

IMPROBABLE

Written by Robert LePage

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particularly the teachers, scholars, writers and scientists
whose work informs every line.

It is also indebted
for the inspiration and encouragement
of relatives, friends and artists.
All who believe that a World of Peace and Love is possible.

It was written while living on land stolen from the Ho-Chunk People.
In an area known as “Taychopera.”
Meaning, “Land of the Four Lakes.”

Derek Gebler created the website.
Design Garden hosts the site.

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Part I: What it's all about



1. prologue

what more improbable a Dream
 than we hammer our swords into plowshares
 turn our spears to pruning hooks
 feed the Hungry, shelter those without a Home
 Care for the Planet and All the Living
 Love One Another
 create Peace on Earth.

more likely
 some unwelcomed thought
 escapes from daylight's shadow
 wakes us in the night
 refuses dissolution
 turns our would be stillness a restless hour
 a sea of feelings

for who can keep their eyes closed
 to the Heartbreak filling our World
 from moments in our microtheaters
 when things go wrong
 to the greater tragedies and suffering
 Gaza, Ukraine, Russia, famines, weather related disasters...

how does one stop hearing about the Chaos
 happening here in the United States
 with a psychotic President who has no moral compass
 his Republican Party that has lost all semblance of integrity
 and a Supreme Court with three members beholden to the Wealthy Class
 the most powerful military Nation on the Planet
 testing the desire for democracy and the Rule of Law

we've been troubled for a long time
 the history of Western Civilization provides adequate evidence
 swords / arrows / shields / guns
 tall masted plundering sailing ships /slavery
 marching armies / tanks / bombs / missiles / drones



war after unending war
 all the while some are struggling to make ends meet
 as others are enjoying ostentatious luxury

we've been meaning to change all that
 the Enlightenment / Revolutions / nascent democracy / Education
 but without eradicating the roots
 the bleeding hurt never stopped

oh who bequeathed us this World
 nightmare no Mother would conceive
 we don't tell the Children about

Global Warming / Climate Change / the sea ice melting
 Oceanic degradation. Deforestation. Biodiversity collapse.
 Nations coveting the next worst nuclear weapon
 and after centuries of colonization and exploitation
 a grossly divided Planet
 with a consequent Global migration problem

Add to this picture
 that the Upper 1%, 2 – 3, 20%,
 who control the Planet's Wealth
 and who have the Power to fix what's broken
 have yet to see they have any greater Responsibility
 than to take care of their own immediate family
 and compete with One Another
 like they see everyone else doing

we face conditions that call for an epic response
 technology is already delivering AI tools
 with the Power to sway individual Minds / effect our collective thinking
 unless we change —
 that influence will continue to work in the same direction that we've come
 instead of providing what we need

whatever our political persuasion
 wherever we each find ourselves on the political spectrum
 there's general agreement that Humanity is at a Crossroads
 we've arrived at the End of a Pathway
 the one we've been on since the beginning of Civilization

2. denied

Life was meant to be a celebration
 children squealing with delight / innocence / trust
 stoned soul picnics, festivals, fairs, dinner parties, weddings
 Horses racing open fields, Swallows cavorting with the wind
 Songbirds at the end of day, quiet starlit skies, the Moon and Flowers,
 Music and Friendship.
 family, neighbors, co-workers, citizens, visitors, guests...
 Everyone respected. Everyone a fair and equal voice. Everyone's needs met.

we live in a highly complex technologically elaborated Society
we depend on each Other
 for water, food, sanitation, energy, healthcare, communication,
 transportation, entertainment, manufactured goods, our clothes...
for every essential service
it's not difficult to imagine all of us working together
because we're already succeeding at doing that

it appears that the trouble we're having
 has to do with rewarding each of us fairly
 taking care of One Another, Nature and our Planet
some are taking much more than Others
leaving the majority in desperate need

Yet we know, from close Companionship
as well as from Relationships time comes between
 it takes little more than a smile, a look, a Word to remind us
how much we mean to One Another

we welcome newborns / grieve passings
first responders risk their lives to rescue and protect perfect strangers
we care about stranded whales, drowning dogs, fallen baby birds
when we gather in crowds there's something in the air



no matter our differences
we all wish a better Life for the Children
a sustainable relationship with our Planet
a Woman-safe World

what other Garden would we rather
 what other Paradise yesterday said not possible



3. this given

we've a good idea of the distance
 between what we've got and how we'd like things to be —
 a good enough indicator that we must be doing something wrong

ah there's the rub
 no one likes being wrong
 we don't easily doubt our personal moral character
 whether our behavior is responsible or not
 being rational creatures as we are
 we justify what we do

the Narratives and Values that we believe in and act on
 the Stories we choose to tell Ourselves
 both consciously and unconsciously
 express our Identity
 One doesn't want to reject Oneself
 that would be both painful and unhealthy
 we need to think of Ourselves as good

we do as we perceive necessary
 nor do we lightly accept responsibility for failure
 we'd rather fault something or someone else
 this leaves us vulnerable to manipulation
 Individuals justifying any means to achieve their end
 can distort, misinform, fabricate, lie
 point to a group or individuals to blame
 produce an us vs. a them

when ignorance, corruption and cynicism reign
 intentionally conflating fiction with fact, misleading...
 mistakes can weigh on Evolution itself
 threaten the future of our Species
 diss the rose / see the bully as the winner
 produce so much unnecessary destruction, suffering and death
 risk the System failing

presently, as we'll see
 with the Ego informed by the Self-as-Separate Idea
 our Culture locates Self-worth as emergent in arenas of competition
 the cost paid for by our Human dignity
 we lose the Freedom to create the World all of us in our Hearts desire
 that is to say, our Possibility

no facile answer is going to dissolve
 what keeps us from Each Other
 obstructs the Dream we share
 our Problems' source runs deep

4. friendship

could we be friends
 find ourselves
 in some unexpected entanglement
 slipped from causal chains

might our Life's paths entwine
 in some unnamed place
 nestled with bones and feathers
 in the tidemark sands
 longer than a shoreline's catch of Sun
 edge a breaking wave

could we be more than chance
 a glance across the room
 more than a passing moment's in-between
 might we share the Ocean's breath
 become the Planet's pulse together

5. because

no one can do for us / what we alone can do
 there are no substitutes / no stand-ins
 there is no waiting for someone else
 every promised Age / Savior / Returning Prophet
 would still depend on our Response
 Human Freedom requires it
 Love is like that



even were an algorithm to be concocted
 enabling Artificial Intelligence to learn and recognize the Sacred
 and you'd have machines appreciating Existence
 empathizing with Suffering
 wouldn't they then turn to us
 and what more tell than what we already know

as for Planetary migration
 there's not enough Time / nowhere to run
 and what Other Place
 welcome a Life Form fleeing its Home
 for failure to answer the needs of its Mother Planet

search this night grown late
 there can be no greater broke in need of fixing
 no challenge more grand
 higher mountain yet unclimbed
 enchanted sea unsailed
 than this Humankind defining moment
 determining the future of our Species
 plus many others interwoven with our own

to be sure
 transitioning from where we are to where we want to be
 isn't going to be easy
 risking One's Heart never is

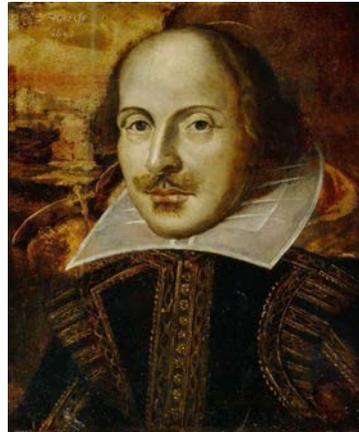
6. storytellers

we're Storytellers
 we use Story to make sense of it all
 Storytelling gives the World its meaning / motivates our sacrifices
 gets us out of bed in the morning
 defines our goals / construes success
 Stories are set in a context
 they fit and keep the pieces together

we begin in childhood asking why
 and for the most part never stop
 the Stories we tell describe and shape what we see
 encase what's true for us
 as we deem new explanations better —
 we discard those out-grown



Maya Angelou



William Shakespeare

our own and Others' Stories
 share ways of seeing the World
 can inspire our intelligence / ignite our imagination
 what we believe we're capable of
 we find the means to do

no one knows for certain
 what will happen next
 or after we die
 how with these Minds we're here
 how you are who you are
 and not someone else
 why any particular One of us exists at all
 whatever differences there are between us
 none separate us very far

our Stories can lead to tragedy
 or enable a place for Each Other
 an in-between that neither Space nor Time
 nor Death impinge

7. what we know

there's more we don't know than we do
 yet we do know some things
 we have real needs
 oxygen / water / food / shelter
 a narrow range of temperatures
 plus mental sustenance: identity / security / stimulation
 and Love — who can forget

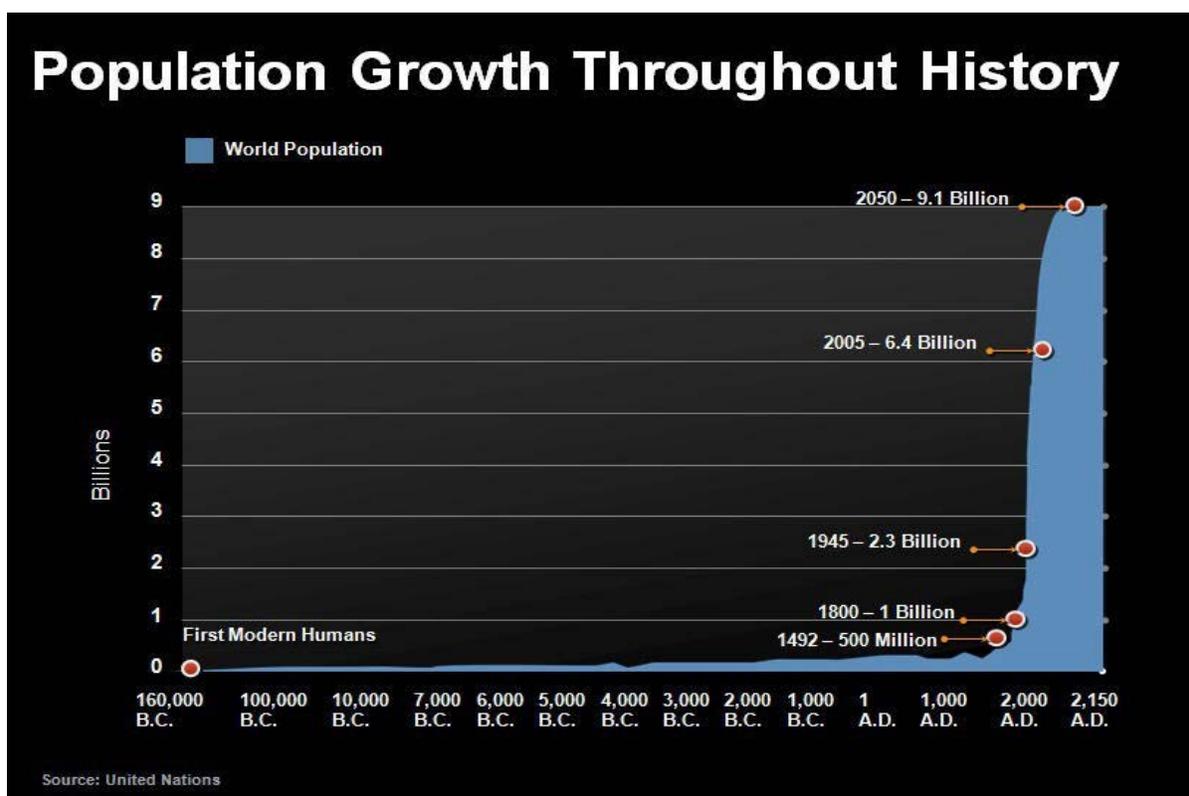
our survival depends on making correct decisions
 to do that we need accurate information
 it's why we value post-18th Century reasoning and its insistence
 on questioning authority
 attaching integrity to the service of truth's interests only
 calling to each of us to judge for Ourselves the Evidence

we know things aren't always what common sense tells us
 the Sun's daily movement across the sky, for instance
 we knew for a long time that the Whole is greater than the sum of the parts
 a living Flower more than an assemblage of roots, petals, stamen...
 the Whole is in some way present in Each of the Components

we've also learned about Complex Adaptive Dynamic Systems
 such as individual cells / bodies / persons / societies / nations
 none can remain forever in the same unchanged state
 every System is nested within countless other neighboring systems
 each one itself growing / adapting / changing in relation to its environment
 resulting in changed conditions
 solutions that once served a System inevitably prove inadequate
 Systems can reach a Pathway's End
 at that point Agents either mature
 spiral inward, upward and outward
 make a Quantum Leap to a new state
 or fail to make the transition / fall into Chaos / collapse

8. what we need

adding unrestrained Human Population growth
 to the problems we've already cited
 makes clear what our Time is all about



we as a Species are being asked to make
 a Great Correction

what's required is a Transition from our Historic situation
to a sustainable World
to do that, we'll need to Love the World we've got
into the World we would like it to be
a transformation of such breadth and magnitude
from agreeing on what that Paradise might look like
to deciding on the best way to get there
its chances of success —
improbable

even to begin
would require that we see Ourselves in a whole new Light
and for that to happen...

yet, as we'll recount,
the Existence of the Universe is also improbable
as is Life itself

in the end
not to try
dooms our Children's World

Part II: The larger Story

9. Interlude I



imagine in this Garden moment
 that the Universe could tell us who we are
 show us how we might do what's needed
 our Problems might appear differently
 solutions unimagined emerge
 were we to learn the answers the wind carries
 become aware the Love Earth has invested in us
 the Hope and Promise we represent

Culture, Reality, Reason, Logic...
 all would no doubt object
 neither the Universe, nor Earth, nor Nature at large...
 not even the Animals
 are to be portrayed as having Intelligence
 as being anything like Ourselves
 anthropomorphized
 things don't have Minds and communicate like we do

we've learned to mistrust such thinking
 in part for its similarities to the Pre-scientific
 a World prey to superstition, theological speculation...
 subject to every possible imagining
 our Fate cast outside Ourselves / in Someone else's hands

The Enlightenment brought us beyond that
 with the Age of Reason we left magic and such behind
 our present World is informed with notions from Modern Science
 only Physical entities make up that which exists
 all interaction in the World is explainable mechanistically
 and evidence must be measurable
 Reason and peer review ultimately decide what's true

Science met with great success adhering to these principles
 it brought us the World we see around us
 the conveniences of indoor plumbing
 the comforts of applied electricity
 the benefits of Medicine
 ever improving modes of transportation / communication / entertainment
 while at the same time leaving us in the lurch

in the lurch because meaning depends on Choice
 as Choosing this, instead of that, represents value
 a Universe without Mind makes no Choices
 it can have no intrinsic value or meaning of its own
 by denying an interior to Nature
 we decide what value Nature has
 and we find Ourselves alone in an Object Universe
 Offspring of a Living Planet unable to communicate with us

given that our Bodies and Minds evolved from Nature
 the One place where we might learn about Who we are
 outside our own speculation
 where we could expect to find the moral codes
 on which Life depends —
 Reality denies us

we're left with only what we're telling Ourselves
 and excepting for Medieval discourse referencing another World
 we're without explanation for our Mental Life
 why this Subjective Experience of what it feels like to be Oneself
 what purpose this Consciousness
 we don't yet recognize how our Self-reflection fits into the Larger picture
 where or how we belong

in a World void of the Sacred / stripped of the Spiritual / with no Mind
 everything that makes up a moment is explained in terms of Physical processes
 we again find our fate cast outside Ourselves

 this Time determined by mechanical Relationships of cause and effect



perhaps we need to question our faith in strict Physicalism
 the assumption that all of Reality / Matter / Life / feelings / reasons...
 are only the effect of a mechanical causes
 suspend that premise for a moment

revisit a theme
 common among indigenous Peoples
 recurrent throughout the History of Western Civilization
 the idea that Mind is a feature of all things
 The Theory of Panpsychism

simply stated
 Panpsychism offers an alternative first premise
 instead of Mindless Particles
 Panpsychism proposes Matter endowed with Awareness
 from sub-atomic upward through the cellular and multi-organelled —
 Nature infused with Subjectivity

to be clear
 attributing an interior to Matter
 doesn't mean that every conglomerate of Particles is conscious
 a pile of Rocks, a chair, an instrument, a tool...
 not all share information across a network as a Unified System
 not all are alive

conceiving all things as having some kind of Mentality
 simply acknowledges that Freedom and Choice are exercised
 within relative Horizons of being / throughout the Universe
 the Quarks choose to share the gluon Particle and bond into their Unities.
 Electron exchange indicates Atomic Molecular intersubjectivity
 and then there's the Metabolic and altruistic activities indicative of Life

Panpsychism doesn't displace Science
 Panpsychism is a conclusion that Science will likely reach
 in most cases, acknowledging that Intelligence is involved
 makes things make more sense
 many researchers already consider Nature to some degree Conscious
 when explaining Life forms that have no neurons
 yet who swim, find food, have sex
 or when observing the labors of the Organelles within cells
 or explaining the ability of organs to Self-repair
 our World is likely replete with different kinds of Awareness

nor does extending our understanding of Subjectivity
 prove or disprove any supposition about God
 we each can and will believe what we Choose
 about the meaning, the existence or non-existence
 transcendence or immanence
 of the Divine

recognizing Nature as Subject-centered, however
 might transform our feelings from indifference
 to an attitude informed by reverence and gratitude
 to the Plants and Animals who feed us with their lives

recognizing the Universe as a Psychophysical Unity
 might also make a difference in how we understand Ourselves



because the Universe exists as an unbroken Whole
 it has no separable parts
 whatever exists is part of the Universe
 if a Conscious, Personal Universe
 then our Existence is inextricable from a greater Self
 each of us / each micro-center of Subjectivity
 an expression of and engagement with a cosmic Personal Presence

we know the Stories we tell Ourselves
 inform our institutions, give shape to our World
 it would take some effort
 to escape the accustomed categories we use for our perception
 put aside the Reality we take for granted —
 if even briefly rethink what we're doing
 how we're doing it

for Nature to help us with this
 for the Universe to tell us something about Ourselves
 how our Presence may have arisen
 what we're made of and the Pathways that brought us here
 where we fit into the larger picture
 we would need to give our Knowledge second thought
 without betraying the lines of Reasoning that brought us here
 see the information that Science and Scholarship deliver in a different light.

