing number of Asian nations have been preoccupied with the arrow of progress. Unfortunately, the glamour of technology has eclipsed humanity's connection with Nature,

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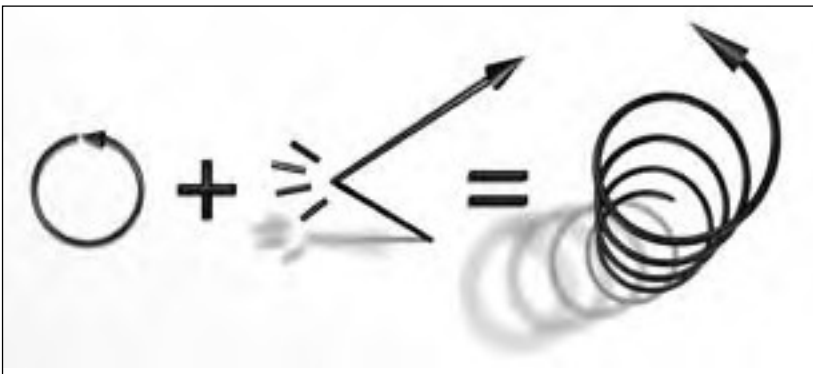
and the pursuit of technological advancement has contributed to disharmony, imbalance, and global crises. Our arrow of progress has become an out-of-control rocket careening from one catastrophe to the next.

To survive—and thrive—must we make a choice between static and dynamic, between wheatgrass and cell phones? Fortunately, we need not answer with an either-or response. Rather, we can choose a both-and solution.

For one thing, life wouldn't exist without technology. As cellular communities evolved from free-living individual cells to form closely packed, social, multicellular organisms, technology became an evolutionary mandate. To build and operate these massive bodies, cells developed the necessary technology to create lightweight structural supports (bones), cables of steel-like collagen (connective tissue), malleable, moldable reinforcement materials (fibrocartilage), and hundreds of other biological innovations.

What makes those technological structures so amazing is that they are not found *in* the cells, but were created *by* cells and assembled in their environment through purposeful cellular interactions. So let's show some respect for technology! Without it, we might not be here.

Clearly, the nature of Nature is two-fold—to simultaneously change while staying the same. So, what happens when we combine static patterns with dynamic evolution? Simply morph a circle, representing cyclical existence, with a vector, symbolizing directional progress, and voilà: we end up with a universe-friendly *spiral of evolution*. Uniting the principles of harmony and balance with the principles of technological evolution leads to a self-sustaining and thriving civilization.



The circle represents cyclical existence, harmony, and balance. The vector symbolizes directional progress and technological evolution. Combined, they create a universe-friendly spiral of evolution toward a self-sustaining and thriving civilization.

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However, be forewarned; such a solution requires rewriting basic beliefs that underlie our present culture. Fortunately, we have precedent to aid us; this will not be the first time that new thought has changed the course of humanity. In the last 8,000 years, Western civilization has rewritten its mission statement four times, each time precipitating an historic social upheaval.

BASAL PARADIGMS: A SHORT HISTORY OF STORY

Archaeologists and historians reveal that civilizations around the world have experienced four *basal paradigms*, that is, agreed-upon explanations for existence: *animism*, *polytheism*, *monotheism*, and *materialism*. As each stage reached the limits of its understanding and influence, an evolution occurred in which a new stage emerged that both refuted the previous paradigm and also retained vestiges either as an integrated understanding or as an isolated hold out.

The character and fate of each version of civilization is predicated on how people perceive their existence in relationship with the cosmos. From the dawn of civilization, humans have subdivided the Universe into two polarized domains—the material realm and the nonmaterial realm. The material realm represents the physical universe and is comprised of matter. The nonmaterial realm represents invisible forces that the ancients referred to as spirit and today’s scientists call *energy fields*. Both modern scientists and the ancient mystics agree that nonmaterial forces greatly influence our human experience. Our discussion treats energy fields and spirits as interchangeable terms.

The four basal paradigms that shape each phase of civilization define that culture’s relationship with the material and nonmaterial realms. Some cultures recognize the spiritual realm as the most important factor controlling the character of life on Earth, while others emphasize the material realm as primal in shaping the Universe. Some civilizations believe that both realms are causative factors in determining life’s experiences. Plotting a timeline of Western civilization’s evolution on a chart to measure society’s perceived relationship with the cosmos offers amazing insight into the evolution and future of humanity.

We use the following illustration to trace a civilization’s beliefs in regard to their perceived relationship with the spiritual and material realms. In Figure A, the realms are designated as separate elements. Figure B.

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is a more realistic expression in which beliefs that emphasize the material or spiritual realms are presented as overlapping gradients that range from 100 percent belief in the primacy of spirituality to 100 percent belief in the primacy of material reality. The horizontal midline represents a balance of 50 percent emphasis on the material and 50 percent emphasis on the spiritual.



Figure A: Spirit represents the nonmaterial spiritual realm. Matter represents the material physical realm.

