

# Introduction

## *Disenchantment and Integrative Postmodernism*

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This issue of *Archai* is concerned, in broad terms, with the rise of the disenchanted world view in the modern era and the possible significance of archetypal cosmology for moving beyond it.

### **Disenchantment and Desacralization**

*Disenchantment* is a term employed by Max Weber to describe the world view of modern secular society in which, as he puts it, “no mysterious incalculable forces come into play”—a world view in which recourse to mysticism, supernatural powers, gods and goddesses, spirits, and magical explanations is considered both unnecessary and invalid.<sup>1</sup> This disenchanted vision, which gained ascendancy in Western civilization after the Enlightenment and especially during the nineteenth century, was created, Weber observes, by processes of “rationalization” according to which life was to be explained in terms of observable and measurable natural forces. Scientific knowledge increasingly replaced religious belief such that the world, no longer related to a spiritual principle of any kind, was stripped of intrinsic meaning; it was no longer seen as sacred.<sup>2</sup>

Richard Tarnas, in agreement with Charles Taylor, connects disenchantment to the process of *objectification*, by which the external world was viewed not as a meaningful subject, possessing intentionality, interiority, and *telos*, but as an object—as unconscious, lifeless matter

moved mechanistically by material forces, that could be measured, controlled, and manipulated. During the modern era, Tarnas points out, the locus of all meaning in the world shifted exclusively to the interior realm of human consciousness. The world itself was conceived as possessing no meaning save for that projected onto it by the human psyche. As he explains:

Disenchantment, the denial of intrinsic meaning and purpose, essentially objectifies the world and thereby denies subjectivity to the world. Objectification denies to the world a subject's capacity to intend, to signify intelligently, to express its meaning, to embody and communicate humanly relevant purposes and values. . . . This in turn tremendously magnifies and empowers human subjectivity: the felt interior capacity of the human being to be self-defining, self-revising, self-determining.<sup>3</sup>

Mircea Eliade, describing a process he calls *desacralization*, gives a similar assessment, explicitly connecting the rise of the sense of freedom and empowered subjectivity of the modern human with the denial of any transcendent spiritual agency:

Modern nonreligious man assumes a new existential situation. He regards himself solely as the subject and agent of history, and he refuses all appeal to transcendence. . . . Man makes himself, and he only makes himself completely in proportion as he desacralizes himself with the whole. The sacred is the prime obstacle to his freedom.<sup>4</sup>

Another term—*demythologization*—has similar connotations, referring explicitly to the process by which mythic elements were removed from explanations of the origin, purpose, and functioning of the world.<sup>5</sup> With the rise of science and rational philosophy, myths were no longer seen as true in any sense, but as fictions and falsehoods or as primitive forms of explanation now superseded by scientific knowledge—a view, of course, that still holds sway today. This Enlightenment view of myth, as it is known, is reflected in the *total demythologization* that has occurred over the last two hundred years.

## Astrology's Place in Modern Thought

Astrology's fall into disrepute in the modern era is a direct consequence of the rise of the disenchanted world view. In the ancient civilizations of Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece, and Rome, and through the medieval and early modern periods of Western civilization, astrology existed harmoniously with the cosmology and world picture of the time and, as a result, was generally held in high esteem. In the late modern era, however, with the rise of materialism and mechanistic science, astrology has become marginalized and is no longer central to, or even compatible with, the prevailing conceptions of the nature of reality. Following the discrediting of the geocentric Aristotelian and Ptolemaic cosmology, astrology has failed to enjoy the support of the dominant scientific and philosophical models of the time. Without such support, and with the eventual rejection of all forms of esoteric and supernatural explanations of phenomena after the Enlightenment, astrology has been driven to the periphery of contemporary culture.