10. before the beginning



astronomers, physicists and chemists,
 Scientists making sense of our World
 the abundance of Helium in interstellar Space
 the omnipresent background radiation
 the increasing speeds galaxies recede
 conclude our Universe began some 13.7 billion years ago

although some Scientists contest any such Timeline
 since the Universe doesn't appear to favor any particular clock —
 why ours?
 especially when it comes to the earliest moments of the Universe

most Scientists marvel at the Wonder
 from the Forces involved in Space Expanding
 not so fast as to completely dissipate Matter
 nor too slow as to have Matter collapse back upon itself
 to the Beauty of the countless Galaxies, our own Star and Planet
 the Genius of every Life form
 it's all just so — improbable

some would explain how it all began
 by recommending we believe that an infinity of random universes emerged
 simultaneously
 some failed, but some were also probably successful
 and so could exist parallel, right now, alongside our own

the Narrative of a Mindful Universe
suggests a different Story

this one begins with the observation
that any discourse about the Beginning assumes something Preceded
what that might be must remain speculation
 does something come from nothing
 does an absolute Singularity explain enough
before space —
there are no dimensions, nothing to separate, no measurement, no location
before time —
no moment can be defined for another to follow, there is only Eternity

Science premises the Singularity being without Awareness
Panpsychism premises some kind of Subjectivity

based on our present understandings of our Physical World
Physicists infer Conditions before the Beginning,
as similar, if not the same as, those attributed to the ubiquitous Vacuum Field
 every emergent Particle meeting with its anti-Particle
 every Wave being cancelled out with its anti-Wave
a frothing Sea of every Separate Thing being met with Not-being that
 an undefined Chaos of every possible separate emergent entity
 being rendered nought
for there is only Being and Nothing else

supposing this were the case
 that every Particle or Wave of Information
 was meeting with annihilation
how could Being,
 from whom we are not excluding Consciousness
come to know its Meaning?
how could there be any Meaning at all?
 both questions veil another
why is there Being rather than Nothingness?
the Quarks will answer

11. the Universe from sharing

would there were a Language perhaps like Art
with which we could talk with the Quarks

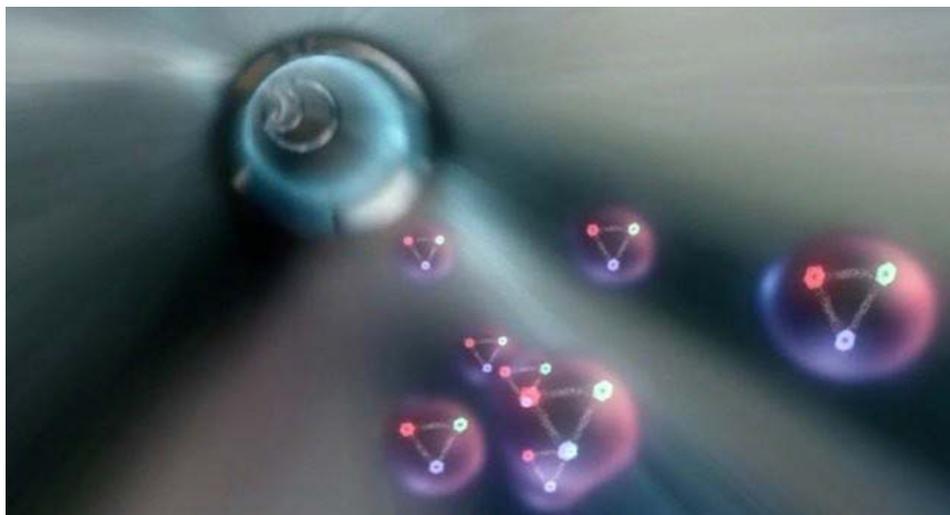
among the subatomic Particles Physicists recognize

Quarks make up the Neutrons and Protons
 that make up the nucleus of every Atom
 Quarks reside at the Heart of Matter

were there such a Language
 we could ask the Quarks how to read what they did
 be certain of the Meaning that their behavior seems to indicate
 for our best understandings of Matter and the Universe
 point to the Quarks as beginning it all

a Beginning that may have failed on the first attempt
 whether due to the enormous heat and energy levels
 or the gross inequality between the Top and Bottom Quarks
 they do not endure
 the Top Quark rapidly decays
 both fall back into Chaos

nor does the Universe begin when the second pair of Quarks emerge
 the so-called Strange and the larger Charmed Quark
 although they are closer in size than the Top and Bottom Quarks
 it appears not close enough
 their bond also fails



It's when the nearly equal in size Up and Down Quarks
 emerge in sets of three
 passing the Gluon Particle among them
 and their activity creates a duration — Time
 a dimension that had never existed before
 that the Universe begins

two Down Quarks and one Up
 or one Down Quark with two Ups
 participating equally in the Field of the Strong Force
 changing into One Another's red / green / blue color charge
 create a bond of such stability, it will serve as the foundation for the Universe

so the Quarks answer to the question —
How can Being come to know its Meaning?

The Ups and Downs emerge from Being
 not by differentiating themselves as Particles Separate from Being;
 instead, they choose to identify with each Other / Share Energy —
 creating egalitarian Relationships
 Expressing Belonging. Their Pattern endures.

 The Meaning of Being Exists. And it looks like Love

by the passing of first second of Time,
 Quark Trinities are moving through Space
 gathering Mass
 stabilizing as Protons and Neutrons

for the first 300,000 years
 Existence is one hot dense expanding Plasma
 an array of Particles in a Quantum Entanglement
 acting as a single unified System
 Minded across vast expanding distances

as the enormous Field slowly cools
 Protons and Neutrons exercising Self-organizing skills
 begin sharing their excess Energy
 and bond with each other
 forming Helium, Deuterium, Lithium — the first Nuclei
 they in turn draw in other Particles
 among them the free floating Electrons creating Atoms

As more and Electrons surround and bind with Nuclei
 they vacate Space

leaving room for the Light carrying Photons
 that had been colliding with them
 to spread out across the Universe
 creating an Eternal afterglow

about 200 million years after the Beginning
 clouds of gases
 encountering one another, come together
 coagulate into tiny pools of Matter
 forming clumps that grow in size and gravity
 as the globular clusters keep pulling together tighter and tighter
 they ultimately fuse / light up / glow
 becoming Stars

12 the dark

no small accomplishment
 for Humans to have found and studied the Evidence
 formulated Laws representing the preferred Behavior of Matter
 reversed the Story back to the Beginning
 to learn something about the Universe
 something therefore about Ourselves

Quarks sharing Energy began the Universe
 Quarks sharing Energy reside at the Heart of Matter

yet we're far from fathoming every Mystery
 take the speed of Stars swirling at the outermost edges of galaxies
 when studied in context with the Laws of Gravity
 there's not enough Matter to hold them in place
 they should fly apart — but they don't

Scientists can only conclude there's something we're not seeing
 something that we can't measure with our instruments
 a different kind of matter / invisible
 emitting no light / no wavelength we're aware
 yet effecting the necessary gravitational fields that we see
 and by most calculations around 27% of the Universe consists of it
 dark matter holds everything together



equally puzzling
 the increasing rate in the speeds that galaxies are receding
 instead of slowing down
 the expansion of the Universe is speeding up
 for such acceleration to make any sense
 there must be some form of energy responsible for the outward expansion
 a kind of anti-gravity

at this time, Physicists have only guesses what it might be
 it's estimated 68% of the Mass-Energy of the Universe
 is made up this this dark energy

then there's the riddle of the ultimately small and the maximally large
 where Classical Physics and the Laws of Relativity
 meet the unpredictability of Quantum Mechanics
 when the Math of one is applied to the data of the other — it no longer works
 given that the goal of Science is a full, complete and unified
 understanding of the World
 a Universe with different sets of behaviors for the large and the small doesn't fit

at this point the most promising solution
 suggests we conceive the tiniest Particle-Waves as vibrating Strings
 and add six additional curled-up Dimensions to the known extended three
 so that — plus Time
 means we live in a ten Dimensional Space

13. the Stars

billions of years after the first Stars appeared
 they've multiplied and fill the Heavens
 some have Lifetimes of tens of thousands of years
 others thousands of millions
 generations have come and gone

when Stars die
 they often expire with Cosmic marvel
 burst into a Sea of Photons
 color the night with Energy
 ultraviolet, infrared, gamma and radio waves, neutrinos...
 a dying Star can turn billions of Suns bright, outshine galaxies
 a Minded Universe remembers every grain



Crab Nebula / Supernova and remnants

tangled in the Heat and Energy of their dying wakes
 Waves and Particles meet up, explore possibilities, Self-organize
 discover atomic configurations they can do together
 Protons / Neutrons / Electrons interact with one another
 adding to the Nucleus / welcoming Electrons
 compose and recompose themselves
 creating innovative arrangements.
 New expressions of belonging.

some of these atomic Relationships fail in less than a nanosecond
others endure

from minutes to hundreds, thousands even billions of years
those configurations that hold together long enough for us to identify
we call Elements

such as Oxygen, Platinum, Carbon, Gold, Uranium...
so far we know of 118

among the stable Elements

Chemists note a wide variety of behaviors

many express a propensity to link up with others

by sharing or exchanging Electrons in their outermost shells
creating multi-atomed Molecular Relationships

pairs of the same atoms

or compounds of diverse atoms

becoming chains of Molecules / monomers to polymers

each time the whole becoming greater than the sum of the parts

each part always inextricable from the larger whole

Stars leave more behind than the dust from which they arose

with each successive generation

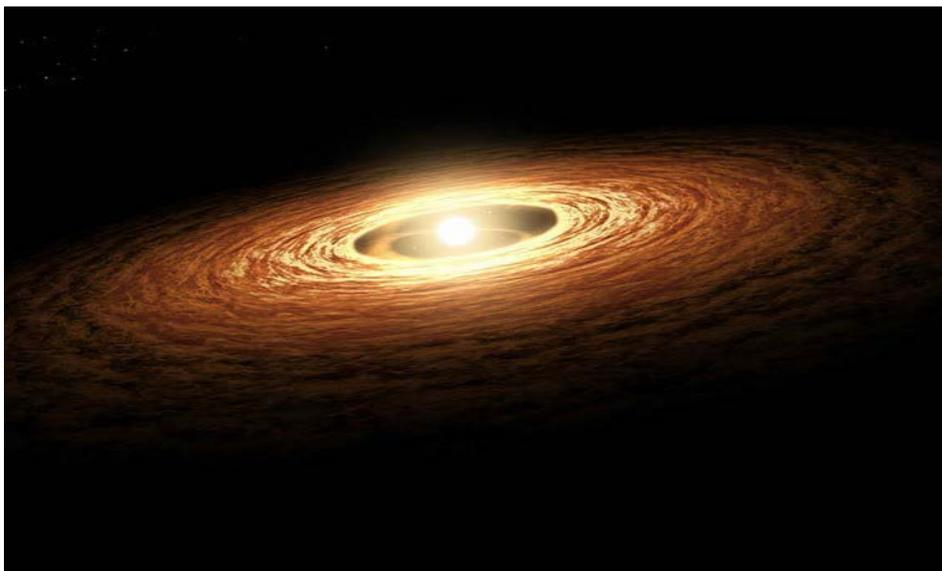
interstellar Space grows more fertile

14. the Solar System

the story of our own Star

begins around 4.6 billion years ago

in the Milky Way Galaxy



when a nearby Supernova stirred a slowly rotating interstellar Cloud
changing its internal pressures / condensing vapors
undoing its delicate balance
setting the Cloud drawing into itself
as its Particles come nearer to each other
their individual momentums begin to mesh
causing the entire Solar Nebula to swirl a little faster
like a ballerina bringing in her arms
as the rate of spinning increases
Particles and dust fall downward, inward
and the Cloud takes on a disk-like shape

for a million years
the dust and ice particles spin and collide
eventually, some start sticking together
eddies of Matter begin building up
boulders aggregate

Hydrogen Atoms drawn to the center of the swirling
come under immense pressure
develop into a burning core. Fuse.
become our Sun
generating enormous temperatures and wind

incubating material capable of withstanding the heat
sweeping away all that can't
Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars take shape

farther out where temperatures are cooler
Solar Winds less intense
Planets build up from lighter Elements
and chunks of ice
the gas giants Jupiter and Saturn grow
gradually the Planets stabilize, turn spherical
affect each others motions
Moons gravitate into orbits

15. Gaia

geologists and geoscientists
 who read the records kept in Zircons
 generally agree that Earth begins around 4.5 billion years ago
 as a molten ball of fire
 with volcanoes erupting
 meteors / comets / asteroids raining down



Gaia's surface a sea of magma
 dense iron meteorites sink into it and to the center
 gradually producing a metallic core
 and with Earth's slow spinning create a magnetic field
 shielding the embryonic Planet from the Solar Winds
 permitting a fragile atmosphere to develop

then the unexpected
 a small wandering Planet collides with Earth
 tearing off part of her mantle
 both quickly recover however
 the wanderer becomes Her Moon

meanwhile Earth continues to cool
 as crusts form on the molten surface
 semi-solid pieces slip beneath the hot liquid upper layers
 again and again
 thickening until lava islands appear
 which shape and reshape themselves
 ultimately becoming interlocking tectonic plates

16. Life from Giving

about a half billion years after Her dramatic beginning
 conditions on Earth have begun to stabilize
 cooling temperatures are condensing water vapor from volcanoes
 and falling as rain
 collecting in ponds, lakes, seas...

for the quasi-continent have by this time appeared
 asteroids now more often vaporize and mix with Her simmering



Earth —
 located not too close to the Sun
 to cause water to evaporate
 nor too far away
 that water would stay frozen
 just right for water to remain liquid
 — improbable

about 4 billion years ago Earth was a warm watery womb
 steeping with organic compounds
 amino acids, phospholipids, carbohydrates...
 complex carbon Molecules with Atoms intelligently arranged
 some from interstellar clouds
 meteorites, comets and Stardust delivered
 others locally produced

what happens within this Primordial Soup
of course, is the story how Life begins here on Earth
 Life more than likely begins lots of other places, too
this version is based on a Microbiological Narrative
starring a Group of complex Molecules known as “Long Chain Polymers”

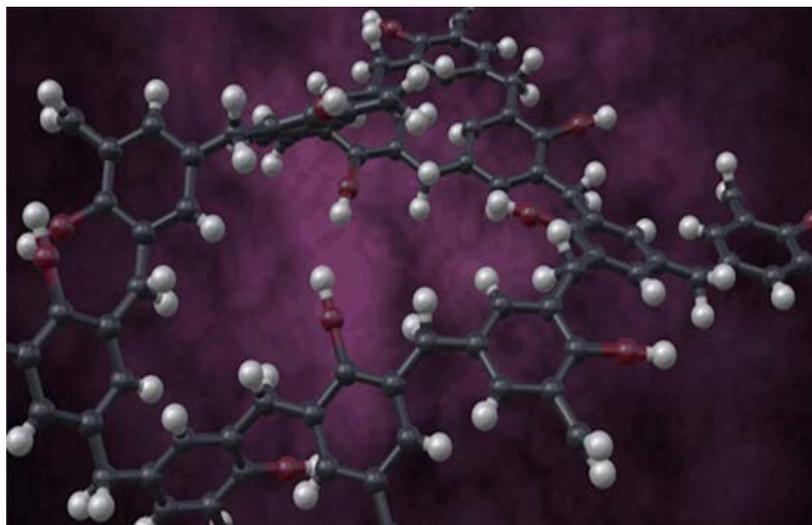
elaborating on their ancestral Pathways
 the Quarks sharing Energy with Each Other
 the Neutrons, Protons and Electrons bonding as Atoms
 Atoms exchanging and sharing Electrons producing Compounds
Long Chain Polymers develop the ability to recognize and acknowledge One Another
begin playfully wiggling together
 and according to some research
passing smaller Molecules back and forth with Each Other

it's a specialized skill however
not all Polymers can participate
a Chain has to possess the requisite Molecules
 the essential information sets as it were
in order to carry out the little trick

when the Long Chain Polymers recognize this
they respond by passing the requisite Molecules to those in need
 a small act yet one that changes everything
providing what another needs to participate or become active
qualifies as an expression of primitive metabolism
a Marker, a Key Sign of Life

this could have started in deep oceanic volcanic vents
in ripples of clay along shorelines, riverbeds...
 in protective bubbles...
wherever it began
choosing to act for the benefit of Another changes everything
Altruism creates a bifurcation in Evolution
 the Long Chain Polymers open the Garden Gate

unexpectedly the recipients reciprocate
begin replicating the behavior of those doing the Giving
unpredictably the activity cascades



as more and more Molecules adopt the Serving others activity
Matter makes a Quantum Leap

Self-similar to the first great Phase Transition
brought about by the Up and Down Quarks sharing Energy
the Altruistic Polymers create a second Planetary scale Phase Transition
moving Existence from the Chemical Realm into the Biological Sphere

Life!