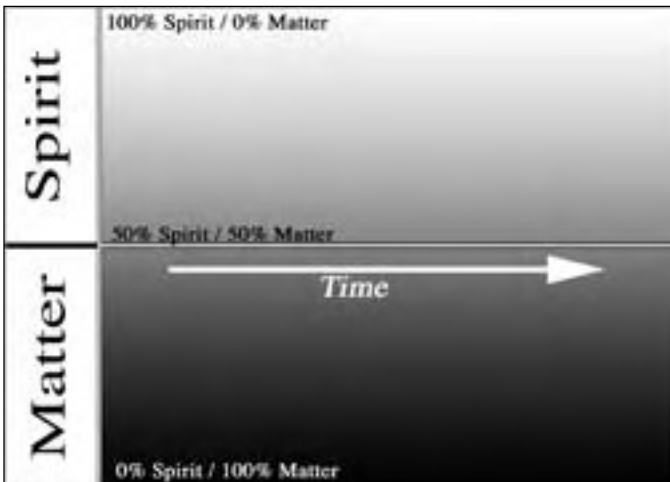


Figure B: In reality, Spirit and Matter overlap, creating a continuum between 100% Spirit / 0% Matter and 0% Spirit / 100% Matter.

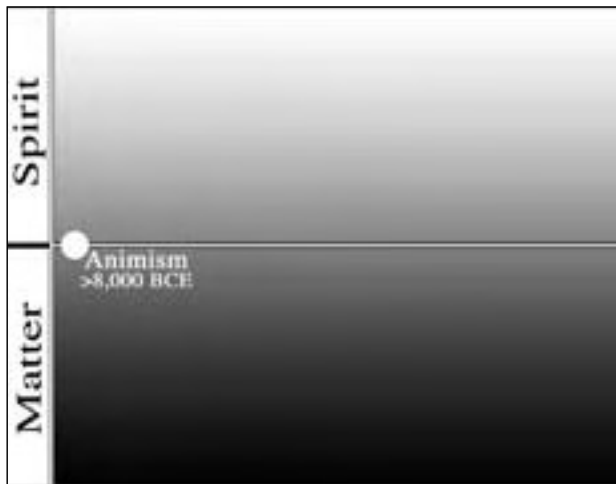
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The midline in Figure B represents the arrow of advancing time along which we will plot the path of civilization's evolution. An accelerating succession from one basal paradigm to the next through history reveals that humanity is evolving at an exponential rate. Passage through one level of awareness provides a deeper understanding that facilitates a more rapid evolution into and through the next level of awareness. As we shall see by adding dates to this timeline, time is truly speeding up.

All indications are that civilization is now on the brink of evolving into its fifth basal paradigm. But before we go there, let's take a look at where we've been.

ANIMISM: MAKE ME ONE WITH EVERYTHING

Animism is, perhaps, the most ancient religious practice and is believed to have had its origins among primitive cultures in the Neolithic, or Stone Age, around 8000 .e. It is founded on the belief that the spirit is universal, existing in all things—animate or inanimate. Because animism represents a culture based upon a perfect balance between the material and spiritual realms, we have placed it on the figure's midline.



During the Animism period, the prevailing paradigm was the inherent balance between Spirit and Matter.

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derived from the word *anima*, which is Latin for “breath” or “soul,” animism is the spiritual experience of the Garden of Eden wherein there is no distinction between the self and the environment. Everything—rain, sky, rocks, trees, animals, and, of course, humans—possesses an intangible spirit. And, while every piece of Nature experiences a single spirit, all of the world’s spirits are collectively part of a whole.

Lest we imagine that the Garden of Eden is an invention of the Judeo-Christian religious tradition, mythologist Joseph Campbell observes that some version of this story is universal to all human cultures. The universality of this myth indicates a commonly held primal memory of our connection with all that is.

Animism still exists in a few places among indigenous people. For Australian Aborigine, the spiritual realm is their true reality. What appears to be life in the physical realm is, quite literally, perceived as a waking dream state. Thus, the veil between this world and the next, between matter in the material realm and invisible forces in the spiritual realm, is indeed thin. To some ancient peoples, time itself doesn’t really exist and every moment is just another now.

Animism offers these answers to the perennial questions:

1. How did we get here?
We are children of Mother Earth (material realm) and Father Sky (spiritual realm).
2. Why are we here?
To tend the Garden and thrive.
3. Now that we are here, how do we make the best of it?
By living in balance with Nature.

Animism is, perhaps, the closest that humankind has come to balancing its emphasis on spirit and matter since the Garden of Eden. during the paradigm of animism, harmony prevailed between the invisible spiritual realm and the visible material realm. Everything was one with the same One. If life were only static and cyclical in nature, we would still be in the Garden, fully integrated in and virtually indistinguishable from our surroundings, wearing a fig leaf or less. People would be like all of the other animals in what would amount to a great global petting zoo.