Consequently, although astrology remains of historical and cultural interest to scholars, to date it has failed to reestablish itself within academia as a viable cosmological perspective informing the modern world view, having no place in contemporary science, philosophy, or psychology. Deemed a pseudoscience and irrational superstition by some within the academic establishment, the consensus view is that astrology is based on unscientific and erroneous premises, and that its continued existence serves only to demonstrate human gullibility. While this view is partly attributable to the superficial forms of astrology that have become prominent in contemporary culture, it is also, at a deeper level, a consequence of the incongruence between the premises and implications of an astrological world view and the dominant scientific paradigms of our time.

Contrary to the modern disenchanted assumption that we inhabit a world without spirit and without meaning, the astrological perspective points to a meaningful order of creative power and intelligence permeating all things. Directly challenging much of what scientific materialism and secular consumerist society have assumed to be true about the nature of reality, astrology provides an alternative frame of reference from which to make sense of human experience, revealing an archetypal dimension of reality, which the physical sciences for all their

extraordinary powers of telescopic and microscopic observation have been unable to disclose. Astrology offers a unique way of interpreting how human experience is shaped by the patterning forces of the universe, by the fundamental energies of nature, and by the archetypal themes that have shaped human life for millennia—and here lies its great value.

## **A Changing Context: The New Science, Depth Psychology, and Postmodernism**

While attempts to accommodate astrology into the dominant paradigm of modern science have been unsuccessful (for reasons addressed in this issue), the emergence of the so-called *new paradigm* perspectives—in physics, biology, psychology, and elsewhere—is slowly bringing forth a new understanding of the nature of the cosmos and of the human psyche that might complement or perhaps even replace the modern world picture. Considered alongside the body of research into archetypal correlations presented in Richard Tarnas's *Cosmos and Psyche* and in the *Archai* journal, this paradigmatic shift makes possible a reevaluation and a reinterpretation of astrology as a core component of a new archetypal cosmology.

The background context to the emergence of the field of archetypal cosmology is the dramatic transformation in the understanding of the nature of reality emerging out of relativity theory and quantum theory in physics during the last century. As is well known, these revolutionary developments cast serious doubts over the most basic assumptions on which classical physics and mechanistic determinism are founded and caused an acute sense of crisis among physicists at that time. Instead of a conception of the universe in which inert material particles existing in empty space are moved mechanistically by external forces according to the laws of Newtonian motion, the universe came to be conceived as a complex, intricately interconnected and interdependent whole. These developments in physics, which have demonstrated the limitations of mechanistic determinism and called into question the traditional concept of scientific objectivity, paved the way for the emergence of the new paradigm scientific perspectives emphasizing holism, organicism, complex

causality, field theories, nonlocal connections, and the participatory role of the scientific observer in shaping the phenomena under investigation.<sup>6</sup>

Alongside the revolution in physics, another new theoretical approach, closely aligned with the philosophy of holism and organicism, has emerged out of biology. I refer here to systems theory and to the self-organizational paradigm. Like physics, this perspective has emphasized the significance of patterns of organization and the dynamic process-oriented nature of all kinds of systems, an emphasis it shares with process philosophy, based primarily on the work of Alfred North Whitehead.

As discussed in the previous issues of *Archai*, these important developments in the scientific understanding of the universe have been accompanied by equally significant advances in our knowledge of the human psyche, emerging, most especially, out of the field of depth psychology. In their willingness to seriously engage and seek to understand the meaning of phenomena often dismissed and excluded by conventional approaches—such as spiritual experiences, synchronicities, dreams, fantasies, and the meaningful content of psychopathological conditions—Jungian, archetypal, and transpersonal approaches to depth psychology have challenged the paradigmatic limitations of the dominant modern world view, and disclosed a vaster, more comprehensive picture of the human psyche. Fundamental to this larger vision is the notion of an unconscious dimension to the human psyche, one transcending normal human awareness and giving an a priori order to our conscious experience.