Exponentially widening and deepening the Horizon of Being

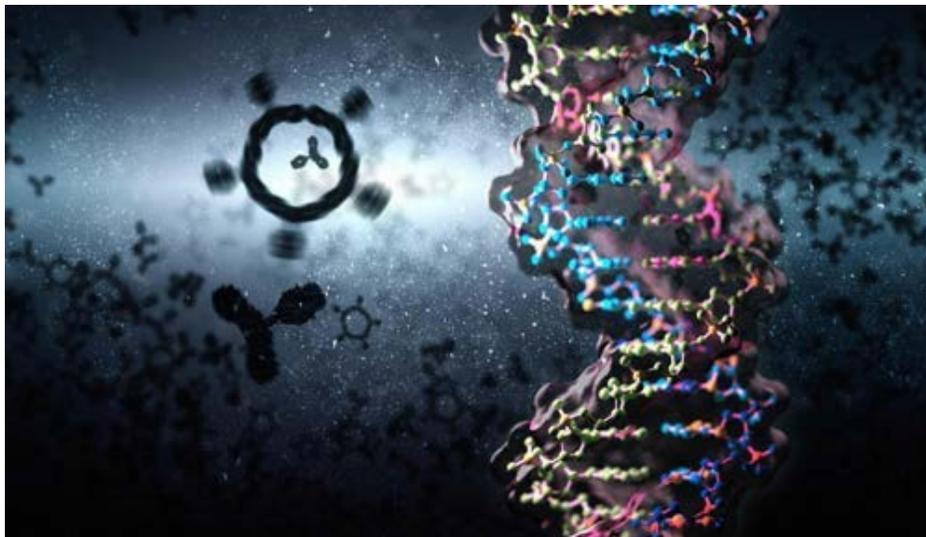
17. eating

with the appearance of Microbial living Creatures
Earth undergoes a profound transformation

Molecules are now bonding with One Another
by way of an in-between unknown before
choosing the attitude that taking Care of each Other implies
passing along an idea that opens a dimension of Mind
enabling vast numbers of Molecules to join together

as free floating Molecular Strings enthusiastically merge into longer Chains
ever more complex Communities appear
Proto-organisms are soon linking up with diverse Molecular segments
representing distinct information sets, behavior repertoires and skills
varieties of play and helpfulness multiply
new forms of cooperation take hold

at the outset
 the waters are rich with unattached Macromolecules
 an abundance of possibilities float about
 easily providing for the needs of this new Phase of Existence



by about 3.5 billion years ago, however,
 maybe only 500 million years after the Beginning of the Serving Others Bond
 unattached free Molecular pieces are becoming less available
 the Primordial Soup, without being replenished, has become seriously diminished
 and the situation is turning progressively critical

by this time the Polymers have significantly elaborated on basic Metabolism
 they've developed skills that will eventually lead to photosynthesis
 some use volcanic ocean vents for thermal heat
 but the end of this promising Pathway that Existence has chosen appears imminent
 without welcoming new segments
 without being able to replace exhausted Molecules
 with no new Energy

without food —
 Life cannot go on

assuming that the Universe has Subjectivity
 and recognizing the evolved Complexity of these Lifeforms
 we can wonder —
 do they somehow understand what's happening?

do they know where all the food has gone
 and do they realize that neither they nor others
 can surrender essential parts of themselves without dying?
 to the point —
 do they understand that to take the needed segments from Another
 deny Life to that Other in order to sustain one's own
 contradicts the choices that brought them there?
 from its conflict with the Quarks at the Heart of Matter sharing Energy
 to its reversal of the Altruistic Bond they themselves use to hold together
 do they see it as a moral question

we may never know
 how the Solution was considered / felt and intuited / communicated
 we do know what it was
 in order to retain continuity with their Ancestors
 and to preserve the integrity of the Pathway by which they'd come
 the proto-life Forms chose survival as Communion
 they begin to eat One Another
 while offering up their own Lives as food for Others in return
 or Serving the larger Living Network in some other Life giving way
 allowing Life to move beyond the crisis

a strange and complex Solution
 Life goes on — by way of Death
 Nature appears to weave internal conflict with Herself
 for every Animal and Plant holds to Life
 by virtue of the Bond that holds them together as Living
 unified Creatures are not going to give up their desire willingly
 thus the struggle for survival becomes a feature of Evolution
 and later, with the development of tooth and claw
 bloody and violent

historically, we've viewed this "competition" feature of Life
 as Evolution's singular driving force
 interpreted the whole of Nature in terms of dominance
 whether battling over territories
 or deciding who gets to mate
 defining success in terms of powering over others
 might makes right
 and that was the end of it

the Patriarchal Culture relished seeing itself mirrored like that
 believing Nature's ways justified its own hierarchies enforced by violence
 a point of view that endures
 despite knowing that cooperation has proven to be equally
 sometimes even more important
 for survival than competition

In a Subject-centered Universe
 in which each Creature is part of the Living Whole
 to eat Another
 whether Plant, Fungi or Flesh of fish, fowl or animal
 implies a responsibility goes with it
 gratitude comes into the picture
 as many Human Religions have recognized
 but that's getting ahead of Ourselves
 as does noting that a Phase Transition can completely change
 Evolutionary expectations

back 3 or more billion years ago to the Scene when the Communion began —
 there's consumption / experimentation / invention / adaptation
 some Bacteria devise ways to get the food they need without injuring Others
 symbiotic parasites preserve the Life of their Host
 prove themselves helpful, even indispensable

18. RNA and photosynthesis

as the early Bacteria eat and are eaten
 they exchange information / combine / complexify
 evolving in both form and function
 one Chain learns to specialize in enhancing various interactions
 without being changed by them
 a catalyzing activity that will lead to cell replication

RNA Molecules develop the skill to stretch and fold
 embrace various Molecular shapes
 provide a template for how the Living Structure looked
 how it functioned
 facilitating ever more elaborate organisms
 in what may have been a random encounter
 RNA discovers that including a particular membrane produces micro-spheres
 semi-porous envelopes

walls that can protect the essential activities and molecules within
while allowing needed food to enter from outside

the walled Cells make rapid improvement

RNA modifies its own structure

re inventing itself into the double helix form

DNA emerges as a matured catalyst and pattern carrier

proves more stable and better at correcting mistakes

capable of carrying out more complicated processes

responding more quickly to in-coming information

and better able to conceive adaptations for ever-changing environments

interactions within and in-between Cells become increasingly complex



when a group of Cells learns how to convert food

into the Energy packet ATP

able to be stored for later use

capable of powering Cellular activities

including the process of producing the ATP itself

Evolution again accelerates

one Group creates a revolutionary solution for obtaining food

rather than eating Others

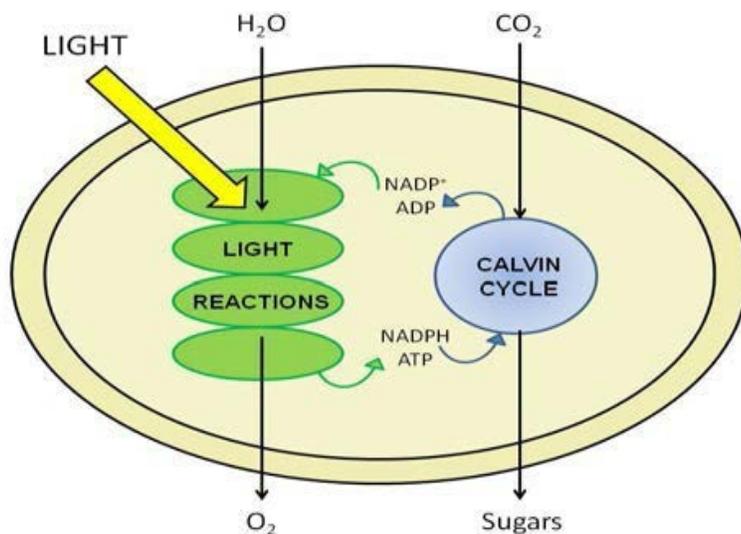
these Cells learn how to make food from its basic ingredients

assembling it from the ground up

using Sunlight for Energy

they harvest the building blocks from air and water

Photosynthesis will eventually serve as the foundation for all of terrestrial Life



The Photosynthetic Process

Gaia is now about 1 billion years old
 Photosynthetic Microbes have come to blanket the seas
 swarm the continents / cover mountainsides
 astonishing varieties of color, form and content appear
 Cyanobacteria, a bluish-green microscopic organism
 proves especially successful

the use of Water in Photosynthesis, however
 produces a by-product — free Oxygen
 Iron lying along Earth's surface had long been absorbing it
 but after hundreds of millions of years, maybe more
 the Iron became saturated
 and a surplus began building up

Oxygen accumulating in the higher atmosphere interacts with the Sun
 transforming into an ozone layer — a good thing
 for it begins to shield Earth from ultraviolet radiation

lower down, however, a catastrophe is underway
 Oxygen is lethal to almost all existent Bacteria
 Masses are dying off. Diversity shrinking.
 The Great Oxidation Event
 one of the most significant extinction events in the history of Earth
 brings Gaia's fragile Life into total peril
 Her living System at a Pathway's End

19. sacrificing an identity

luckily for all of us
 around 2 billion years ago
 two unique groups of Bacteria meet up
 one skilled in mobility
 with an innovative method of replication
 likely an off-spring of an earlier symbiotic merger
 between Spirochetted tail-wiggling sulphur-heat lovers
 and Ancestors who had developed a kind of sexual reproduction

the other an eccentric group
 perhaps avoided by most of the existent Bacterial forms
 due to their dangerous habit of toying with the poisonous Oxygen
 but after millions of years, the Purple Bacteria no longer die from it
 they've learned to breathe it



Spirochetes meet Purple Oxygen Breathers

in their initial encounter
 the two groups may have perceived each other as food
 but the Purple Bacteria may also have noted the Spirochetes mobility
 represented a power to find food
 extremely valuable as their own local resources were undoubtedly dwindling

while the Spirochetes may have recognized
 queer as the Purple Bacteria breathing Oxygen might be
 it appeared to protect them from what was happening to everyone else

although each may realize the value the other has to offer
 they face seemingly insurmountable obstacles sharing those assets

all Life forms at this Time are single-celled Organisms
called Prokaryotes

everything that makes them up floats freely within rigid cell walls
a kind of looping, circular DNA serves for replication and adaptation
they have unique identities, live independent lives
and are not known for cooperative relationships

without supposing some kind of Intelligence

it's difficult to imagine how the two Species could come up with their Solution
one that will not only save Earth's fragile Living Network from total collapse
but will also provide the means for the next quantum leap in Evolution
the Spirochetes and Purple Oxygen Breathers emerge a single Creature
securing their Existence and the future of their Off-spring
by sacrificing their past Identities

how did they accomplish this amazing feat?

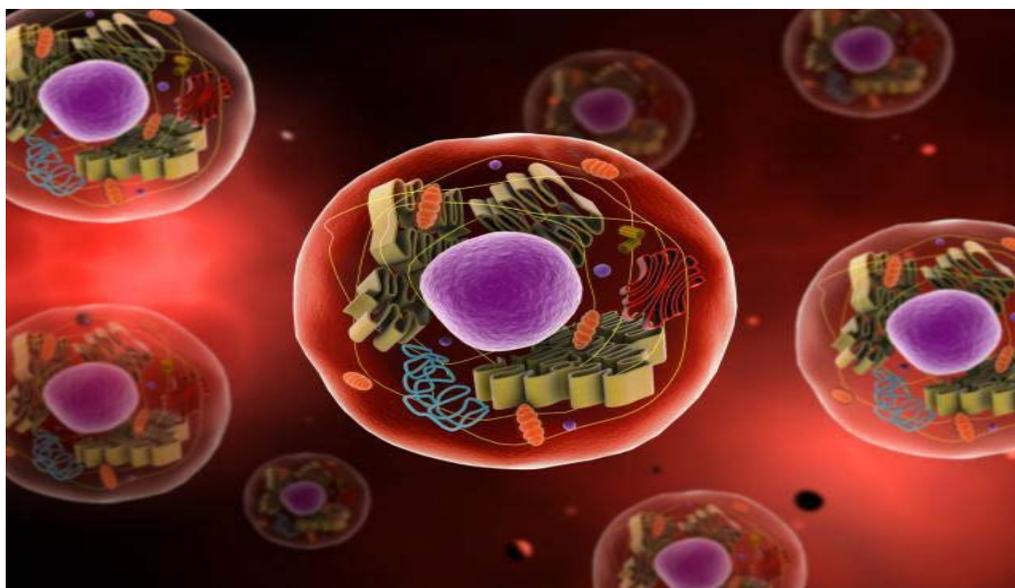
was it joyful? fun? a little scary?

did it take negotiation? Compassion? Empathy?

certainly it was improbable

the Eukaryote represents a radically new kind of Cell
beginning with a logically organized internal network

Organelles are now arranged with the goal of an efficient cooperative system
everything structured around an innovative decision making Nucleus
a specialized repository for the DNA



the Nucleated Cells prove immensely successful
 they very quickly begin to grow in size
 reflecting both revised, upgraded and additional skills
 the Oxygen breathing method of metabolism yields more energy
 their DNA — now protected with additional inner walls
 becomes linear and elongates
 expanding its connective strands
 optimizing its abilities

the Eukaryotes develop single cell Reproduction, Meiosis
 and perfect sexual reproduction, Mitosis
 multiplying the opportunities for adaptation
 enabling more rapid change in body form
 catalyzing diversity

when the Spirochetes and Purple Oxygen Breathers sacrificed their Identities
 and came together to form a new being
 they created the third great Planetary scale Phase Transition
 unpredictably and perhaps paradoxically
 their Solution will enable diverse groups of Cells
 to retain their individual Identities
 while becoming integral agents of larger living Organisms
 no small leap

Multi-celled Organisms will lead to Multi-organelled Life forms
 Bodies with skin, digestive system, heart, lungs, eyes, bones...
 unique Cells composed of Molecules
 holding together and reproducing by way of the inherited altruistic Life Bond
 the Nucleated Cell enables Networks of increasing Intelligence and Complexity

modest beginnings
 for what the future of Life on Earth will become

20. multi-cellular life

immediately following the Eukaryotes improbable Solution
 they enter a quiet period
 perhaps solving problems associated with different Cell groups joining up

learning how to communicate
 and ultimately how to live together
 cooperatively do the needed work / share food and Oxygen / reproduce
 it doesn't take long before their efforts begin to appear
 fossil records show flotillas of Microbes
 some Microbiologists describe them as sheets of light, soft-bodied tissues
 with differently structured types of Cells
 engaging with One Another
 merging while yet retaining their Identities
 coordinating their Lives and growth
 adapting their shapes and functions
 developing specialized abilities / dividing labors



but then comes a great Deep Freeze
 ice envelopes vast portions of the Planet
 a condition not unprecedented
 about a billion and half years earlier
 conditions on Earth are referred to as "snowball"
 our Planet will endure three more ice ages
 one resulting in another catastrophic extinction event
 the last is only now ending

given our model of the Universe
 with attributes of both Consciousness and Matter
 and the trajectory toward Love we see in Evolution

we might ask if we Humans
 couldn't some day help regulate Earth's temperature
 become Her Cosmic Gardener

given we've already started down that Path
 failing to understand the impact of our technology
 not yet adequately responding to the damage we're causing
 the Climate Crisis has decreased the likelihood of another ice age
 yet the Global Warming is causing Planetary wide disasters
 and threatens Chaos as could precipitate Systemic collapse
 but again, that's getting ahead of Ourselves

back 600 million years ago
 as mild climates return and sustaining rains begin to fall
 a warm, moist environment re-cradles
 those who somehow survived
 neither Eukaryotes nor Prokaryotes utterly lost

and there's been developments
 what had been loosely associated flotillas
 have now become unified Living Creatures
 Animals

some have Cells that perceive light and shadow
 when blue-green Photosynthesizers
 combine with several other cell types
 Plants develop

along the Pathway to these successes
 the Eukaryotes solve a difficult problem
 they'd inherited an exceedingly long Life span
 their Prokaryotic ancestors lived Forever
 well, not exactly —
 they could starve, die of thirst, get crushed or eaten
 so probably none ever did live Forever
 nonetheless their longevity — just living on and on
 severely restricted the rate at which adaptations could occur

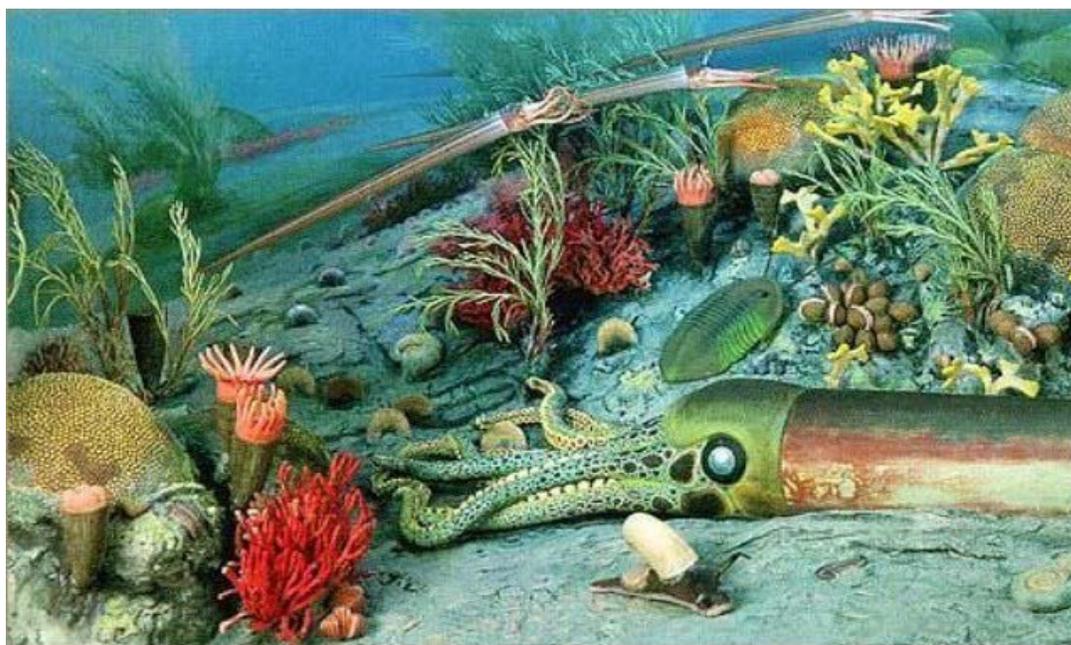
the Eukaryotes' Solution
 as improbable
 as it is unthinkable to the Self-as-Separate Identity

the Eukaryotes choose to forego Individual immortality
they program aging and death
into their DNA

this sacrifice made on our behalf
and including all of us — being their descendants
proves profoundly successful
in addition to accelerating Adaptations and Evolution
it limits the longevity of genetic error
helps ensure adequate resources for the new off-spring
and in a distant future
Cells dying so that others can take their place
will make possible embryonic and fetal growth
later still —
Complex Nervous Systems such as our own