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But some power or incentive, perhaps innate human curiosity, sent our ancient ancestors on a path outside the idyllic Garden so that we, as a species, could observe, evolve, and become knowledgeable in the world. What theology subsequently ascribed as our downfall from the grace of innocence or our separation from God was, in reality, an “up-wising” that has motivated humanity’s evolution through our quest for understanding and awareness.

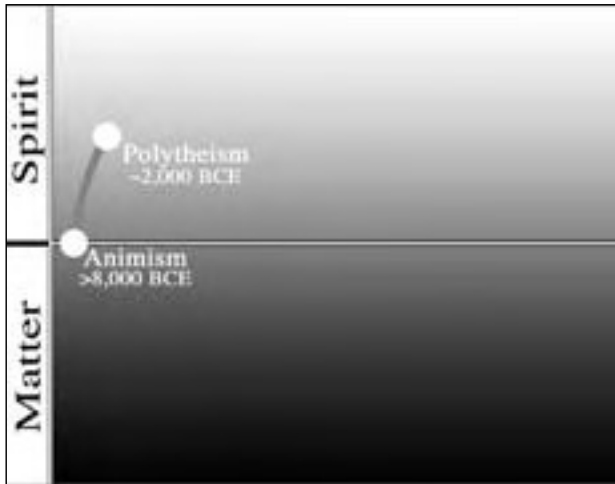
With one bite of the Apple of Knowledge, Earth shook, the unity of the Garden was fractured, and civilization set out on a path to experience the separate realms of spirit and matter. However, there was a significant fly in the ointment: in order to act as observers of the world, our ancestors had to stand outside and look in. This perspective significantly changed their relationship with Nature. All of a sudden, the Universe was subdivided into *me* and *not me*. And somehow, all those forces that had become part of *not me* had to be mollified lest *me* and *others like me* be victimized by the very forces *me and we* once saw as being in balanced harmony; that is, *one*, with all.

POLYTHEISM: THE FIRST SPIRITUAL SUBDIVISION

As humans began to emphasize the difference between me and not me, the unity of the Garden’s oneness gave way to “spiritual subdivision.” Untethered from the physical world, the spiritual realm took on an energy of its own.

Polytheism came into prominence around 2000.c.e. when society disconnected from the oneness of animism through the introduction of a multitude of spiritual deities. In separating spirit from matter, polytheists coalesced the spiritual realm into a variety of iconic gods representing Nature’s elements. And wouldn’t you know, each of those deities demanded that they be honored with special rituals and ceremonies in order to ensure humankind’s continued health and well-being. In seeking the answers to life’s mysteries in the spiritual realm, polytheists began to disconnect from Nature.

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With the advent of polytheism, the prevailing paradigm began to shift into the Spirit realm.

The culmination of the polytheistic epoch came when the Greek gods and goddesses, who exhibited human and superhuman qualities, decided to live in crystal mansions atop Mount Olympus, from which they “commuted,” often masquerading in various disguises. As a result, real people never knew if some person or creature was, in reality, a god.

The implications were weighty: fooling around with fickle gods could lead to disaster. Therefore, the message was simple: live in harmony as if everyone and everything were god because the last thing you’d ever want to do was get on the wrong side of an entity who would later get the last laugh by making you roll a boulder uphill every day for eternity.

Polytheists offered new answers to the perennial questions:

1. How did we get here?
We came from chaos.
2. Why are we here?
To please the whimsy of mischievous gods.
3. Now that we are here, how do we make the best of it?
Don’t anger the gods.

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Seeking explanations for what primitive people took for granted, persons living during the paradigm of polytheism birthed the first philosophers. Greek thought evolved into two distinct and mutually exclusive points of view.

The first, popularized by democritus (460-370 c.e.), suggested the primacy of matter. democritus coined the word *atom*, which means “uncuttable.” He surmised that invisible and irreducible atoms, the smallest bits of material reality, were at the core of every physical structure and that the Universe consisted of atoms suspended in a void. To democritus and his followers, the only thing that mattered was *matter*. In other words, what you see is all there is.

In contrast, Socrates (470-399 e.c.) offered a philosophy with a vastly different point of view. He perceived the nature of the Universe as a duality. On one hand, there was a nonmaterial realm in which thoughts take on *form*. The more common term for form, as used by Socrates, was *soul*. He also said that forms in the non-physical world were perfect, while the tangible material realm represented an approximation or a “crude shadow” of perfect forms. For example, a person could imagine a perfect chair, but the constructed chair would, at best, only approximate the perfection of the original thought.

As polytheism matured, the Greeks allowed both democritic and Socratic points of view to coexist.