Within the wider cultural context, the development of new paradigm perspectives in science has been accompanied by the emergence of postmodernism—the collective term for those cultural and intellectual movements that critique, challenge, or negate the fundamental assumptions and values of the modern world view. Many truths and assertions that have prevailed in the modern era, and that were once deemed incontrovertible, are now being called into question. Truth, to many postmodern thinkers, is now seen not as absolute fact but as constructed interpretation. Claims to objective validity have been undermined, or at least tempered, by the realization of the inescapable subjectivity of human knowledge. Consequently, postmodernism has permitted a reconsideration of views, philosophies, ideas, and practices deemed incorrect or outmoded in terms of the rational-scientific world view of the modern era. Ancient wisdom traditions, esoteric philosophies,

indigenous cultures, and the perspectives of previously repressed minorities are finding a new voice on the postmodern stage. In this climate of change, astrology—in its archetypal form—need no longer be alienated from the wider culture if it can face the challenge of setting forth an explanation of astrological correlations in terms comprehensible to the modern mind.

While the term *postmodern* has become synonymous with deconstruction and the Nietzschean “hermeneutics of suspicion,” certain theorists such as Charlene Spretnak, Charles Jencks, and David Ray Griffin have tried to reclaim the term, and to use it to signify not only deconstruction, but also trends towards more integrative and constructive developments that lead beyond the limitations of the dominant modern world view—an emphasis that reflects the original meaning of the term *post-modern*, coined by Black Mountain poet Charles Olson in the mid-twentieth century. Such thinkers have sought to distinguish between late- or ultra-modernism, which they identify with deconstruction, and postmodernism in its constructive sense, which, according to Jencks, is “the continuation of modernity and its transcendence.”<sup>7</sup> The modern world view is to be transcended not by the outright rejection of the possibility of there being any world view at all, but rather by overcoming the limitations of modernity by means of revision and movements towards a “synthesizing overview.”<sup>8</sup>

One way this transcendence might be achieved is by bringing back that which modernity has discarded as obsolete, to effect a synthesis of the old and the new. Such “double-coding,” as Jencks terms it, potentially makes possible a creative fusion of ancient wisdom and modern science by which the inherent limitations and one-sidedness of the modern rational-scientific world view might be overcome and a new integral world view developed.<sup>9</sup> It is just this kind of integral approach that is necessary to understand the astrological perspective.

For archetypal astrology to achieve credibility within any emerging world view, however, it is imperative to meet the challenge of articulating a cosmology (a theory of the nature and structure of the universe) that can lend support to its empirical claims to validity. Closely related to metaphysics, cosmology is a branch of philosophy “that deals with the Universe as a totality of phenomena, attempting to combine metaphysical speculation and scientific evidence within a coherent framework.”<sup>10</sup> In a wider sense, of course, a cosmology is far more than just a philosophical conception of reality, for it provides the implicit background to all human

actions, the context within which human life takes place. A new cosmology must therefore address the place and role of the human in the universe, in both its physical and psychological dimensions. Both aspects of cosmology are central to the focus of the *Archai* journal and to the field of archetypal cosmology as a whole.

## In This Issue

The articles in this issue approach the topic of disenchantment and its transcendence from two overlapping perspectives: conceptual, exploring astrology's relationship to modern philosophical and scientific thought; and as historical narrative, focusing on the psychospiritual, existential, cultural, and cosmological dimensions of Western civilization's journey from the Christian world view through disenchantment to the unfolding spiritual transformation at the turn of the twentieth century and on, finally, to consider the life experience of a prominent modern physicist. These two approaches are addressed in turn within the two main sections of the journal.

## Theoretical Foundations of Archetypal Cosmology

The opening essay of this first section is my "Astrology and the Modern Western World View," which considers the main factors, both theoretical and empirical, behind astrology's fall into disrepute in the modern era, before making the case for its re-evaluation in light of the new understanding of the nature of reality advanced in modern physics. This article, taken from my doctoral dissertation, provides the preparatory analysis for the archetypal-mythic world view I outline in *The Archetypal Cosmos* (Floris Books, 2010).