21. the Cambrian radiation

fossils dating back about 540 million years ago
show evidence of a sudden bloom of diverse Multi-celled Animals
responding to cues from their environment
cooperatively re-configuring and re-building their structures



the seas hosted billions of minute creatures
 becoming food for ever more Complex and Larger living Unities
 as Cells learn how to make use of Calcium
 shells, teeth, bones, hard body parts became possible
 including animals with an external skeleton jointed legs, segmented bodies
 ancestors of the insects
 fungi and some of these tiny animals have begun making their way onto land

as the forms of the living rapidly change one reality doesn't
 Everyone wants to live / Everyone needs to eat
 only Plants make their own food, everyone else feeds on Others
 every Species finds itself nested in a larger ecosystem
 because those with whom it is nested are also evolving and changing
 survival requires successfully climbing peaks of fitness
 in response to the constantly changing environment
 the clever find and create niches for themselves
 weave their Presence into the interdependent expanding webs of Life

meanwhile, in the shallows along shorelines
 and farther out in the warm seas
 new kinds of fishes have appeared
 every Life form diversifying and evolving
 creating and choosing among options
 making adaptations within their horizon of possibility
 around 470 million years ago the first land Plants appear

22. body changing destiny

around 370 million years ago
 the Tetrapods, four-limbed vertebrates, walk out onto the land



they're amphibians
 gifted with both gills and lungs
able to breathe the Oxygen dissolved in the water
as well as the Oxygen in the air
most of these Ancestors prefer to stay close to the shore
 and continue to lay their eggs in the water

with the development of waterproof skin and shelled eggs
reptiles evolve from the amphibians
they're initially quite small and lizard-like in appearance
in time they diverge into two evolutionary Pathways
 one gives rise to mammals
 the other leads to dinosaurs, crocodiles, turtles, lizards, snakes and birds

by 320 million years ago
tall forests cover the land
 and beneath their branches ferns
and beneath the ferns —
early spiders, ticks and wingless insects, centipedes, scorpions...

around 200 million years ago
as Pangaea begins to break apart
 giving rise to the continents as we know them
Earth is warm and hospitable. A Garden of lush vegetation
 ginkgo trees, palm-like Cycads, conifers...
dinosaurs roam



most dinosaurs are herbivores
 although there's also carnivores who feed on the vegetarians
 from one group the earliest birds begin to evolve
 at this same time plants are inventing flowering

then, about 66 million years ago
 an asteroid collides with Earth
 shock waves trigger global earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and when
 the super-heated dust particles from the collision fall back down as
 fiery rain —
 wildfires are burning everywhere
 months of darkness follow

the effects are catastrophic
 the dinosaurs, already under stress, go extinct
 along with families of Mollusks and marine Plankton
 terrestrial Plants and Insects all suffer
 nearly 50% of Species disappear



23. the age of mammals

about a million years later
 Gaia again regains Her balance
 birds, the only surviving descendants of the dinosaurs
 fill the air with their chirping, song and call
 the possibilities of the matured DNA are enabling Life to transform the Planet
 enchant every cubic centimeter

mammals diversify

mammoths, mastodons, bear and bison

wolves, beavers, raccoons, rabbits, shrews and porcupine...

herds of grazing animals...

horses, sheep, cattle, rhinoceros, deer...

large carnivores such as sabretooth cats also evolve

as does more and more effective cooperation within Species,

even across Species

finding and obtaining food / collectively caring for the young

warning of predators...

the moderated Climate

encourages some Lifeforms to reconsider the Sea

some mammals return

become whales, dolphins, porpoises, sea lions...

meanwhile perch, trout and bass populate the fresh water rivers and lakes

24. primates / hominids / homo sapiens

the Story we're following is also our Story, of course,

the choices and sacrifices our Ancestors made

the evolutionary genius they invested in Life

the Pathways they took tells us about Ourselves

where we came from / how we got here / what we're a part of

about 10 to 15 million years after the Dinosaurs have disappeared

the first primate-like Creatures appear

they look something like present-day Lemurs / squirrelish with long-tails

they're, smart, communicative and social

and like all mammals, they nurse their young

one group finds an ecological niche

by adapting their hands

thumbs opposite the digits allow for the handling of objects

nails rather than claws improve the grasp

adding these adaptations to their tree climbing skills

results in a variety of successful Primates

by about 30 million years ago Monkeys have appeared

almost 5 million years after that

foregoing tails and excelling in strength

Apes diversify from Monkeys

after at least another 15 million years
Continuing in the Branching Pattern of Evolution
rather than a linear replacement of Ancestors
permitting ancestors and descendants to exist at the same time
the Apes diverge into two lines
one will lead to Gorillas
the other to Humans, Chimpanzees and Bonobos

about 3 million years ago
Earth turned cooler and drier
causing forests to shrink and grasslands expand
severely impacting the tree-dwelling Primates

fossil bones of this period
suggest our Ancestors responded to these changes
they climbed down from the trees —
and began walking upright



by the time Lucy was alive, about 3.2 million years ago
the Human line had clearly split from the Ape line
Homo Erectus flourishes in Africa

Hominids are soon making tools
living together in small groups
gathering plants and fishing
hunting or scavenging animals already killed

some groups choose to migrate toward Asia
they enter Europe around 1.5 million years ago
it takes another million years
before there's evidence of befriending fire
by 100,000 years ago we're burying our dead

25. civilization

around 16,500 years ago
the first Humans cross the Bering Land Bridge
making their way toward what will become the Americas
some who make the crossing will develop Cultures deeply reverent of Nature
place a high value on creating Community with One Another
could this mean we've not yet developed
Self-as-Separate Cultures when they cross?

during this same period
Humans are creating unprecedented forms of art
beautiful cave wall paintings, jewelry, decorative beads, antler carvings...
statuettes and small sculptures suggesting at least a positive attitude toward women
if not a religious association

by about 12,000 years ago
we're using bows and arrows, traps, snares, nets...
making pottery, weaving baskets...
some groups are planting and harvesting crops
others domesticating animals
communities are growing



by 5000 years ago
cities have appeared
rivers and river valleys cradle these early Civilizations
we have systems of letters and writing
 calendars for crop planting
we're navigating by the Stars, Moon and Sun
 making tools from metals

by the earliest records and writing that we have, however
it appears that hierarchy enforced by violence
 men over women
 wealth and poverty
 slavery
territorial clashes with neighboring groups
has already taken hold.

something has gone wrong
terribly wrong

Part III: Our Short Story

26. preface

some might argue that nothing has gone wrong
if we premise an Object Universe

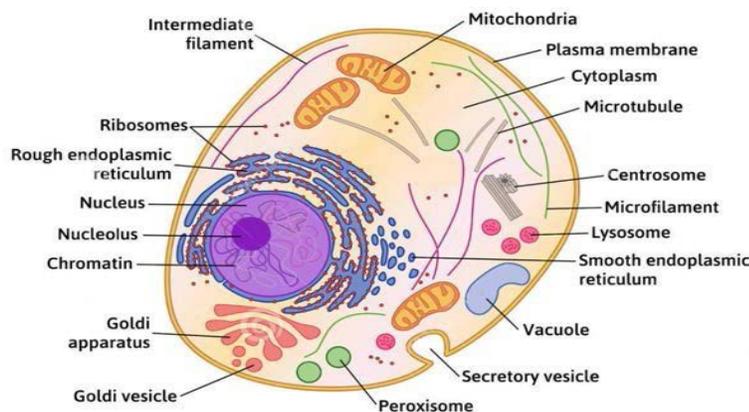
and assume we are Separate from Nature and each Other
the logic of our thinking will reduce Evolution to Narratives of competition
define survival of the fittest as the strong taking from the weak
normalize social and economic inequity / violence / war
veritably celebrate greed
neutralizing our ability to respond to Others and our Planet

and if the Pathway Civilization has been on ends in tragedy —
the argument concludes
it won't be because of errant choices we made or are making
but rather the unavoidable result of Human Nature

happily, there are a host of alternatives to this deterministic model
beginning with noting that not all Scientists agree
that Self-serving aggression is the only Relationship we see in Nature
recent work in Primatology, for instance,

has challenged older thinking
observing that in all Primate Species
cooperative and harmony promoting behaviors
outnumber the aggressive in a group's activity budget

Microbiologists studying the Organelles
the tiny intra-cellular Creatures who keep each Cell alive
note that they carry out their specialized tasks for the good of the whole
Live in a manner easily categorized as Altruistic



although some Scientists still hold to hierarchy and social stratification
 as integral to their definition of civilization
 others recognize that such an account carries a value judgment
 many Scientists now prefer alternative approaches to the concept of Civilization
 such as linking it with the identification of types of Human Community
 enumerating their characteristics and features

History searches the records, writings, artifacts left in the past
 that represent the Choices we as a Species have made
 the Pathway we've taken
 history wants to tell us how the World we have — came to be
 where we fit in our Story
 what we're a part of
 to learn the motivations that informed those Choices
 is the principle piece of our Story

27. ancient history

piecing together fragments of ancient writings
 statuary and oral traditions
 and noting several allusions to the reality
 a Matriarchy may have preceded the male-centric World of our History

So what might be said of it —
 certainly the Universe may not have been understood as an Object
 and a Woman-centered Society would likely have elevated Care for Children,
 valued Community over conquest and powering over others
 We need to note that there's no clear archeological evidence
 precluding early Human Societies from being Egalitarian and Loving

in fact, we know of several such Cultural Traditions existing today
 among North American and Australian indigenous Peoples, for instance,
 One Another and all of Nature are One Sacred Family.
 also, the Moken People, Austronesian sea-nomads,
 who care little for material wealth;
 and for whom, "the ocean is our universe."
 and the Mbendjele, forest dwellers of the Congo, who say:
 "We love the forest as we love our own bodies."

We also have the intriguing observation of Agatharchides,
 an Ancient Greek geographer,
 describing a group of African people, he wrote
 "unlike the Greeks," they have "no desire for power"
 live "free from greed and envy"

is this a society he's actually seen?
 or does he intend these comments less as geographical observations
 than as a critique of those, "sailing the seas for the sake of gain"
 that is — his own People

in any case,
 Ancient Greek Culture represents the cradle of Western Civilization
 and their assumption regarding the Universe as Mindless
 as well as their attitudes toward women and property
 even their definitions of Masculinity still inform our own
 "Spartans," for instance, synonymous with tough manliness

since the Greek Cultural tradition informs the dominant Pathway Humanity has taken
 tracing how we got to where we are suggests we start with the Greeks
 of course, the Ancient Greeks didn't invent the Patriarchal patterns we live under
 warfare, territorial expansion, misogyny and slavery
 are well-documented aspects of ancient Mesopotamian society

the inhabitants of the area known as Greece fought among themselves for centuries
 until the king they called Alexander the Great forcibly united them
 after consolidating the peninsula
 Alexander extended the Greek empire annexing Egypt, Asia Minor, Syria, Persia,
 even entering the Indian subcontinent
 sacking and burning cities / massacring able-bodied males / raping the women
 enslaving the children / pillaging anything of value



admitting that this kind of behavior represents our beginnings
 we can appreciate the distance we've come from such barbarity
 applying reason, invoking compassion and believing in One Another
 we've been learning how to solve our problems without violence and revenge
 we've begun exploring the possibilities of Liberal democracy and the Rule of Law
 we've created the United Nations in the endeavor to recognize each other
 respect and appreciate each other's territories and Culture
 true we're far from our Ideals
 and we haven't come far enough in addressing the gross inequity in our World
 we've neglected the health of our Planet
 and the progress we have made hasn't come easily

we're constantly reminded that getting closer to a more Loving World
 a more just Society
 can only happen as all of us are making those kinds of moral choices
 Human freedom enabled every war / every thought of hatred or revenge
 the very imagining of Self-as-Separate
 it also enables us to Love One Another

noting and acknowledging our historic abuse of Freedom
 raises the question
 how did such violence and powering over ever become normal?
 was it originally spread because either join in or be eliminated by it?
 and thus all becoming unwilling enlistees?

did we end up thinking about war like Alexander's tutor, Aristotle,
 believing it was the only means we had to achieve Peace
 never really knowing where it came from / just that it was there

Aristotle equated Truth with knowing the Reality that was there
 alongside war, he also commented on slavery and misogyny
 for Aristotle, knowledge consists of fitting things into categories
 thus he concluded that slaves are born to be enslaved
 women to be subordinated, etc.
 his writings laid the foundation for Western thought

quite sidelining his teacher, Plato
 who advocated a seemingly more progressive view of Truth
 as an on-going discovery
 a coming out of the cave
 stepping beyond the Reality, the shadows cast on the walls
 Plato's recommendation, "Know thyself."

to their credit, the Greeks add to and develop the knowledge
 they appropriated from the People they conquered
 geometry, art, philosophy, astronomy, medicine...
 and most significantly — they create the world's first known democracy
 ...sort of



In 146 BC the Romans conquer the Greeks
 and take away everything they can carry
 including the Culture
 tweaking it their own imperial ambitions. They make it their own.
 the Romans develop extensive networks of communication and administration
 they codify practices such as the right to unlimited private property accumulation

Rome subjugates the known World
 plundering rich booty from Cleopatra's Egypt
 gold from the Celtic tribes of Gaul
 eventually controlling Lands stretching to Mesopotamia and beyond
 all the lands surrounding the Mediterranean
 all of what will be France, parts of Britain and Germany
 they rule over 50 to 70 million People
 warring / enslaving / crucifying
 watching Lions eat People
 cheering gladiators as they slash each other to shreds

it's abundantly clear at this stage in our Story
 that something *is* terribly wrong

Western Civilization is producing a Humanity
 based solely on a Self-as-Separate idea
 submerged beneath an “us” and a “them” Linguistic mentality
 Others’ sufferings are not our own
 Another’s misfortune no one else’s responsibility
 we’re clearly objectifying One Another
 and it’s resulting in brutal patterns of behavior
 might equals right

yet even times like these have their Purple Oxygen Breathers
 such as the young preacher in one of Rome’s colonies
 calling us to “Love One Another” — even our enemies
 replace the old “eye for an eye” with “turn the other cheek”
 telling the Wealthy man to “sell all you have and give the money to the poor”
 urging us to feed the hungry / clothe the naked / shelter the homeless
 the authorities quickly put this wave-maker to death

but People found Christ’s message compelling
 some 300 years after his untimely death
 and not long after one emperor had thousands of his followers killed
 another decrees Christianity the official State religion

ancient Rome leaves Western Civilization richer in architecture
 sculpture, mosaics and writings
 Roman ingenuity took civil engineering to a new level
 bridges, aqueducts, paved roads...
 Roman imperialism enforced Latin
 a shared language across 2.5 million square miles of territory
 Roman rule lasts more than 10 centuries

28. feudalism

in 410 and again in 455
 Germanic invaders sack Rome
 for multiple reasons, the Empire collapses
 as Roman control breaks down
 warrior tribes invade with impunity
 local armed men, too
 pillage, seize territory, murder, rape, enslave

you can imagine what's going on
 men armed with swords, spears and hatchets
 running around some claiming this, others claiming that
 and killing One Another over it
 feudalism brings a small measure of order to the otherwise chaos
 deals are cut for dominion over Lands
 and the People living on them
 including the right to collect dues in goods and services
 in exchange for military alliances
 those who work the land have little choice
 even if they're not slaves or serfs
 they desperately need the protection of the castle walls
 the knights on horseback

those atop the feudal hierarchies arrive there and stay
 by exercising brute force more effectively than anyone else
 but here and there a king does something more constructive as well



take Charlemagne
 grandson of the military commander
 credited with halting a European incursion by North Africans
 Islamic invaders who were at the time conquering the known World
 gathering and developing all available knowledge
 preserving and commenting on the writings of ancient Greece and Rome
 enjoying a Cultural Golden Age
 while education and scholarship in Europe was in a deep sleep

By 771 when Charlemagne becomes king
 it's hard to find literate People to serve as court scribes
 he himself can't write. perhaps can't read either
 but he can bring scholars to his court
 decree that schools be established
 all the while expanding his realm through warfare
 converting conquered people to Christianity at sword point
 rewarding loyal supporters with high-ranking posts in the Church Hierarchy
 for during the Centuries intervening since Christ proclaimed His message of Love
 individuals embedded in the dominant Culture
 transformed Christianity itself into a hierarchicalized Institution

29. the church

the Medieval Church exemplifies Western Civilization's troubled times
 corruption from Pope and cardinals, on down through the priests



inside the castle walls
 those who called themselves nobles
 descendants of those who had conquered the lands
 feasted on whatever was available / lived in relative luxury
 those who lived outside the walls, all the rest, everyone else
 suffered hunger and cold

the Institution that claimed the rights to Christ's words and teachings
 now preached and practiced the belief that the severe hierarchy
 the gross inequity among Church members and in Society at large
 mirrored God's hierarchy of Angels and Saints in Heaven

thus justifying the social and political structures as divinely ordained
 those at the bottom easily believing that Earthly life is a valley of tears
 Wealthy families filled the upper ranks of the all male Church hierarchy
 their supposed celibacy expressing distrust and hostility toward women and Nature

Popes wage wars like kings
 become responsible for the deaths of some 1.7 million People
 the Crusades stretch over two centuries
 slaughtering, sacking cities, pillaging
 the perpetrators believing all their sins forgiven
 merely for joining these “holy” wars
 In 1096, crusaders murder an estimated 10,000 Jews
 before leaving Europe to go kill Muslims in Jerusalem.