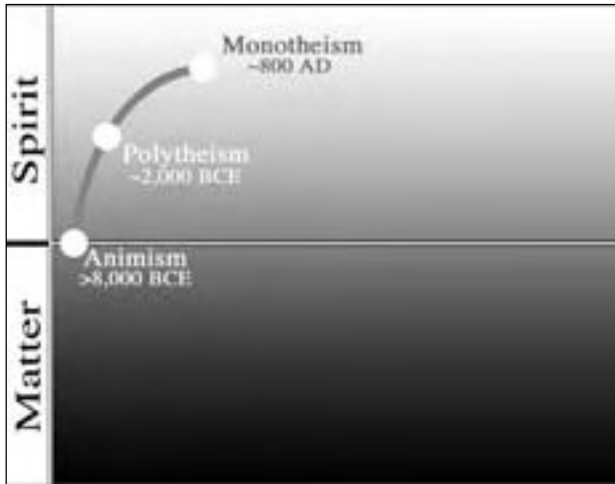
MONOTHEISM: GOD DOESN'T LIVE HERE ANYMORE

After watching the gods cavort and wreak havoc for a few millennia, it was time to once again move the story along the path of evolution and deeper into the spiritual realm.

Just as children of a certain age begin to sense a need for order and discipline, the search for spiritual understanding led to monotheism and belief in an omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent One God who dictates the rules for all. Not only was this God completely out of this world, but He promised us a cushy place out of this world as well, so long as we lived according to His rules—at least those presented by His holy missionaries here on Earth.

While the minority population of Hebrews in the Middle East had been worshipping one God for 2,000 years, Christianity advanced monotheism, with its belief in a single, all-encompassing God as the dominant theological paradigm of the Western world.

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Monotheism took the prevailing paradigm deep into the Spirit realm.

In the first millennium after Christ, the rise of the Church of Rome provided a wonderful example of how a new stage of civilization can subsume and restructure vestiges held over from a former society. Many idols and feasts from the preceding pagan Roman civilization experienced extreme makeovers and returned as Christian icons and festivals.

Under the auspices of Albertus Magnus and his student Thomas Aquinas, the Church revamped the 1,500-year-old version of science and philosophy handed down from the Golden Age of Greece. They winnowed out objectionable polytheistic rhetoric and modified the contents so as to reconcile them with Old and New Testament. Through his synthesis of Christian and Aristotelian philosophy, Aquinas created *Natural Theology*, a belief system that strove to understand God through a study of Nature.

The Judeo-Christian Church was particularly drawn to Socrates' notion of a dualistic universe and his concept of a perfect form or soul. The Church taught that the imperfect life in this crude shadow of the material realm, Earth, represents what modern visionary activist Caroline Casey called a "spiritual hardship post." The planet is merely a stage to live out morality plays, a way station on the path to perfection in the invisible Kingdom of Heaven. This last-shall-be-first, suffer-now-and-party-later selling point made an otherwise intolerable *this life*—in the service of opulent higher-ups—a stepping-stone to a blissful *afterlife* for the soul.

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Simply stated, monotheism represented a full emphasis on the spiritual realm while the material world was linked with damnation. Therefore, while living in the monotheistic paradigm, civilization became solely invested in the spiritual realm and soared to its maximum deviation from the balance point at the midline of the timeline. Humankind became so focused on the promised life out of this world that life became out of balance in this world.

A philosophical difference between polytheism and the new monotheistic paradigm was the location and accessibility of the divine Powers. While the Greek gods lived on Mount Olympus, the new Christian God had an unpublished address somewhere in the High Heavens.

Being above it all, this One God naturally needed a chain of command, from the hierarchy all the way to the “lowerarchy.” Now that we humans were fully separated from the Creator, mere mortals needed priests to serve as intermediaries. Missionaries enhanced the Church’s power and their personal prowess by traveling the world converting animistic primitives who were already communing with their creator with their every breath and doing it very well, thank you.

Monotheists answered the three perennial questions this way:

1. How did we get here?
Divine intervention.
2. Why are we here?
To live out morality plays.
3. Now that we are here, how do we make the best of it?
Obey the Scriptures—or else.

While asserting that life was short and brutal, the Church was making a very compelling offer: do as we say and you, too, will be able to enter the Pearly Gates to an afterlife with the one and only God. Their marketing plan was direct and highly effective: Buy our product; get to Heaven. don’t buy our product; go straight to Hell.

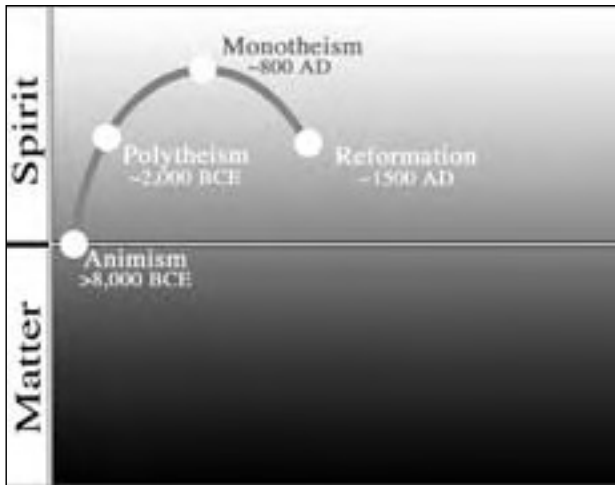
But along with the religious hierarchy came lots of rules, not to mention torture and repression in the name of Father God. And with self-proclaimed infallibility came absolute knowledge. Given that knowledge is power, absolute knowledge is absolute power. Therefore, questioning the Church’s claim of infallibility was deemed to be heresy, punishable

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by death, which gave incredible power to the Church's unchallengeable authority.