The second paper, "Archetype and Eternal Object" by Grant Maxwell, addresses the privileging, in modern science and philosophy, of the Aristotelian notions of efficient and material causation to the virtual exclusion of formal and final causation. Taking as his starting point David Ray Griffin's attempted synthesis of the ideas of Jung and Whitehead, Maxwell argues that Jung's notion of synchronicity can be

interpreted as a rediscovery of formal causation in a modern context. More generally, in agreement with the implications of synchronicity, Maxwell proposes that Jungian archetypal theory, brought into association with Whitehead's process philosophy, can serve as a basis for a new world view restoring interiority and meaning to the world at large.

The final paper of this section, adapted from the appendix of Sean Kelly's *Coming Home: The Birth and Transformation of the Planetary Era* (Lindisfarne Books, 2010), explores the relationship between archetypal astrology and the evolution of consciousness. Kelly identifies the need for an explicit integration of Tarnas's focus on the archetypal dynamics studied in astrology and Hegel's notion of the world spirit acting through history as a *telos* or final cause shaping the unfolding course of planetary evolution. In accordance with his spiral model of the evolution of consciousness, Kelly proposes a synthesis of the archetypal astrological perspective with the uni-temporal goal-oriented trajectory of history suggested by Christian theology, Romanticism, and especially Hegelian philosophy.

## **Archetypal Analysis of Culture and History**

The first article in this section is the final part of Rod O'Neal's detailed archetypal analysis of the Puritan movement. O'Neal focuses here especially on the period of Great Awakening during the 1730s and 1740s, shining a light on spiritual experiences occurring within the horizons of an established Christian world view—but one that was already adapting itself to the rise of science and modern philosophy. O'Neal's article, in addition to its archetypal exploration of the planetary alignments associated with spiritual awakening, addresses the revisions to Puritan theology resulting from the ideas of Isaac Newton and John Locke, which threw down a radical challenge to the traditional understanding of God's involvement in the universe.

The second article, "The Shape of Nihilism" by Joseph Kearns, focuses on the profound cosmological and psychospiritual implications of Friedrich Nietzsche's epochal proclamation of the "death of God" in *The Gay Science* in the early 1880s. Combining a careful, systematic textual analysis with reflections on his own personal experience of nihilism and the shattering of the Christian world picture, Kearns's article takes the reader into the heart of

the existential predicament of the modern self, as he considers the host of implications—metaphysical, cosmological, existential, psychological, and moral—resulting from the disenchantment of the modern era. Kearns’s essay explores the experience of nihilism as a necessary means to its transcendence, anticipating, through Nietzsche’s vision of the *Übermensch*, a post-Christian and post-nihilistic future for the human spirit.

The third article in this section, “The Dark Spirit in Nature,” looks at the spiritual transformation that began in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, coinciding with the rare planetary conjunction of Neptune and Pluto. I have commented elsewhere that the “death of God” did not signal the end of spirituality, but its transformation, its rebirth into a different form.<sup>11</sup> In this paper, I consider one of the most important figures in this spiritual transformation: Carl Gustav Jung. In certain respects, Jung’s life and work were both a continuation of and a response to themes addressed by Nietzsche. Jung’s work was a response, moreover, to a dogmatic Christianity that had grown distant from the spiritual needs of the modern, educated individual, and distant too from the instinctual dynamism of life, which had been increasingly repressed into the unconscious. Coinciding with the fiftieth anniversary of Jung’s death in 1961, this article presents an archetypal astrological perspective on Jung’s personal relationship to the archetypal dynamics and experiences associated with the Neptune-Pluto complex.