this does not look good for Humanity
 at least not for this strain of Human development or lack of it
 happening in Western Europe
 yet glimmers of the original “Love One Another,” “turn the other cheek”
 message remain

the millennial “Peace and Truce of God” movement, for instance
 declares Churches as violence-free zones
 and there’s also the occasional wealthy individual
 who gives away all material possessions as Jesus said
 but to do so requires walking a fine line
 when the Waldensians dared to question Church Wealth and Hierarchy
 they were burned alive for their teachings
 Francis of Assisi gets away with his poverty point
 by submission to the Church on all else



for by the 1100s
 the once-persecuted Religion is now well established
 and jealously guards the power to decide what Christians will believe
 the Church will eventually establish the Inquisition
 an institution that will torture and kill thousands for what they think, feel, say

at this time most People still inhabit manorial lands
 although increasing numbers are moving into the cities
 merchants and artisans workers on the great cathedrals
 students at the first universities

then the unpredictable
 changing weather patterns / crop failures / famine
 and starting in 1347 / and in just four years
 a great plague kills 40 to 50% of the European population
 violence and blaming others for the calamity exacerbates the situation
 thousands of Jews are massacred / pilgrims and alleged witches are murdered

all this accompanied by additional destruction and death
 wrought by the Hundred Years War
 villages decimated, laborers scarce, people wandering the countryside
 in some places the peasants revolt
 at least one such group questions the idea of hierarchy
 all are crushed
 Europe's population drops at least 60% by the mid-1400s

the story of our Humanity
 our past / what we did / came through / learned
 the Choices that our Ancestors made
 is certainly not the Narrative we would wish it could be
 but we need to know it truthfully
 so we can know how we came to be where we are
 and how and where we presently fit in
 helping us answer who are we becoming
 in our own Lifetimes

30. Renaissance

Europe eventually recovers with a remarkable Cultural rebirth
 beginning among the educated upper classes in Italy
 renewed interest in Roman and Greek literature

turns the Cultural focus from Medieval theological speculation
to the Human / Human capabilities / Human genius
the beauty of our Bodies / of Nature
the Wonders of Life / Earth / the Arts

new drawing and painting techniques are developed
artists are using scientific methods of observation, employing mathematics
edging toward perfect representations of Human Bodies, Faces



David, by Michelangelo



Mona Lisa, by Leonardo da Vinci

the Church commissions great works of art
finances them by selling forgiveness of sins
a theological product called “indulgences”
a corruption only matched by oligarch Popes and Cardinals
indulging in lavish this-worldliness feasting
including sexual abuse of women and children

the Renaissance sobers as it spreads northward
where a new phenomenon bursts onto the stage

in 1517, Martin Luther rejects the Church doctrine on indulgences
questions Papal authority and won't back down
he finds people ready to hear, as well as protect him
thus begins the Protestant Reformation
the newly available printing presses greatly accelerate its spread

a multiplicity of denominations rapidly emerge
 some declare themselves pacifists. "Thou shalt not kill"
 more generally, the new Protestantism encourages believers to read
 particularly the Bible

Protestants establish schools / spread literacy
 they aim at creating a "priesthood of the faithful"
 a major cultural change takes place

but Europe is not ready for Pluralism
 with the emergence of diverse religious belief comes terrible violence
 Catholics vs. Protestants / Protestants vs. Catholics / Protestant against Protestant
 Inquisitioners as well as commoners, kings and queens, aristocrats and officials...
 torturing and killing people for what they believe, for how they pray

full scale wars
 with gunpowder now in the mix



St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre / painting by Francois Dubois

the French Wars of Religion kill between 2 and 4 million People
 including up to 10,000 abruptly murdered in the St Bartholomew's Day massacre
 in Germany some 11 million lives are lost
 as the mayhem turns political
 multiple countries fight it out in the Thirty Years War
 unprovisioned armies devastate the countryside
 take everything of value, burn homes, destroy farms, rape,
 murder and spread disease

on and off the battlefield the Religious Wars intensify attacks against Jews
encourage the witch burning craze

In England, religious differences further enflame a Civil War
originally begun over the dispute of monarchical power

European Kings at this time were claiming absolute power by “divine right”
not something the British Parliament were about to go along with

Meanwhile, explorers are laying claims to new lands and territories
France, Spain and England are reaping wealth exploiting colonies

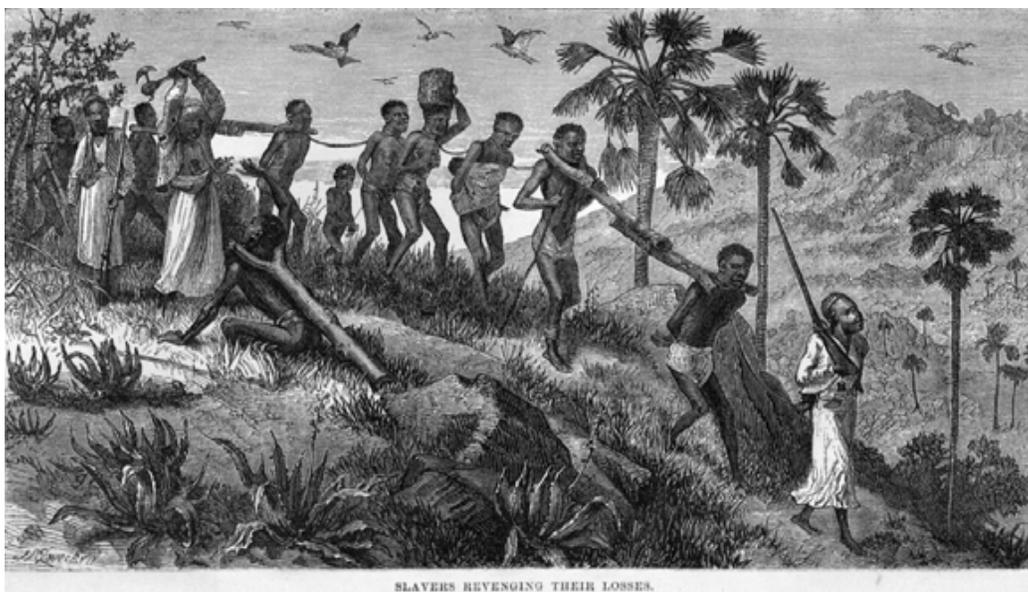
Peru’s gold and silver mines

Caribbean sugar and coffee plantations

as ruthless treatment and enslavement kills off indigenous People

the African slave trade takes off

will boom through the 17th and 18th centuries



by the time the hideous Trans-Atlantic commercial enterprise ends
at least 12 million Human Beings will have been packed onto slave ships
2 million will have died on the way to the Americas
another 5 million die in holding camps upon arrival
those who manage to survive are then sold
subjected to brutal working conditions, whippings, mutilation, rape
sale of family members and more

can Hope glimmer through such horror?

are we as a Species saying anything even remotely Redemptive of our Presence?
 or have we so profoundly deviated from the Path
 that the Quarks sharing Energy took at the Beginning of the Universe
 that the Long Chain Polymers helped define with their Altruism
 and the Spirochetes and Purple Oxygen Breathers clarified

a shining light will come from the enslaved Africans themselves
 independent of the oppressors' Choices
 many hold firmly onto their dignity
 keep their own moral compass
 harboring a clandestine alternative Culture
 expanding notions of Human Integrity / compassion / Family / Community

31. micro shift

hope grows that Humanity can mature
 that Western Civilization can wake
 as the the Age of Reason and Scientific Revolution
 upgrade fundamental beliefs about Ourselves and the World

Copernicus' assertion that the Earth goes around the Sun
 affirmed and publicized by Galileo
 undercut Aristotle's view that what we see is simply what is
 and that knowledge consists in commentary on inherited tradition
 cracking a central pillar of the Medieval mindset

in 1641, Descartes publishes his Meditations
 the account of a groundbreaking thought process
 in search of a foundation for all of Human knowing
 Descartes finds that the only thing that he cannot doubt
 is that he himself is thinking (doing the doubting)
 "I think therefore I am"

one of the problems with this approach however
 follows from the recognition that perception is a kind of thinking
 taking place, as it does, in our Minds;
 so Descartes is pressed to conclude that we can't know for sure
 if a World actually exists outside our Minds.

He declares a complete split between Mind and Matter
 the extended of World, one thing;
 our interior Minds, something else altogether.

but by denying Intention or Purpose to the World
the Cartesian Paradigm leaves the production of Meaning to our imagination
where morality is to be found — a real problem

Now what?

rather than reproducing the inherited idea —
that an independently existing Subject, that is God,
created a temporal mindless Object-like thing, the Universe;
Spinoza offers a different model of the Cosmos



Benedict de Spinoza

Spinoza delivers his answer to the Mind-Matter Problem
as one would present the explanation for a principle in geometry.
He moves from definitions to axioms, to postulates and propositions.

Substance, he begins, is that which Exists.
Singular and Infinite.

Substance is all that Exists. It doesn't depend on anything else —
so being without limits and with infinite Attributes
Spinoza identifies Substance with God

He then points out that Humans are capable of knowing
two of the infinite Attributes of the One Substance —
Thought and Extension

in modern terms, Mind and Matter

Spinoza integrates how we experience the World;
draws out the logical conclusion that the Universe is Divine;
he inspires a few radicals at odds with traditional culture

but is mostly shunned as a pantheist, even atheist
disowned by his own community

philosopher and mathematician Gottfried Leibnitz
weighs in with another solution to how Mind and Matter could be unified
he suggests that there exists an infinity of Monads
simple Substances with thought and perception

but no windows to see into them / you can't know what they're thinking
although individuated they mirror the entire Universe from their perspective
Monads are non-physical building blocks composing every identifiable thing

when asked how is it that the World is not in absolute chaos
as would be expected from an infinity of independently minded Monads
Leibnitz answers that such a multiplicity could only be integrated
by a divinely pre-established harmony
and thereby concludes that this must be "the best of all possible worlds"

an assertion that Voltaire will thoroughly demolish
with the tale of his protagonist the childlike Candide
witness to the Seven Years War, the Inquisition, the cruel treatment of African slaves
the horrors endured by the indigenous People in the New World
"best of all possible Worlds"?

Voltaire's comic genius proves a powerful tool
his wit plays into a growing Cultural movement of applying Reason to everything
writers work at articulating Humane values, real knowledge
the idea of religious toleration resonates
Humanity is waking
we're become aware of who we can be

32. Enlightenment

Enlightenment writers put their faith in Human Goodness
they trust Reason and the new Scientific thinking
exemplified by Newton's Laws of Motion and Gravitation
John Locke challenges traditional religion and authority with his Natural Rights
shifts the grounds for authority from divine decree to Human consent and reason.

Rousseau dares point out that private property lacks a valid basis
"the fruits of the earth are for everyone, the earth belongs to no one," he declares.

other Enlightenment writers don't go quite that far
but they do show audacity / their work is forbidden

Voltaire gets beaten up by an aristocrat's thugs
twice does time in the Bastille prison

Diderot, too, is imprisoned

Enlightenment writings nonetheless get published
by Dutch and Swiss sympathizers

books and pamphlets are smuggled around Europe

all of which only makes the new ideas that much more attractive

even to aristocrats

who are beginning to recognize that you can't run a society
with all privilege concentrated at the top

and everyone else left uneducated, unable to contribute

reading becomes fashionable / literacy spreads

coffee houses, study clubs, salons provide places for discussion



every point must prove itself

none gain by appealing to authority

the Enlightenment represents a momentous change

from a subservient relationship with the existent Institutions and Authority;

their explanations, justifications and points of view —

to a mature thinking for Oneself

taking up individual responsibility for moral values

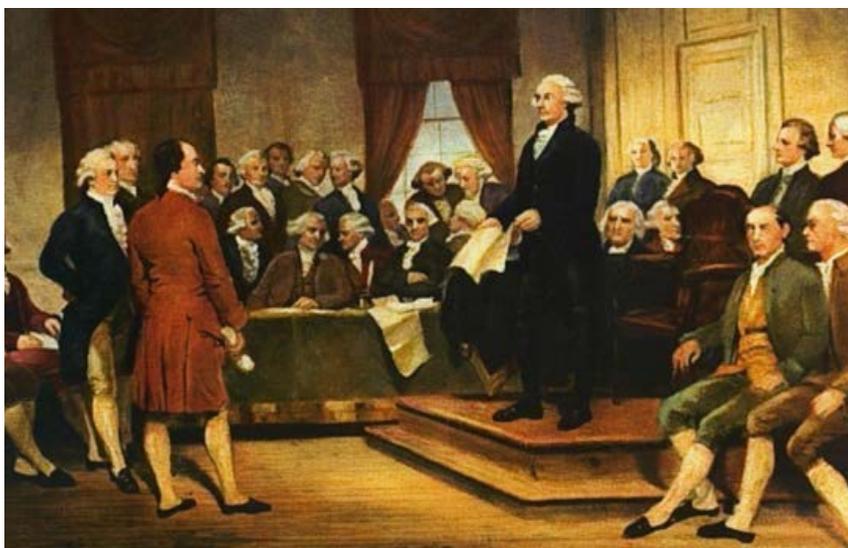
the moment summed up by Immanuel Kant, "Dare to Know."

the meaning of Humanity that the Enlightenment whispers, however,
doesn't go far enough, nor reach the needed depths

it doesn't stop the slave trade
 Racism, in fact, worsens
 as those who believe in slavery
 now feel obliged to try to justify the unjustifiable
 nonetheless the Enlightenment helps make Human Rights thinkable
 laying democracy's groundwork

"Man is born free," writes Rousseau, "yet is everywhere in chains!"
 before the end of the century
 revolutions in the Americas, in France and elsewhere
 will try to break free

Try



the Enlightenment inspired founders of the United States
 declare all men created equal
 endowed with inalienable rights
 among them: "Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."
 but the government they create
 allows slavery to continue in the U.S. until 1865
 supports genocidal tactics against Native Americans into the 20th century
 gives only propertied men the right to vote until 1870
 excludes women voters until 1920
 fails to protect African Americans' voting rights until 1965
 and remained more an oligarchy than a true democracy into the 21st century

Try...

In France

it will take four Revolutions to establish a stable, if limited, democracy
after high hopes and stunning moments

the People taking down the Bastille

aristocrats promising to give up their feudal privileges

France's first attempt will careen through counter-revolution
and the Reign of Terror

followed by Napoleon's Roman-style Empire

the People actually voting to let Napoleon take away their rights and freedoms

his wars of conquest take 4 million lives

it comes to end with the forcible restoration of the Monarchy by foreign powers

then comes backlash — even against the Enlightenment

Europe's monarchs try to stamp out the questioning

press to restore the old traditions

they want no more revolutions — ever

33. something's missing

Romanticism works both for and against the progress

that Humanity was making at the time

toward the World where we care for One Another and our Planet

no matter how improbable that Dream

the slow evolutionary movement had unexpectedly speeded up

but not everyone was ready

Romanticism rejects Reason, even Science, as unfeeling

pointing out that Logic is unable to comprehend love, wonder, beauty...

cold rationality doesn't comprehend mystery

Some Romantics look back longingly and fantasize about Medieval times

some identify with traditional religion

even embrace the Nationalism that the Revolutions have stirred up

above all though, Romanticism celebrates Nature

advocates an open Universe not determined or predictable from the Beginning

insists on Human Freedom and Individual moral Choice

honors the heroics of the Great Man

Romantics imagine utopian possibilities

if the Enlightenment woke us to our responsibility as Humans,

Romanticism provided egalitarian visions of what we're possible.

meanwhile laissez-faire industrialization was making an ugly start
 innovative techniques in mining, smelting iron, textile manufacturing
 the appearance of steam engines, railroads, harvesting machines...
 but with no regulations / no labor laws
 Capitalism is wrecking havoc on the World



mills and factories proliferate death, injury, disease
 14 hour workdays / 6 day workweeks
 child labor ubiquitous and cruel
 cities are overcrowded and fouled with industrial and Human waste
 even those profiting can't bear the stench
 some feel a moral discomfort, too

Charles Dickens vividly describes the poverty, the corruption,
 the insensitivity to the suffering
 Emile Zola shows what Life was like for mineworkers.
 Karl Marx calls workers to unite / throw off their chains

Workers do organize and carry out strikes even riot
 but pay a high price in beatings / lost lives

To keep the workers in line
 and maintain the social economic hierarchy
 for a system blatantly unfair doesn't exist by People choosing it

and in our case,
 everyone can see and feel the unfairness
 and no one likes being exploited
 so the Ruling Classes add calculated concessions
 improved urban conditions
 small beginnings of regulations
 and alongside the on-going merciless violence
 veiled efforts to manipulate by controlling education and entertainment
 transforming old spontaneous rural games
 into uniformed teams and leagues / owned and overseen by them
 teaching team spirit
 forging disciplined workers
 institutionalizing us-against-them
 constructing masculinity / sportsmanship / nationalism
 training for war

 and war it will be

34. the twentieth century

driven by industrialists' demand for more resources for raw materials
 catalyzed by political strategies fanning the flames of nationalism
 European nations fall into a global territorial grab competition
 lock themselves into a mad scramble for wealth and imperial glory
 after carving up the Americas, pushing into Asia
 they turn to what Belgium's King Leopold calls "that magnificent African Cake"
 gold, oil, rubber, metals, diamonds and more
 the taking easy with modern machine guns and artillery on one side
 spears, swords, outdated guns on the other
 one battle's toll: 47 British killed / 10,000 Sudanese

if our Story is leading to the outcome every Heart would wish
 it's not taking a straight line

early 20th century technologies bring real progress
 at least if measured in terms of standards of living, comforts, ease
 gas lights and steam are replaced by electricity
 suddenly there's automobiles, trucks, telephones, radio, film
 but innovations also pave the way to unimagined horror

heads of state and war ministers opt for massive military modernization
 every Scientific advance is pressed into the service of war
 new armaments / equipment / guns / artillery
 not long afterward armies are practicing with it
 all poised for the least provocation
 a feud among the ruling families was all it took

welcomed enthusiastically by People all across Europe
 generals and military strategists deployed chemical weapons
 sent men with rifles charging out of trenches
 to be mowed down by machine gun fire
 World War I takes the lives of some 11 million soldiers
 then a flu epidemic decimates armies / prisoners of war
 areas of Europe are left totally destroyed
 civilian casualties perhaps 7 million



shattered, too,
 Enlightenment faith that Reason and Science necessarily lead to progress

add to it all the Peace Treaty ending the war
 blamed only Germany for the carnage
 extracting vengeance on the German economy
 knowing the People there are already starving
 sowing the seeds for the next conflagration

postwar Europe emerges as a mess of shaky economies
 weak governments and social strife