The Church became so preoccupied with its absolute knowledge, so corrupted by its absolute power that it began to unravel itself, and the Church eventually fell from its lofty position as civilization's prime arbiter of truth.

A key event in the fall of the Church's dominion occurred in 1517 when Martin Luther, a German monk and teacher, protested the Church's sale of indulgences, which were get-out-of-Hell-free passes for the more well-to-do sinners. Luther's challenge precipitated the Protestant Reformation, and, in its wake, the reach of the infallible Church began to recede. Bolstered by the contributions of Descartes, Bacon, and Newton, among others, humankind's evolutionary path began to move away from its preoccupation with the spiritual realm as science began to unveil the mysteries of the physical Universe.



The Reformation marked the first change in direction as the prevailing paradigm began to shift back toward the balance point between Spirit and Matter.

DEISM: A FLASH OF LIGHT

By the late 17th and 18th centuries, humanity's evolutionary path was leading civilization toward the powerful midpoint where it would reflect a balance between spirit and matter. Western civilization was, at

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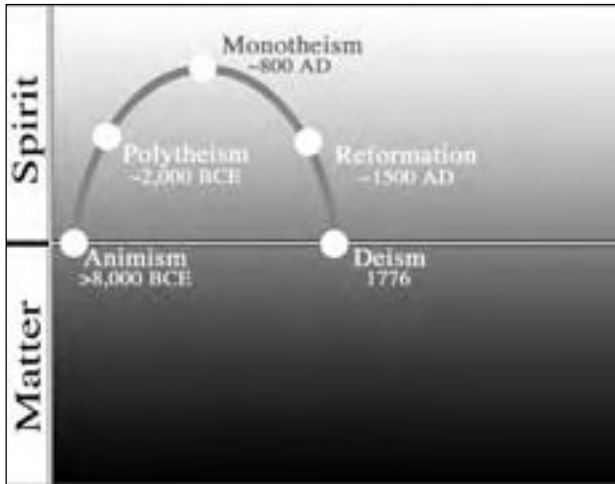
the time, experiencing the Age of Enlightenment, a European intellectual movement that emphasizes reason and individualism rather than monotheistic religious tradition. Enlightenment philosophy acknowledged that God and Nature were one and the same and that, through a scientific understanding of Nature, people would learn to live in harmony with God.

Interestingly, the balancing of spirit and matter that marked Enlightenment philosophy was actually derived from studies of the animistic culture of the American Indians by French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Rousseau's idealized description of the Native Americans as noble savages who symbolized the innate goodness of humanity, free from the corrupting influence of civilization, launched a wave of European immigration to the newly formed American colonies.

Many of the Founding Fathers were deists, practitioners of Enlightenment philosophy who accepted the existence of a Supreme Being but rejected belief in a supernatural deity who interacts with humankind. They based their beliefs on what they called "natural law and reason." Like the animists 8,000 years prior, deists honored their relationship, with both the material and nonmaterial realms of Nature.

Steeped in deist philosophy with elements directly derived from Native American society, the U.S. declaration of Independence and Constitution represented an exquisite balance between deep spiritual truth and the physical principles of an elegant material Universe. The auspicious event that marked civilization's return to spiritual-material balance was the founding of the United States of America.

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The Deistic period marked a brief moment when Spirit and Matter were again in balanced harmony. This balance didn't last long, but it did foreshadow that it is possible to reattain evolutionary balance.

However, the arrow of time never stands still, so the path of evolution continued, passing through the midpoint as it progressed into the uncharted realm of matter—away from otherworldliness to this worldliness.

As civilization transitioned deeper into the physical realm, science's intensified exploration of the material Universe resulted in awareness and technologies that provided a better physical life than anyone up until that time could imagine. How does one compare the reported miracle of Jesus turning water into wine to the marvels of a steam engine trip to the Orient or a vaccine to prevent the ravages of smallpox? And yet, in spite of all of its technological miracles, modern science during the Age of Enlightenment was not yet in position to vie for the title of civilization's "official" truth provider.

Simply, science was unable to offer a better truth for our origins than provided by the Bible, which meant that the truths of science played second fiddle to the accepted truths of the Church.

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SCIENTIFIC MATERIALISM: MATTER MATTERS

Monotheism was based solely on faith. But philosophers and scientists, such as Sir Francis Bacon and Sir Isaac Newton, offered humans an opportunity to question dogma and seek answers for themselves. For people of that era, scientific truths were predicated on mathematical certainty and predictability, and technological miracles would become the foundation of the new industrial revolution.