Finally, this issue ends with Clara Lindstrom’s insightful and engaging exploration of the life and personality of eminent physicist Richard Feynman. Focusing in particular on the archetypal themes associated with Saturn-Neptune alignment in Feynman’s birth chart, Lindstrom shows how this archetypal combination—which is often associated with skeptical atheism, disenchantment, and disbelief—can also manifest as a deep commitment to authenticity forged by a rigorous reality-testing empiricism, a scientifically mediated quest for truth, and a post-Christian secular morality. One implication of Lindstrom’s analysis is that archetypal astrology, even when applied within a predominantly secular and scientific context, can illuminate the major patterns and themes of an individual’s life, providing a basis for a more deeply meaningful and potentially enchanted relationship with the cosmos.

The order of articles in this section thus reflects the transition from an established Christian world view (Puritanism) through nihilism and

disenchantment (Nietzsche) to the rebirth of spirituality in depth psychology (Jung), and then concludes with a study of a modern physicist and the archetypal dynamics underlying his life experiences and philosophy (Feynman). In so doing, this section demonstrates archetypal astrology's capacity to illuminate the underlying dynamics of human experience, whether this experience is interpreted through an orthodox religious world view, a scientific or atheistic perspective, or an esoteric depth psychological model, such as Jung's. Archetypal astrology focuses on the framework of cosmically based meanings within which the evolution of world views and the evolution of consciousness takes place. With its recognition of this background order of archetypal meanings, archetypal astrology might therefore, I believe, significantly contribute to the recovery of a more spiritually meaningful world view in which psyche and cosmos, mind and nature, are seen to reflect a deeper metaphysical order and evolutionary *telos* pervading all things.

## Notes

1. Max Weber, "Science as a Vocation," in *From Max Weber: Essays on Sociology*, trans. and ed. H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (1919; New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), 154. For a discussion of this topic and its relevance to archetypal cosmology, see Rod O'Neal, "Seasons of Agony and Grace: An Archetypal History of New England Puritanism," PhD diss., California Institute of Integral Studies, 2008.
2. As Weber puts it: "One need no longer have recourse to magical means in order to master or implore the spirits, as did the savage, for whom such mysterious powers existed. Technical means and calculations perform the service. This above all is what intellectualization means" Weber, "Science as a Vocation," 139).
3. Richard Tarnas, *Cosmos and Psyche: Intimations of a New World View* (New York: Viking, 2006), 21.
4. Mircea Eliade, *Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*, translated by Willard R. Trask (New York: Harvest Books, 1968), 202.
5. For a discussion of demythologization, see Lauri Honko, 'The Problem of Defining Myth,' (1972) in *Sacred Narrative: Readings in the Theory of Myth*, edited by Alan Dundes (Berkeley: University of California Press), 1984. For the relationship of mythology to the modern world view, see Keiron Le Grice, *The Archetypal Cosmos: Rediscovering the Gods in Myth, Science and Astrology* (Edinburgh: Floris Books, 2010), 25–33, 275–280.
6. I address the relevance of these new paradigm perspectives to archetypal cosmology in Part 2 of *The Archetypal Cosmos*, which presents a synthesis of ideas from systems theory and modern physics with Jungian depth psychology.

7. Charles Jencks, *What is Post-modernism?* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 1996), 13.
8. See Charles Jencks, ed. *The Postmodern Reader* (London: Academy Editions, 1986), 31.
9. Jencks, *Postmodern Reader*, 12. Jencks himself sees the emergent sciences of complexity and the dialogues between East and West, ancient and modern, and mainstream and marginalized perspectives as central to postmodernism. The ideas under discussion in archetypal cosmology are generally in accord with this larger constructive postmodern movement. The work emerging out of transpersonal theory, the new sciences, deep ecology, participatory research, and inter-religious dialogue, for example, has already made significant contributions to this aim. See also Jencks, *What is Post-modernism?*, 20.
10. Anthony Flew, editorial consultant, *A Dictionary of Philosophy*, 2nd revised edition (London: Pan Books, 1984)78.
11. See Le Grice, *Archetypal Cosmos*, 44–54.

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