Socialists, Communists and Labor Unions organize strikes

demanding a living wage
decent working conditions
the eight-hour work day

such bold demands

plus the Bolshevik Revolution that happened during the war
frighten the comfortable Classes

in the United States

a Red Scare curbs free speech / attacks Unions

unapologetic racism drives a resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan

anti-black riots result in mass killings in East St. Louis, Tulsa, dozens more cities

in Italy

Mussolini pushes his way to power

rejected by Socialists for his pro-war stance,

he abandons the left / moves to the right

a right more extreme than the old conservatism

a modern right opposed to change and committed to Separate Self-interest

Mussolini plays on Ruling Class fears of workers' movements

employs hate-talk and promises to restore Italy to Roman "Greatness"

squads of fascist thugs beat up Socialists and Communists



by 1922,

Mussolini takes over Italy as dictator

he coins the term, "Totalitarian" to name his rule

a cult of personality
 modeling a hyper-masculinity / anti-feminist / absolute tyranny
 his success encourages others of Europe's far right to take action

like the Beer Hall Putsch that lands Hitler in jail
 where preferential treatment permits him to dictate his book
 within a few years, he's running for president
 talks German "Greatness" to a People humiliated
 hurting from the terms of their defeat
 inflames and manipulates their anger / frustration
 stirs deep-seated racial hatreds / employs age-old blaming tactics
 first attacking Jews
 then Communists / Liberals / Union Leaders / Gays / any hint of opposition

in 1929
 when the top-heavy U.S. economy crashes
 entangled European economies also go down
 mass unemployment / soup kitchens / bread lines
 only the socialized Scandinavian Countries weather the Great Depression well
 Germany's economy worsens / joblessness increases to 40%

using newly developed media
 in addition to mass rallies / rantings / gangs of thugs / beatings of those who object
 Hitler gets German voters to give him enough power
 to enter the hallways of government
 he takes total control by the end of 1933



defying the terms of the treaty ending the "war to end all wars"
 Hitler enlists bankers / investors / industrialists / corporations
 and cuts unemployment by embarking on a massive military buildup

Ford, IBM, Standard Oil join the effort
 Joseph Kennedy, Henry Ford, Fred Koch, Prescott Bush
 and other United States oligarchs flirt and invest
 while Hitler annexes Austria / invades Czechoslovakia / destroys Poland

World War II will take more than 60 million lives
 more than any previous war
 killing a much larger proportion of civilians than ever
 the relentless destruction of cities
 the use of the nuclear bomb
 were this slaughter of One Another not enough

add to it the horror that no Mind can wrap around
 roundups / holding facilities / death-camp trains / sadistic guards
 the systematic processing / sorting / stripping / gas chambers / the ovens
 Six million people — men, women and children — murdered for being Jews

And yet in so evil a moment, we also see Humanity's best
 many throughout occupied Europe dared to resist
 even within Nazi Germany some People refused to go along
 Students, Professors and Supporters made up Munich's White Rose
 denouncing Hitler's regime in graffiti and leaflets
 boldly talking back to their interrogators / going undaunted to their deaths



Hans Scholl, Sophie Scholl and Christoph Probst / Members of the White Rose

many known and unknown risked their own lives to save Jews
 whether by hiding one person or a family
 or rescuing large numbers like Swedish diplomat Raoul Wallenberg
 German industrialist Oskar Schindler
 British stockbroker Nicholas Winton

or the entire town of Le Chambon-sur-Lignon in the mountains of occupied France who worked together to harbor at least 3,000 to 5,000 Jewish refugees. Heroes who will later insist they only did what anyone would have done —

but in fact,
most People collaborated with the Nazis to a greater or lesser extent.
Auschwitz, Hiroshima, Nanking / on and on



Western Minds reel in the aftershock —
Soul Search

was this an aberration? or the expression of our Culture?

is this who We are on some level?

how could this have happened?

who was responsible for the nightmare?

in a prisoner of war camp

young philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre formulates a strong answer

We Humans, he will elaborate in all his writings, are “condemned to be free”

we Choose who we will be

what we will do

we determine our Possibility

making each of us fully responsible for our World.

from within the French resistance

Albert Camus suggests that each of us can respond to an “unfree world”

by becoming so free that our very existence is a rebellion

Simone de Beauvoir describes the process of being made “Other”
her focus the construction of Woman as a second sex



Jean Paul Sartre

Simone de Beauvoir

Albert Camus

Philosophers writing literature that a worldwide audience loves
like Sartre’s short story, *The Wall*

where a captured resistance fighter must choose:
reveal his comrade’s hiding place or face the firing squad
he collaborates. Sends the police to what he’s sure is the wrong place
but where it turns out his friend had gone

or Camus’ thoroughly unsubtle play, *State of Siege*
where a character identified as “The Plague”

has a Secretary who kills people by crossing-off their names in a notebook
takes over and terrorizes a village
getting everyone to collaborate
seemingly invincible until his power is broken
by just one individual willing to risk everything and take a stand

the Existentialist message hits home
as People honestly try to make sure such atrocities never happen again

European nations take the first steps away from their old competition
join in creating the United Nations
the role Communists played in resistance movements during the war
brings them a burst of electoral success
the less damaged United States gives massive aid
works toward a rapid post-war recovery
hoping to ward off any growing admiration or influence of Communism

as World War II comes to an end
the fear that Communists are going to insist on everyone sharing the Wealth

is compounded by the emergence of Stalin
 a brutal totalitarian ruler at the top in the Soviet Union
 whose domestic policies result in the death of millions
 but because of his military role in the defeat of Hitler
 Allied leaders allow his army “liberate” those nations he took from the Nazi’s
 the Soviet Union ends up ruling over most of the Eastern Europe
 much of the World becomes similarly divided
 Communist or Capitalist
 Soviet Union or Liberal Democracy

meanwhile, a Communist Revolution in China
 results in another Totalitarian Regime
 yes, Totalitarians on the Left of the Political spectrum
 as well as on the Right
 if embedded in a Self-as-Separate Culture
 the inevitable outcome of any new system created
 — will not be the Communist ideal of Equality
 but new hierarchies
 men at the top taking more / enjoying extreme luxury
 while trying to force those below them to cooperate and share
 finding they need to use ever more force
 because you can’t make People not want to have a voice
 Love is a free choice

Meanwhile, the United States,
 for a mix of reasons,
 throws itself into fighting Communism.
 McCarthyism blacklists entertainers and other high profile individuals
 destroying careers and lives
 showing contempt for Civil Liberties
 in our microtheaters,
 such strong-arm tactics give way to the seductions of consumerism
 and the subtleties of social pressure
 cars, appliances, television sets in every home
 advertising and mass media emerge
 perform as powerful cultural tools teaching conformity
 celebrating the comforts of Life under Capitalism



abroad, it's a Cold War of propaganda
 between the United States and the Soviet Union
 played out in everything from Olympic competitions
 to covert operations / assassinations / coups d'état and —
 most threatening of all — a Nuclear Arms race
 the strategy of Mutual Assured Destruction

Europeans can no longer afford empires
 as the former colonies gain independence
 the two “superpowers” compete to win their allegiance
 France fights to retain its power over Algeria and Vietnam
 but the People and their desire to govern themselves repulse the occupiers

in the United States
 Capitalists fearing impending doom from a domino effect
 of one Nation after another sliding into Communism
 refuse to sign The Geneva Accords
 that stipulate free elections to determine the future of Vietnam
 instead, wage an ever escalating war against the North
 insisting the entire new Nation embrace Capitalism

as the truth comes out about The Vietnam War
 an Anti-War movement grows
 the sentiment becomes more widespread
 particularly among young People

and especially males of 18 years and older
 unless some way deferred, they're susceptible to being drafted

at the same time a Civil Rights Movement
 invigorated by returning World War II veterans
 with a strong postwar sense of American ideals
 meets with staunch resistance — violence / deep seated racism
 yet ultimately achieves the Civil Rights and the Voting Rights Acts
 these movements resonate with a generation
 rebelling against the tyranny of parents / rules / conformity
 rejecting Medieval and Victorian sexual mores
 calling out the hypocrisy they see in both Church and State
 launching the Worldwide Youth Movements of the Sixties

the young idealists don't succeed in creating the New World
 of Equality, Peace, Love and Freedom they believe possible
 yet they do bring about significant changes in the Culture and Society at large
 triggering a decades long backlash culminating in the "Culture Wars"

35. the twenty-first century

backlash yes / but also this —
 we learn that we can be sincere change-seekers
 yet be unconsciously working against the very changes we seek
 late Twentieth Century Scholarship helped us recognize what's holding us back

French historian and philosopher
 Michel Foucault took cultural analysis to new heights
 when he documented how the locus of Power that keeps our Institutions in place
 moved from being concentrated in the hands of the Lords of the Manor
 to being dispersed in our Microtheatres
 Foucault pointed out that Social Control now operates in our workplaces
 schools / family / social circles / even buildings
 we keep ourselves in line and the hierarchies in place

Saussure, Derrida, Kristeva, Barthes and others
 demonstrated how our words are essentially closed chains of signifiers
 with no necessary connection to any Referent outside of them
 it is we who we keep the signifieds connected to the signifiers

their work also exposed another shortcoming of Language
 it doesn't, indeed it can't — deliver the Subjectivity of Another to our Minds

Language works on basis of Subject / Object

Our Minds work with Objects

Language affects what we perceive

Postmodernists alert us to the reality that words,

gestures, practices, games, even objects

drag along multiple meanings

meanings that affect how we think and feel without our realizing it

meanings we might not wish

meanwhile, 21st Century Science continues to amass evidence

indicating that our perception of Separation is largely mistaken

Physicists find that every Particle of Matter is inextricably entangled with every other

Microbiologists study the intracellular cooperation of the Organelles

Ecologists explore the interdependence of every Species in the Life of our Planet'

Complexity Theory added its insights about Complex Adaptive Dynamic Systems

Galaxies / Planets / Cells / Life Forms / Civilizations / Societies / Economies...

compiling data on how the actions of individual agents

determine the success or failure of entire systems

how a single act — the subtlety of a Butterfly wiggling its wing

can meet with resonance and cascade sideways / upward / downward

changing the pattern of the whole System

edging closer to understanding how change happens

none of these understandings could have come soon enough

our History as a Species makes clear that we did not stay on the Path

taken by our ancestors the Quarks, Metabolizers and Eukaryotes

by all evidence

the worsening Climate Crisis

nations upgrading and adding to their Nuclear Armaments

the unaddressed gross economic inequity precipitating our global migration problem

we've reached the end of the Pathway that the Patriarchy chose

we all seem to agree that we need to move beyond this point

but so far we're not able to agree on the kinds of changes we need to make to do so

in the United States

members of the Republican Party see their primary responsibility

as protecting the Wealth and Power of a privileged Ruling Class

rather than Legislating for the common good / working for a more equitable Society,

creating a Social safety net, supporting Education, taking responsibility

for the Environment, leading us toward disarmament and Peace...

GOP Legislators regularly block efforts to provide Everyone with the same Healthcare that the Legislators themselves and their families depend on instead, they prioritize eliminating taxes and removing regulations while continuing to believe that we can solve political differences with violence



if this particular Political landscape weren't disappointing enough it's happening in a stressful economic environment produced by Ronald Reagan's trickle-down economic program which in just a few short decades transferred more than \$50 trillion from the bottom 90% to the top 1% leaving most Americans behind

when Separate Self-interest informs the goal and Reason is employed to justify any means necessary to reach that end individuals are no longer bound by any moral principles among nefarious ways to get your way when voting is involved — produce an us vs a them

sad that history records the concerted effort of media moguls here in the United States presently manipulating the People in this way quietly going along with veiled appeals to misogyny, racism and xenophobia even producing programming that applauds it a strategy that the Self-as-Separate identity has proven extremely susceptible to and when coupled with the tactful use of the electoral college — instead of one person one vote twice resulting in the elevation of a narcissistically sick individual to the presidency

footprints on the Moon / robots on Mars / the miracles of modern medicine
communication, entertainment, the Internet at our fingertips
we've come far as a Species
we've learned a lot about our Physical being, Nature and the Universe
and in ways our ancestors could never have imagined

but we've set up our Children for a Future
no one would wish on them

Part IV: What's up with that?

36. Interlude II

to answer what led us down this Path
 why our long history of unnecessary suffering
 now threatening to end in tragedy
 we need to interrogate the unconscious beliefs underlying our Choices
 a task that at the same time promises to uncover the conditions
 for the World all of us would wish to see



Nature heavily invested in us
 the Gift of Language provided the essential ingredient for Human Evolution
 when we acquired Sign Systems / when we began using Words
 we entered into new Relationships with One Another and the World
 Relationships with their limitations, to be sure —
 yet key to the improbable

Language enabled the development of Culture and Civilization
 from campfire to streaming cinema
 ours is a Storied Existence
 at the center of our Storytelling is a Subject Center
 a “we” or an “I”

each of us play the starring role in our Stories
 no one else knows what it feels like to be the Individual
 Self-reflective Choice-maker each of us are
 we experience our particular moment-to-moment Presence
 as an uninterrupted stream with our past
 and an imagined project into the future
 the Narratives we use in order to understand Who we are and Where
 inform the “I” or “we”
 and determine how we play our role

it’s particularly the Narrative that makes up our Identify
 what we tell Ourselves about what we’re doing here and why
 defining our own as well as Humanity’s goals
 delivers the attitude of how we think about Others and our World
 gives permission or forbids / encourages or discredits
 delineates our moral and ethical principles
 justifies our actions

a good place to start, then
 would be to interrogate this Identity
 ask who is this “we”
 who is the “I” doing the Storytelling

perhaps I could begin telling you who I am
 by constructing a profile that would include, among other things
 my sex, gender, skin color, economic class, income, age, car...
 ancestry / family / religion / nationality / education / experience / travels...
 what I do and have done
 where I live and have lived
 likes and dislikes / beliefs and hopes
 friends / politics / dreams...

no matter how exhaustive the list I would construct, however
 the identity produced wouldn’t tell you who-I-am
 as a Subject Center, I remain outside the assemblage of descriptions
 the Mind doing the thinking isn’t located within the categories of knowledge it employs

Consciousness, Presence
 comes before any Story we might tell about Ourselves
 any “I am...” is a construction



we can become aware that we are aware
 that is, become Self-conscious
 but such an experiencing of Consciousness is a secondary act
 a being aware of awareness
 which is not our common state of Mind

take, for instance, the activity of driving a car
 we've no need to constantly be telling Ourselves,
 "I am aware that I am driving the car."
 yet, we perceive and respond to the curves, hills, traffic...
 Consciousness is pre-reflective.

in light of our Presence needing no Narrative
 having none and escaping them all
 we exist by way of a radical Freedom at the Ground of our Being
 our Minds are open to horizons of virtual infinity
 we can think about anything we want to think about
 theoretically, at any time
 which bears a heavy responsibility
 an Existential dimension adheres to the Storytellers that we are
 for were we to set no limits on our Minds
 believe anything, avoid learning, assume there is no morality
 prefer the easiest way to think about things
 we could put Ourselves and One Another in grave physical and mental danger

we each create our Stories in an on-going
 mostly unconscious process
 we're constantly sorting through, editing, creating Narrative to fit our experience

we Choose which thoughts to pay attention to
 which to give importance, repeat or act on
 which discredit, downplay, let pass, discard
 what spin to give our perceptions

none of us does this alone, of course
 we grow up in homes, with family, in an environment
 we go to school, engage with others
 Culture comes to us in word, imagery, enactment, objects, play
 it teaches us what's important
 what to foreground, what to leave behind
 what to value, what to discredit

as we learn to imitate performance associated with older Children and adults
 childhood fantasies that occupy our imaginations slowly fade
 we earn rewards by correctly choosing among meanings
 generated by our Society
 securing Ourselves within ever larger shared Realities



our own individuality emerges
 as we acquire the ability to navigate the infinity available to our Minds
 choosing which Narratives bring us closer to the Self we desire to become
 which take us farther from the Idea we have of Ourselves
 although inseparable from the larger networks we both pass through and belong to
 we each create our own Life Story which we carry with us as we grow older
 at its center a constructed Identity
 one we are constantly, if unconsciously, revisiting

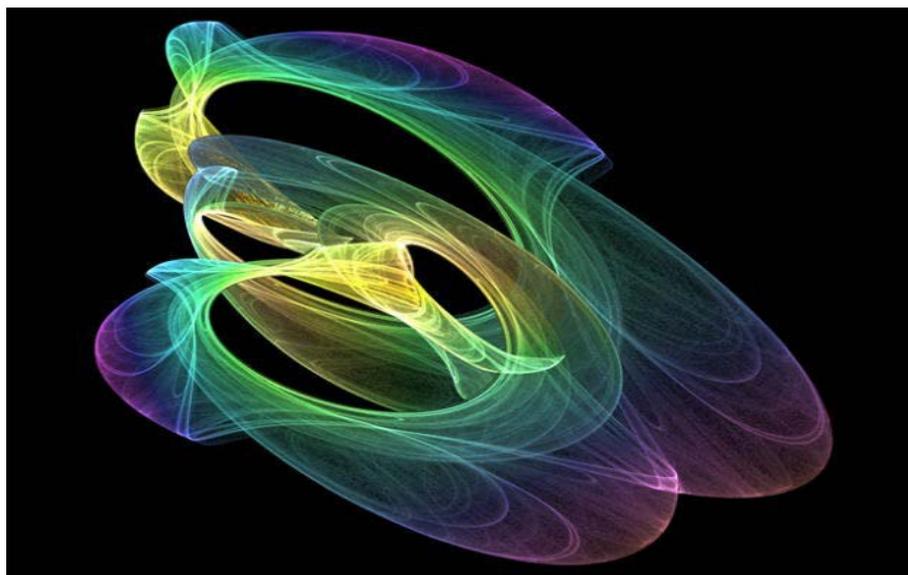
37. narrative fields

Language provides the material with which we create Narratives
which we then weave into the Stories we tell
every Narrative draws on meaning / points to values
what we tell Ourselves prefigures our behavior

although Narrative can lead to new Relationships
more than anything else the Narratives we reiterate
regarding who we are and where
reinforce the established Cultural Reality
resulting in the appearance of our World

we live in Complex highly technologically evolved Societies
each of us deeply dependent on One Another
for the maintenance of the infrastructure... for everything
drinking water, food, health, electricity, sewage systems, garbage disposal...
Narratives enable our World