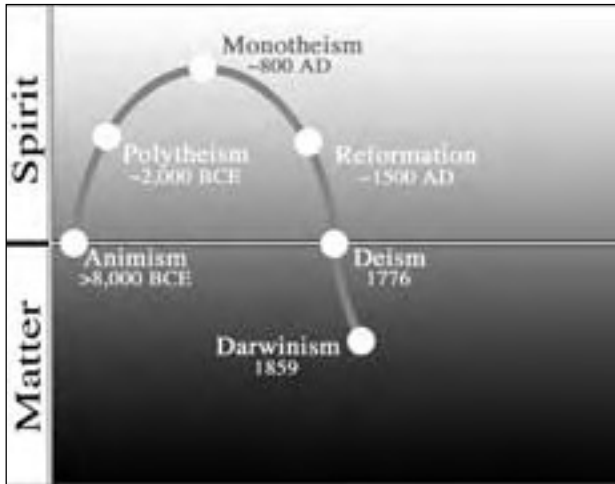
Meanwhile, the Church desperately tried to retain control of knowledge, suppressing creative thinkers with the threat of an invitation to the Holy Office of Inquisition, the consequences of which were an unusually effective incentive to help people “think correctly.”

The Church also limited the quest for knowledge by making many topics off limits, discouraging curious budding scientists who wanted to know more about the world. For example, the Church claimed that the human body was a restricted domain, a “Mystery of God” for His eyes only and to peer inside was a sin. Christians were not allowed to be physicians because of the intellectual prohibition against studying the body’s internal workings. The practice of medicine was, therefore, a trade restricted to Jews, Muslims, and those the Church considered to be non-believers. But, in spite of the Church’s decrees regarding human biology, scientists forged ahead in other fields.

Philosopher and mathematician Rene descartes, then later Isaac Newton, postulated that the Universe was a machine. Newton’s principles of mathematics extrapolated the precision of gears in a clock onto the solar system. While the new science did not deny that God might have been the original watchmaker, once the “world watch” was wound up, it was running pretty well solely on mathematics.

In a world where science ruled, God was so far off the planet that His work operated without him. The subsequent industrial revolution and technological inventions further nudged God out of the picture. Who needs God when we humans can make our own technological miracles?

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Darwinism marked the prevailing paradigm's shift into the realm of Matter.

It wasn't until English naturalist Charles Darwin arrived on the scene in the mid-19th century that scientific materialism became civilization's dominant paradigm. Remember, a basal paradigm story has to answer all three perennial questions. Until Darwin postulated his *The Origin of Species*, science wasn't able to offer an adequate explanation for the question, "How did we get here?" Darwin's theory of origins proposed that humans were derived from a primitive life form through millions of years of hereditary variations shaped by a never-ending struggle to survive. The people of the 19th century readily accepted Darwinian theory because they were quite familiar with the consequences of plant and animal breeding.

Once the theory of evolution was accepted as a scientific fact, civilization quickly dropped the Church as its supreme authority and adopted scientific materialism, with its materialist worldview of science, as the "official" truth provider.

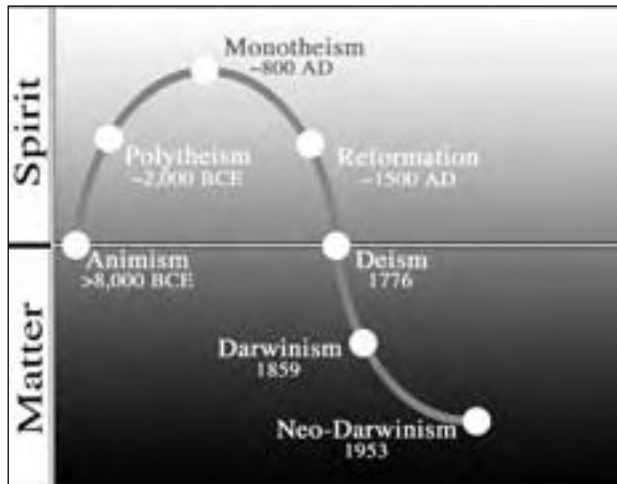
Materialists answered the three perennial questions this way:

1. How did we get here?
Random acts of heredity.
2. Why are we here?
To go forth and multiply.
3. Now that we are here, how do we make the best of it?
To live by the law of the jungle.

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And there we have it—a rapid descent from the laws of Scripture to the law of the jungle. With honing, the double-edged sword of materialism has provided us with comforts of technology that would have been unimaginable to our ancestors; simply put, civilization traded one absolute authority for another. In light of science’s perceived miracles, the dogmatic religion of monotheism gave way to the dogmatic religion of scientific materialism, or scientism. For science, the material world is all there is and anything that doesn’t fit into that ideological package is branded as heresy.

Like an adolescent asserting independence for the first time, we humans even began to imagine that we could understand the mechanics of a matter-based Universe and, hence, unlock all the secrets of life. Civilization’s path hit the extreme deviation toward the material realm in 1953 when molecular biologists James Watson and Francis Crick declared they had uncovered the ultimate secret of biology with their discovery of the dNA double helix. In defining the nature of the cell’s genesis elements, Watson and Crick identified the material origins of life.