Donna Haraway came up with the concept of a Narrative Field
offering a way to understand how Narratives operate in our World
adapting her idea, we might envision every Narrative that we activate
that is, every Narrative that we speak, write, read, broadcast, act out...
as a swirling neon line
and all the active lines brought together in a single field
giving rise to a complex dynamic interactive mapping of all their pathways
picturing how our Social, Collective Storytelling might look



Complexity Theory would suggest we would see a pattern
 those Narratives most activated would form a Basin of Attraction
 indicating that particular Narrative and its derivatives
 are what we're most attracted to
 in other words, what our Storytelling is mostly about

such imagined Narrative lines would have no independent existence
 of course
 each swirling thread depends on us activating it
 we Choose
 to keep Narratives in the field by our reiteration of them
 or allow them to fade by our ceasing to pay attention to them
 we regularly introduce new Narratives into the field

even if once believed
 Narratives can prove undesirable, unhelpful, destructive
 or they can lose their significance for other reasons
 Narratives that are no longer used, fade and then fall from the field
 though never entirely

in contrast, Lines of Narrative we most often repeat grow distinct
 inspire similar lines of discourse
 giving rise to the overall pattern of the Field
 denoting the Master Narrative
 a pattern we can easily be unaware of
 take for granted
 because so ubiquitous, so ever-present

a Master Narrative serves as an organizing principle
 legitimizing Narratives of lesser reach
 those minor Narratives, in turn, elaborate the Master Narrative's pattern

the Master Narrative powerfully affects our thinking, speech, decisions, actions
 it heavily influences how we perceive the World
 it informs our values, approves our choices, colors our history
 its explanations define the Pathway that we've been on
 since the inception of the Patriarchy

38. our problematic Master Narrative

given the premise
 that the Ego Identity informed by the Self-as-Separate idea
 serves as the Master Narrative in our World
 what's meant by the Ego Identity needs to be clear from the outset

so the Ego Idea that concerns us here
 does not refer to the sense of Self that we develop as babies
 when we come to recognize that everyone else is not an extension of our being
 nor does it refer to the idea our Individuated Self that we need and hold dear
 nor to the central organizing character that our memory delivers
 nor the idea that our imagination projects into the future
 nor is it simply about Selfishness

the Ego Identity that concerns us here
 is a Narrative of Identity that reserves Subject status for the Self
 while reducing Others and the rest of the World to Objects

a Narrative that Language plays a pre-eminent role in producing
 because Language can't bring the World to us directly
 it can't deliver the Subjectivity of Others, of Nature or of the Universe to us
 Language works by representing the World as Object

the Ego Narrative we have in Mind
 owes a great deal of its credibility to our limited Field of Perception
 we don't see how every Particle of the Universe is inextricably entangled
 we can't directly experience the pain, the distress of Others
 we can't read One Another's Minds
 the idea of a Separate Self and therefore Separate Self-interest
 seems like common sense, easily goes unquestioned

but being embedded with the Ego Narrative carries profound implications
 Subjects and Objects are not equal
 Objects have no Personal Presence. They are not free.
 we don't enter into dialogue with Objects
 no one has to care about how things feel, because they don't
 Objects don't share information across a unified network
 Objects are surely Conscious
 though that Subjectivity may not extend beyond the molecular level

Objects do not call to us. they have no claim on us
 our Responsibility for things extends only so far as they prove useful to us
 we care for our cars, tools, pots and pans, computers, instruments...
 but not like how we care for One Another
 treating other Subject Centers as Objects creates conflict
 if not given a Choice, if denied Self-determination, Minds rebel
 all Creatures, even Ladybugs, recoil at being treated as a thing
 just try moving, even feeding, that Ladybug overwintering in your house

most importantly, denying Others their Subject status
 permits the cruelty that our History documents,
 both personal and collective
 from psychological violence, rape, murder, slavery...
 to war and the Holocaust
 the harm licensed by the Ego Narrative has no measure.

the more so, because when we turn attention to the Self
 Language Objectifies that, too,
 reducing our own Presence in our Storytelling to Object status
 measuring our value against a set of Culturally constructed notions
 the Ego Narrative tells us we are what we own
 our money equals our worth
 as does who we know and what we've done
 where we've been privileged to travel also counts
 which rapidly escalates to comparison and competition with Others
 locking us into Relationships constrained to being better than
 leading to feelings of anxiety, insecurity
 forever in search of perceived power over
 the Ego Narrative limits our Possibility
 leaving us unsatisfied

the Ego Narrative consciously and unconsciously
 generates oppositional dichotomies
 modalities based on not-being / not-identifying with the Other
 man vs woman / White vs Black / rich vs poor / owner vs employee / us vs them
 normalizing its paradigm of dominance and subordination

the Ego Narrative invites us to identify with the dominant group
 admire those with higher rank
 even if we're actually excluded from such groups
 we're led to accept and embed with hierarchies

we're sold symbols that indicate superiority
 the make of car, the neighborhood we live in, clothes we wear
 thinking Ourselves better than those supposedly lower
 the Ego Narrative teaches us to desire privilege and advantage
 Family and Class can become an us — the rest of the World a them

we're discouraged from our Quark inclination to share with Others
 under the command of the Master Narrative, any Wealth we earn or are given
 no matter how far beyond our need
 we keep for Ourselves — even as People go hungry / without shelter
 without jobs to support themselves
 some Individuals are born into families that provide privilege and advantage
 while Others faces challenges and barriers to any success at all



as an organizing principle
 the Ego Narrative has proven a dismal failure
 it conflates Individuality with the idea of Separate Self-interest
 denies our actual interconnectedness with One Another and our Planet
 disallows a communicative Universe
 for the Ego Narrative also casts Nature as an Object
 a thing to be probed / explored / exploited / used
 at best — appreciated
 tells us the World outside Human Consciousness is Mindless
 assumes the Universe is made up of some kind of mechanical matrix

a Universe without Personal Presence

leaves us nowhere to turn

the Master Narrative confines us as a Species to our imagination

some religions teach that Earth is not our real Home

not where we came from

not where we belong

the Ego Identity guarantees perpetual conflict

oppression, poverty, war, ecological irresponsibility

the competition it fosters from workplace to neighborhood to geopolitical realms

makes sure everyone knows something about Heartbreak and fear

this is a World that none of us have chosen

not even the 3,000 Billionaires and their families would wish to see needless suffering

floods, wild fires, ecological disasters, hunger...

one thing we are not

at least, not yet —

we are not a failing Species

we are all of us made of Quarks

at the Metaphysical Material Biological ground of our Being

there's a goodness about us

but because we participate in a generalized Cultural milieu

we each carry and reproduce the underlying Master Narrative to some degree

whether unaware of its destructive tenets

or working at outgrowing / liberating Ourselves from them

all of us may wish a better World

but Culture works powerful effects

it operates on unconscious levels in each of us

even if we're aware of the limitations and danger that the Ego Narrative poses

we might find that we still carry threads of its modalities

39. modalities of separation

Cultures that are structured by the Ego Narrative

regularly program boys and men to a masculinity defined by power

from power gained by way of playground tussling for alpha status

to power later exercised in the workplace

or achieved vicariously in the winning-losing paradigm of sports



we see blatant examples of programming to masculinity
 in the production and popularization of hyper-violent movies and video games
 normalizing mayhem / celebrating the power of destruction
 glorifying gunslingers, militarism, war, conquest
 rather than teaching males a gentle, caring, sensitive version of gender

such programming also takes place more subtly
 when our Storytelling represents men as the Subject Centers
 women as peripheral items / the objects of desire
 instilling the notion that men's sexual pleasure is what women are for
 the Ego Narrative eroticizes dominance / submission
 mixing harm to women in its encoding of sex
 constraining and damaging our Relationships with One Another

some women see advantage in going along with it
 yet, all women have a Mind of their own
 with their own ideas / their own desires
 neither they nor anyone can be fully controlled
 the enslaved crave their freedom
 thus power-dependent masculinity associates women with Nature
 both threateningly uncontrollable
 both untrustworthy

we live in a World plagued with efforts to assert male supremacy
ranging from inter-personal psychological bullying —
to domestic violence, rape, incest, prostitution, acid attacks,
female genital mutilation, child sexual exploitation and child marriage ...
consider the conditions that allowed a man
openly misogynist in his behavior and words
who bragged about groping women
and has been publicly accused by at least 28 women of sexual assault
to become President of the United States

ours is a Patriarchal Society
being a member of any Social Class except the Ruling Class
means you are beneath the Upper Class / lower down / lesser than
an Object to those above you
if comparing and being better than someone else matters
as the Master Narrative would have us think
then Class Status becomes an on-going loss of that kind of Self-esteem

the Ego Narrative compensates for this, however,
by enabling those below to identify with the empowered Class
through fantasies generated by advertising and mass media
such as associating a product with Wealth
the car, the wristwatch, the vacation, the suit, etc.
or offering membership in the political Party known to be associated with Wealth

another avenue that the Ego Narrative offers to compensate
for feelings of being valueless in a Culture where success means having more
has historically been used as a means of Social Control
by both the European and American Ruling Classes
perpetrating the notion that Caucasian origin in some way signifies superiority
permitting even those of low Economic Rank
to consider themselves better than People of any other Ethnic Group

the “Other” Group presently refers to all who are not White European —
including African Americans, Asians, Mexicans, Native Americans, Immigrants...
in any case,
Racism runs deeper than what an Individual might consciously feel or want to acknowledge
nonetheless —
the inequity and hurt that racism causes impacts us all
it pervades our Systems / Institutions / Structures

Racist beliefs become embedded in Language, images, TV cop shows
 we absorb stereotypes from the Culture
 mostly without realizing it
 we still encounter Narratives used by those profiting from the inhumanity of slavery
 in the effort to justify morally unacceptable behavior —
 dehumanizing / Objectifying the Other

Racist attitudes cause real harm
 from the insensitivity of personal micro-aggressions
 to discrimination, threats, killings, even genocide



we are not born seeing the World through the lens of the Ego Narrative
 classism, sexism, racism, xenophobia are learned
 we acquire these modalities from the Self-as-Separate Ego Culture

the modalities of the Ego are charged with emotion
 although they're meant to make us feel better
 none of it really works to free us from the sense that we Ourselves
 are being made Objects
 submissive to some greater hierarchy we have no voice in changing
 our intense need for a sense of dignity remaining unmet
 although endlessly unsatisfying, we cling to the constructed prejudices
 for it seems like there's no other option

the Ego Narrative is garbed in normalcy
 its pattern kept in constant view

rather than sharing, cooperation, working together, making music, dancing
 individuals and groups compete with One Another
 the winning-losing paradigm of sports and politics runs system wide
 the Upper Classes flaunt their advantage over the less fortunate
 to the degree that the Ego Narrative is ubiquitous
 it becomes invisible

living in a Culture informed by the Ego Narrative
 we easily assume a Separate Self with Separate Self-interests
 making the cause of our problems that much more difficult to see
 hard to admit / harder to renounce
 if even to save what's most precious to us

40. call it democracy

all of us want to Live
 search for meaning / pursue happiness / feel secure
 we all want to know that we in some way matter
 we like getting ever closer to Free
 Choosing our friends, recreations, careers...
 deciding for Ourselves what to think / what to believe
 who to love
 how to spend our time
 what goals pursue, where to live, travel

we Live in Societies becoming increasingly Pluralistic
 we enjoy each Other's friendship / Culture / music / food
 although the Ego Narrative would argue that democracy was never intended
 to enable a Majority to restructure the Institutions
 since the Enlightenment and the Age of Reason
 we aspire to a Society where that should be true
 we'd had enough of emperors, feudalism, kings and monarchies
 we no longer want a minority ruling over and exploiting the Majority
 if we ever did

we like to believe that our systems are fair the way they are
 that everyone is being treated equally
 everyone assured of Civil Liberties and Human Rights
 and no one above the law
 that the way we're doing things is sustainable

and if our positioning permits
we can think that we're already doing the best that we can do

in Reality, we're far from our ideal
our World has not been scripted by Lady Liberty



on the contrary
the pattern we see repeated throughout much of the World
has a Wealthy Ruling Class sitting atop rigid social and economic class structures
steadfastly refusing to embrace and encourage real democracy
an elite that maneuvered through the Age of Revolutions
clinging to Wealth and Power
swelling in the early 21st century into a somewhat larger privileged billionaire group
who, up to this point —
have been unwilling to pay the price
for the improbable dream that they themselves are a part of
and Humanity has somehow managed to keep alive

many governments claim to practice democracy
but in actuality, they are oligarchies
class-privileged systems
in which an elite group rule in favor of their own self-interests

in many democratic societies
 media and information outlets are privately owned
 book publishers, newspapers, public media, television, radio, networks, cinema...
 and when the owners' private interests conflict with the interests of Society at large
 the majority pays / the common good loses
 information becomes canalized
 journalistic integrity and responsibility squelched

with the pressure just a phone call away
 few reporters dare risk having to resign from their jobs
 note how carefully the words "global warming" and "climate change" are spoken
 even as catastrophic weather events escalate
 observe the retreat from labeling a Politician's lie as a "lie"
 even when they and just about everyone else knows it's a lie —
 is it fear of appearing biased the controversial is left out
 are reporters telling themselves it's objectivity
 leaving their audience to find out the truth
 figure out what's going on here
 un-spin the story's meaning

when the first elected African American President of the United States
 met with unprecedented obstruction and endless vilification
 how many news anchors pointed out the underlying racism in that?
 and where was the objective reporting
 regarding the shameless racism, misogyny, advocacy of violence
 in the campaign that brought his successor to power?

41. it's economics

not every society in Human history has done things this way
 some Native American groups have lived cooperatively with One Another
 everyone participating / sharing resources / food
 each contributing to the common good
 everyone respected / each with a Voice
 everyone's needs being met
 reverent in their regard for Nature

many Indigenous Peoples believed in a sacred Relationship with One Another
 and the Animals, the Plants, the Earth



in contrast —

the Ego Narrative

based on the idea that we are Separate Selves
each with Separate Self-interest

has underwritten the evolving global Economic System

resulting in hierarchy, wars, deprivation, ecological destruction

Capitalism has no corner on this, it needs to be pointed out

but Capitalism is the Economic System dominating our World right now

Free-market Capitalism conflates doing good

with getting back more than you put in — and keeping it for yourself

it demands that decisions be driven by the bottom line

so there can be a return on investment

Capitalist Culture glories in taking as much as you can get

a delimited responsibility eclipsing all that we could be

Capitalism applauds success in the game

rewards with security, comforts, luxury, deference...

motivates with symbols of power

punishes by withholding basic Human needs

for Individuals in the Upper 1% Class

who control more Wealth than the bottom 90% of U.S. households combined

Life is a race for the top of the Forbes 500

or winning in some smaller fishpond competition

Capitalism insists that nothing must interfere with profit making
 or the business will lose value, even go bankrupt
 but prioritizing property over People entails systemic problems
 from callous exploitation of Human labor
 and the manufacture of shoddy products with planned obsolescence
 to the obstructing of regulations aimed at protecting Health and the Environment
 resulting in a carcinogenic food supply, Oceanic degradation, deforestation...
 poverty / war / the Climate Crisis



Capitalism is all about growing money / increasing individual Wealth
 which requires ever greater buying of some product or service
 which demands ever-increasing Human Population
 which means more resources converted to product
 and ever more land for Housing and Food production

given that Earth is a finite Planet
 there's something seriously wrong about that formula
 the Capitalist System has always harmed what it exploits
 we now see Species diversity rapidly plummeting
 Reason, Compassion and Logic tell us this is not good

but making a profit is not about morals
 the Self-as-Separate Narrative emboldens greed and corruption
 when morality is reduced to what the law will let you get away with
 and well-funded groups and parties with only Self-interest in common
 work together at electing legislators and influencing law makers
 on the sole basis of who will protect the Wealth they've accumulated
 help them get more

how could such a Pathway end except tragically?
we can do better than this.

42. not over

viewing our Human Condition through the lens of Complexity Theory
we learn that our World like every network or system
whether Living Creature, Society or entire Ecology
survives to the degree that all its parts are Healthy
Complex Adaptive Dynamic Systems risk failure
if they ignore the input of their members
the sustainability of successful Systems
is attributed to the care provided for each of their Agents
such Systems answer appropriately to change and disturbance

when a network or system gives special advantage to some agents
at the expense of others, however
talent gets wasted
dialogue among the agents breaks down
cooperation deteriorates
and if critical information gets distorted, pushed aside or not taken seriously
solutions to problems wither
leaving the system vulnerable to changing circumstance
often unable to respond appropriately to new challenges

when such Complex Adaptive Dynamic Systems require upgrading
instead of making the Quantum Leap to a new state
they can fall into Chaos / fail

one doesn't like to believe it
but it seems as though some of us are presently willing to risk
taking our World off that cliff
fortunately, we know more than we ever did before
about the problematic pathway that got us here
and how we can change it

we are the Creators of Language, our Culture, our Institutions...
and not vice versa
they influence and affect us / but they did not and do not create us
we created and create them

we now know something about how Culture works
 how we learn the shared assumptions
 about who we are to One Another
 how we understand Nature
 that even those who manipulate Culture are subject to its spell
 and that in theirs as well as in all our Hearts
 none wish the suffering our Choices are presently causing
 for the most part, we don't yet sense the improbable Wonder
 that our Existence represents

and we know much more about Ourselves than we did before
 Science has made available information we would never have been able to see
 we're made of Quarks sharing Energy
 our Cells Live by virtue of the Altruistic commitments of the Organelles
 our Bodies are individual organs working together as a unified Being
 knowledge that more reliably informs our Identity
 than Narrative that has only the bloodstained ground of history to stand on



Septima Clark

*"...you never know
 when a person's going to leap forward,
 or change around completely....
 ...have a change of heart..."*

we know that anyone of us can disembed from a Culture
 anyone of us can change
 it happens all the time
 together we can do what's needed

Part V: How do we get there?