Neo-Darwinism took the prevailing paradigm deep into the realm of Matter.

THE TIDE HAS TURNED

Well, what goes up must come down, and we humans have been suffering a “come-downance” ever since. Over the past 50 years, deified technology has generated unimaginable negative reverberations.

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In Walt Disney's *Fantasia*, Mickey Mouse plays the role of the Sorcerer's Apprentice who attempts to re-create the sorcerer's magic with neither the knowledge nor the wisdom his master possesses. The result is disastrous, as Mickey is unable to control the power he has unleashed. Similarly, modern civilization has activated the power of technology while operating from a limited Mickey Mouse consciousness. Consequently, the same matter-based medicine that gave us penicillin, the polio vaccine, and open-heart surgery—without the countervailing understanding of the invisible realm—has become a leading cause of death in Western societies.

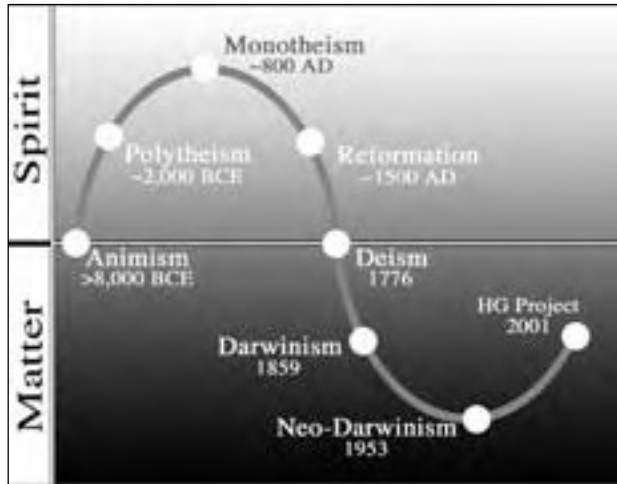
In a last ditch effort to capitalize on the culture of scientific materialism, venture capitalists convinced scientists and the public to invest in the Human Genome Project (HGP). This project was designed to identify and patent each of the 150,000 genes that neo-darwinian molecular biologists theorized were necessary to create a human being.

However, the completion of the HGP in 2001 revealed the human genome consists of only approximately 23,000 genes. The missing 125,000 genes glaringly reveal that the neo-darwinian belief in a genetically programmed biology is fundamentally flawed.

Creating a health-care system based on this flaw, in conjunction with other fundamental misperceptions to be described later, has limited advances in health care and is directly responsible for allopathic medicine's decreased effectiveness and increased costs. The public's dissatisfaction with the current state of allopathic care is reflected in the fact that nearly half the population of the United States has sought relief through complementary medicine modalities.

Interestingly, most alternative healing practices emphasize the role of invisible energy fields in shaping the character of human life. The figure below shows civilization's trend away from materialism and toward balance with the realm of invisible sources, the realm of spirit.

a n e w l o o k a t t h e o l d s t o r y



The Human Genome Project, while still an endeavor of Matter, was a key point in the prevailing paradigm's shift back toward the balance point.

A new science has arisen to replace the erroneous belief that genes are masters of our fate. The new-edge science of epigenetics recognizes that an organism's biology and genetic activity are directly influenced by their interaction with the environment. Rather than being victims of our genes, epigenetic science reveals, that by controlling our environment, we have the power to control our biology and become masters of our fate.

The good news in the bad news is that society's evolutionary path is rapidly returning to the powerful midpoint and not a moment too soon. Each day reveals a new lesson about how our unbalanced preoccupation with materialism is threatening life on this planet. Thankfully, we seem to be on a quickening learning curve. But if we are to move beyond the unconscious rollercoaster ride of the sine wave, we must become fully conscious and aware that what we need now is not more spiritual-material polarization, but instead harmonizing integration.

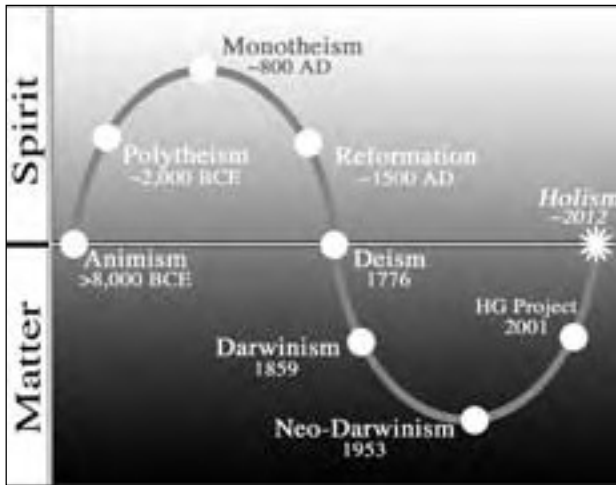
The resurgence of religious fundamentalism, particularly the obsession with the rapture and other off-planet rewards, seems to indicate there is a collective knowing that we humans are cruising "fool speed ahead" down the road to destruction. Neither the black-cloaked priests nor the white-coated scientists can help us right now—at least not within the confines of existing belief systems. Both monotheism and scientism

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have essentially disconnected humans from Nature. Religious fundamentalism holds humans above the rest of creation, instead of being part of it. Scientific materialism tells us that the miracle of life was merely an accident that resulted from a random roll of genetic dice.

THE STORY BEHIND THE STORY

Are you beginning to see why we need a new story? The old stories keep us powerless, at the mercy of either a distant God or random genetic events. They steal our attention and energy by polarizing the population to adopt untenable positions rather than enabling us to move forward. Must we deviate once again? Or will we cultivate unity and coherence that will allow us to take an emergent step forward when, in the near future, the path of evolution once again brings civilization to the powerful midpoint of balanced spirituality and materiality?



With holism, which is the forecasted result of the pending spontaneous evolution, the prevailing paradigm will, once again, be balanced between Spirit and Matter, drawing upon the best and most powerful attributes of each.

At a time when persistent archaic patterns are fueling the dueling dualities, it would be wise to remember what quantum physicists tell us about the nature of physical existence: behind every particle, there's a

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wave telling the particle what to do. Just as animists and deists understood that spirit and matter must fully coexist, we are being challenged to move past either-or and to recognize both-and. It's like those beer commercials: Great taste *and* less filling. Spirit *and* matter. Wave *and* particle. You *and* me *and* all the others, too.

Consider the story of life itself. Life came into existence at the mid-point, or zero-point, where both waves of energy and particulate matter were fully present. For billions of years, energy from the sun hit the particles of matter that comprise *Mater*, our Mother Earth. The energy from those light waves merged with Earth's inorganic chemistry through a process called photosynthesis. The composite of light waves and chemical particles generated *organic chemistry*, the chemistry of living organisms. Through *photosynthesis*, the energy of sunlight enlivened inert matter. So life, indeed, began with light from the sky fusing with the physical matter of Earth! Can you see where Native American animists generated the concept of Father Sky and Mother Earth?

In a similar fashion, the sperm cell, which is essentially designed as a means of delivering genes, carries only information. In that capacity, sperm function is the equivalent of the wave that fuses with the physical matter in the mother's egg. Once again, in the Universe's amazing web of integrated self-similar patterns, life is created. From information and matter emerges a new life, something that cannot be predicted by studying the egg and the sperm as separate entities. Is it possible that by integrating the opposites of spirit and matter, energy and particle, masculine and feminine, we can create an emergent human society, one never-before seen, whose expression is completely unpredictable by studying what we have and who we are now?

The notion of an emergent humanity may seem like a pie-in-the-sky ideal, but consider the alternative. We are being forced into a situation wherein we either evolve or die. Which would you prefer? And, as we will see in Part II, *Four Myth-Perceptions of the Apocalypse*, our personal preferences exert a lot more control over our reality than we have, so far, imagined. Consequently, what we choose to prefer might actually make a difference in the fate of humanity.

Unlike our deistic forebears, the battle we face now is not against some external king, but rather against our own internal conscious and unconscious limitations, against our distorted misperception of human nature and human potential. We are at war with the out-picturing of our own fears and habitual defenses against things that might not even exist

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anymore. The sad joke is that most of us are “remotely controlled” by the beliefs and limitations of people who have lived in the past, and we don’t even know it!

When a baby elephant is being trained, its leg is tied to a post with a strong rope. No matter how hard and how long the baby elephant pulls, there is no budging the post. The elephant ultimately comes to associate the rope with an all-powerful, immovable force. When the elephant becomes an adult, simply placing a rope around its leg causes it to stay put because it has already resigned itself to the all-powerfulness of the rope. Even though the adult elephant has the strength to break any rope or uproot nearly any post, the belief of limitation it acquired from past programming in its youth keeps the elephant immobile and docile.

In that light, we might ask: “Which stories and beliefs are keeping us unconsciously tethered, disempowered, and thwarted from expressing our true abilities? Are we limited by unquestioned beliefs about original sin or the meaninglessness of the Universe? despite our moral guidance, are we secretly afraid that maybe might does make right? Have we resigned ourselves to the pervasive belief that there will always be warfare and poverty, and that’s just the way the world is?”

Well, tell that to Mahatma Gandhi. Or Martin Luther King, Jr. Or, better yet, to Washington, Jefferson, and Franklin. Because, as we will see in the next chapter, the unfinished business of America’s Founding Fathers may very well hold the key to our next evolutionary stage.

Just as they founded the United States of America on what they called “natural law,” perhaps what is needed now is an updated natural law through which we live by our higher nature as cells in the body of Mother Earth *and* in the spirit energy of the eternal Universe.

That new direction may be our return ticket to the Garden, but this time, we will return as conscious gardeners, co-creating ever more beautiful, functional, and loving expressions of life.

Endnotes

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