43. before all else

how came we you and me
 to cross paths in this moment
 in this 14 billion year old afterglow
 Communion of Plants and Animals
 able to trace our Pathway back through eons of Evolution
 mythic forests
 this troubled dream



a risky cliché
 to walk with you listening
 the waves, gulls, the sand
 the wind in your hair
 making sense of this morning's gray skied sea
 bringing the World closer

no matter how much you've shown me
 I want to know you more
 no matter how far we've come
 we can go farther

naturally organic untamed wild and free
 improbable as Humanity
 you've a Mind of your own
 you're going to believe what you're going to believe
 do what you want to do
 in this sacred never again place
 hour grown late

thank you
 for the gates you opened
 the reflections you shared
 Ojalá that I could make this as clear
 that would be the best that I could do for you

up the street
 the children still squeal with delight
 the dogs bark
 people are falling in love
 mothers are having babies

it appears
 we still have time

44. interlude III

what draws us to One Another
 what pulls us through this night
 keeps us dreaming this dream together
 what possible promise

how is it
 why do we Love
 and want to be Loved
 why care about a better World

turning to the news
 and facing what's happening
 the political corruption, bribery and extortion in full view
 it's unbelievable —

deep in our Hearts
 all of us know we can do better than this
 we know we have a greater Horizon of Possible

it's going to take more than incremental change
 more than any reforms we've been arguing over
 not a revolution
 not even a paradigm shift suffice
 for us to move from this Pathway's End
 to a place we'd like to be forever



that World
 where not a single child goes hungry
 where each person is assured a Livelihood and Healthcare
 each the same voice in making Laws
 each the respect and freedom we would accord Ourselves

where borderless states of friendship
 welcome guests from everywhere
 Nature, Plants and Animals are regarded with reverence
 a Women safe World
 Everyone can feel good about
 every neighborhood, alley, street corner cool
 Mother Earth her Gardener found

the World we might have created long ago
 but for the Ego Narrative

45. different now

we may never know for sure how we got on this particular Path
but we do know more about Ourselves now

the work of scholars

linguists, literary critics, historians, philosophers, primatologists
have helped us see the role that Language plays in our Mental Life
 how its categories structure our thinking
 how its Subject-Object paradigm shapes our perception

we've also learned that since Language is a Sign System
it depends on us —

linking its Signifiers (words) to their Signified (meaning)
 as there is no necessary connection

 between any word and what it supposedly refers to
nor any link to anything outside the System
alerting us to the caution we need to exercise regarding our Storytelling
helping us to understand how a Master Narrative could go wrong

contributions from the Hard Sciences

 physicists, biochemists, microbiologists, biologists, paleontologists...
have acquainted us with our Ancestors
 and the Choices they made that brought us here
we have an evidence based idea of what we're made of
 who we are / what we're a part of
 how entangled with One Another and our Mother

we've learned from Complexity Theory

that the behavior of the individual agents composing a system
produces the overall pattern

 refining our knowledge of how change happens
agents can Self-organize

 from an in-between across all Space and Time
begin resonating in word and action with Alternative Narrative

 leading to the creation of a change of such magnitude
 as would qualify for a Phase Transition

46. good fortune

fortunately, Nature's graced us with a wide array of intelligence
 above all — when we recognize error we can correct it
 we're hardwired to want to do better

pass on to our Children what we've learned
 without education, civilization would not have developed

among the many tools invented
 we've now intellectual methods

such as the gift that the Age of Reason brought
 a new approach to knowing
 trust in observation and evidence
 plus logic, consistency with established knowledge and peer review
 the scientific method changed us
 in more ways than making possible all the technology we enjoy

we stopped thinking of Authority as unquestionable
 we learned to criticize and evaluate what we heard or read

interrogate traditions
 identify assumptions
 discredit misconceptions

giving rise to a new definition of what qualifies as knowledge
 by the late 20th century, the protocols had become standardized
 every academic field has come to recognize the value of this approach



no matter how much they disagree
 scientists and scholars respect the method

at least enough to show respect for One Another
 and together aim for Narratives all can accept
 they reach for consensus and often come to broad agreement
 as a Species, we recognize that truth is a communal affair

like Ourselves

scholars and researchers are members of the same troubled Society
 participating in the same Culture at large

engaged in its performance in its microtheatres
 its shared values, behavior patterns

also like us, they know there are places Language falters
 where numbers fail and logic doesn't go

where we can host One Another's Presence

where we encounter Art and Beauty

we've perfected ways to cut diamonds, cultivate roses

we adorn our homes with paintings, hangings, photographs

we cook, dress, garden with a sense for the aesthetic

Art opens cracks in the Ego Narrative and lets us peek through

our problems are not as unsolvable

as the Master Narrative would have us believe

were the Self-as-Separate Ego Idea the only Story informing our behavior

we would long ago have destroyed Ourselves

instead, from our earliest moments we trusted One Another

cooperated / worked together / depended on each other / shared

even before we invented the wheel we moved megaliths

why?

47. alternatives

we've carried Alternatives to the Ego Narrative with us all along

Storytelling infused with notions of Relationship / Belonging / Love

Narratives with the goal of creating Community

holding together with One Another

sharing / forgiving mistakes / finding ways to get along

a Within and an In-between us of harmony

every Society known has had some form of Religion

although anthropologist don't agree on what precisely constitutes Religion

we know every Culture also has its Wisdom and Spiritual traditions

both are known to address the core questions of our being

where did we come from / where are we going

many offer hope and solace in the face of difficulty or sorrow

almost all major Religions at this time are Male centric
 believing in a Male God, explained by Male authorities
 functioning by way of Male dominated hierarchies
 historically, Religions have often ended up compromised
 perpetuating gender inequality / Class hierarchy / even wars



some Religions insist on a strict boundary between God and the World
 view the Universe as an Object
 some teach that only the Humans have a Soul,
 that is, only Humans have intrinsic value, inner meaning. Worth.
 some say Earth is not our real Home

nonetheless, all Religions and Spiritual Traditions share a common focus
 even if looking to an ever-retreating future time for the fulfillment of their Visions
 they encourage compassion, empathy, helping Others
 tell us that Love is the way of Heaven
 many provide their believers with discourse and practice
 enabling them to transcend the Ego Narrative
 prayer, ritual, meditation, yoga, scripture, running, music, cooking...
 possible ways of engaging the Divine

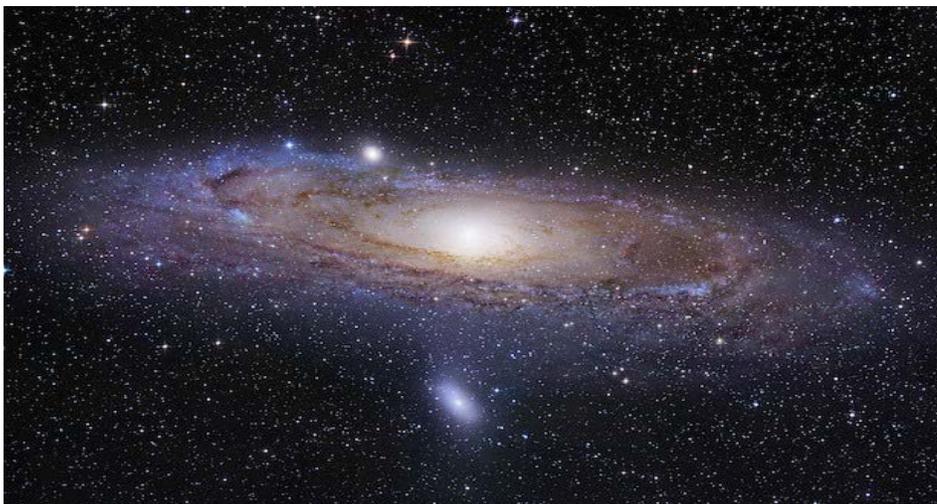
take for example, the ancient Chinese Book of Wisdom
 the I-Ching mixes the random fall of coins or shuffle of sticks
 with a simple but complex mathematical algorithm
 which results in an image of six open or unbroken lines
 each of the possible sixty-four configurations
 is associated with an Image and Narrative

the I-Ching affords the possibility of entering into dialogue with the Universe
 as the particular Hexagram drawn addresses what you had in Mind
 or were asking about
 or was just below Consciousness when you dropped the coins
 the emergent response from startlingly literal to marvelously poetic
 always encouraging, always Community Minded
 always an awareness of our Greater-than-Separate Self

among Wisdom traditions

Astrology offers a description of a dimension of the Self
 that doesn't necessarily preclude Free Will
 fits alongside the recognition of Cultural influences
 as well as with any role genetic inheritance might play

most importantly, if you find resonance between Natal Astrology's descriptions
 and what you know about yourself / family / friends / co-workers
 then the Stars represents evidence of a Connection with the Universe
 fully discrediting the Self-as-Separate idea
 additionally, because the individuated Identity that the Stars describe
 is woven from meanings drawn from the same Planets and Signs we all share
 we're given the awareness of an immediate Relationship
 an Existential entanglement with One Another



with its pre-enlightenment beginnings, however
 its association with superstition, long undisciplined tradition
 and its susceptibility to distortion
 Astrology reaches the twenty-first century in a questionable state

nevertheless,
 in a fractal, multi-dimensional, non-local and Personal Universe
 just as threads of who we are reach inward
 through our Biology and to the Ground of Matter itself
 being Neurophysiological Creatures evolving for billions of years
 in this particular Solar System
 it might be expected that Self-similarity would also reach outward
 somehow reflect elements of our larger Nest

put in other words,
 might the Children of Earth inherit facets of their Cosmic Mother
 a dimension of our identity connect with a Moment of Her Existence

48. heart of the matter

our Physical Selves
 the Quarks / Atoms / Molecules / Cells / Organs that make us up
 not only indicate a deep connection with the larger picture
 they also tell us what we're made of
 where we came from
 how we're here

although we Humans don't always behave accordingly
 we live by virtue of the ancestral Goodness within us
 our Organs evolved and work in cooperation with One Another
 we wouldn't be here if they didn't
 like many of the creatures around us
 we're aware of the World by way of a complex nervous system

late in our particular Evolution
 we developed a unique Sign-system Intelligence
 enabling both unprecedented exploration and alteration of our World
 as with all Freedoms — it also brought new responsibilities
 when the Patriarchy chose the Self-as-Separate Path
 our Sign-System-boosted capability permitted us to wreak enormous destruction

ironically,
 here at that Pathway's End
 Language can help us get beneath the thin Narrative layer
 that lays atop our Physical being
 tap into the Altruism within us
 grow conscious of it
 draw strength from it
 in all the ways we engage the World and Another
 intuition / feeling / perception/ reason
 we know what Loving looks like



we know the pleasure working and playing together brings
 the joy of giving
 the reward of helping others
 it's not difficult for us to conceive of a World
 all of us would like to see

imagine the wealthiest 1%
 along with the upper middle class top 20%
 freely divesting themselves of privilege and advantage
 Choosing Equality and fairness
 placing their family fortunes in the service of the less fortunate
 doing all they can to heal the Planet
 working real miracles

picture our military budgets and personnel
 converted into ways of helping others

international community assistance programs

aid projects

ecological restoration

we could make solar energy available for Everyone in every nation

develop more effective ways of producing food

raise everyone to a desirable standard of living

with the Will to do so,

we could pay down History's debts

right the wrongs that the Ego Narrative said weren't owed

launch a new global security

hammer our swords into plowshares

re-write our relationship with Earth and all who feed us with their lives

envision us changing our Minds

motivated from the strata of Ourselves

where we recognize how much we Love One Another

how much we Love the Earth

where honesty impels us to take the Children in mind



we could let our imaginations run wild

listing all the things we would like to see

start with moving from our present every-man-for-himself Economic System

to an intelligent, sensitive, egalitarianism —

principled by sharing, cooperation, sustainability, healing...

everywhere dialogue and reciprocity...

Humanity evolving into whole new horizons of Personal Responsibility

what eye of a needle might some camel walk through

what Heaven come down to Earth

so great the distance from where we are to where we'd like to be
 so improbable taking the steps to get there
 we've come to call such visions utopian
 dismiss them as impossible

now however, at this Pathway's End
 relying on the goodness of our deepest Selves
 trusting in our ability to realize Altruistic dreams
 believing in what was always just out of reach
 is where we need to begin

49. we can do this

since the beginning of Civilization
 we've longed and worked for a better World



we moved beyond the cave and stone tools
 adapted habits of hygiene and cleanliness
 recognized that a Legal System is better than violence and tyranny
 evolved the Sciences / Education / the Arts and Medicine
 made the invisible visible / the unbelievable believable
 the utterly unimaginable a century ago is now our everyday

but deluded by the mistaken of idea of the Self-as-Separate
 we've arrived at this Pathway's End

no need one more time to enunciate the perils we're facing
 suffice it to say, we're seeing signs of Chaos

to discredit and drop the Ego Identity, however,
 to replace the Master Narrative with a new Story of Humanity
 would entail a Cultural leap of Planetary scale
 a transformation of such magnitude as would qualify for a Great Phase Transition
 — improbable

yet we know Changes like this have happened before
 when the Quarks began the Universe by sharing Energy
 when the Long Chain Polymers initiated Life with their proto-metabolic Altruism
 and when the Purple Oxygen Breathers and the Spirochetes saved the Living Network
 by sacrificing their past identities / becoming the Nucleated Cell
 and started Life down the path leading to the possibilities we see all around us

Phase Transitions have no leader
 no hierarchy / no centralized organization / no power structure
 Phase Transitions are Self-organizing
 because members or agents of Complex Adaptive Dynamic Systems
 are Free individual Subject Centers
 and because they are already playing a role in producing the overall pattern
 Each is empowered to change it

how can that work?
 in our case
 because we're all contaminated by the Ego Narrative to some degree
 were we individually to begin freeing Ourselves from any grip it has on us
 by engaging with whatever Alternative Narrative we might Choose
 the collective effect would begin to alter the overall pattern of the System

imagine how changed our World could be
 were we to step away from the Self-as-Separate Master Narrative
 and infuse our Identity with a new Story
 one bearing Freedom / Belonging / Possibility
 meaning accessible only by letting go of the Ego Idea
 since to whatever extent we hold onto the Self-as-Separate idea / it holds onto us
 knowing that Culture operates on both the conscious and unconscious levels
 tells us we need to become aware of how the Master Narrative has us,
 name it, then replace it

the Sensitivity to Initial Conditions Principle of Complexity Theory
 “the butterfly wing effect”

suggests that the kind of global transformation that we need
 could begin quite simply —
 with each of us paying closer attention to our Thoughts, for instance,
 from recognizing Narratives generated by the Self-as-Separate Ego Identity
 and replacing them with Alternative Narrative
 to opening our Minds to an Ontopoetic communicative Universe

most of us would probably count Ourselves among agents already doing all we can
 because, in fact,
 most People have been doing their very best
 being a loving partner, caring about others, family, home, being a good neighbor
 studying, working jobs, acting responsibly, voting
 given the Freedom of Mind that we as a Species know and experience
 a Phase Transition wouldn't be conceivable
 if we hadn't already learned the value of being Responsible
 Honesty, Integrity and Responsibility are Principles of Survival

a Phase Transition assumes Civic Responsibility
 and might include the complete repudiation of a Political Party
 the larger picture, however
 upgrading the Master Narrative
 changing the Story we've been telling Ourselves
 transforming the overall Pattern of the System
 calls for something more

whatever our Personal trajectory of Liberation
 it's a small step, yet a brave one
 from the work of developing One's Character and Personality
 to the active advocacy of the new World one would like to see
 in whatever way the Universe provides for you to do it

in some instances, this might mean standing up for Someone / or Something
 with your Voice alone
 or adding your Voice to the Voices of Others who have also woken
 sharing your thoughts with family, friends, co-workers...
 commenting on the news, posting on-line, casting your vote...
 communicating with your elected representatives
 demonstrating, volunteering, offering to serve

plus, of course, random acts of kindness
 holding open the door, letting Another into your lane
 showing unexpected kindness / a smile
 learning the Goodness that we are

were we to begin experiencing sincere courtesy instead of crude masculinity
it could help bring us together

strengthen our Trust in each Other / renew our commitment to One Another
and if Others were to begin doing similar things
Alternative to the Self-as-Separate Idea could cascade

because information and performance work together in a non-linear fashion
just as they produced the chains that kept us bound to the Ego Narrative
so thinking in alignment with Loving Others and Nature
will lead to phenomena associated with Loving Others and Nature
and that phenomena play into thinking about that better World

without a name or organization

with hundreds of names, within thousands of organizations
there could be acts and talk of a new Humanity
a Second Enlightenment

a Phase Transition depends on People expressing their Vision
it waits on us creating the World we'd like to pass onto the Children
each of us answers how a Phase Transition happens
as any aligning of our Thoughts, Words and Actions with Alternative Narrative
contributes to changing the overall pattern
every occasion that Someone points out the failure of the Master Narrative
teaches us about its chains / helps us break free of them
every example of Goodness discrediting the Master Narrative's portrayal of us
helps us connect the dots / discover Who we are

a Phase Transition looks to Everyone
it needs to hear and learn from every Voice what a new World could look like
Humanity has long been craving an Alternative to the Master Narrative
and the hour is late



Hollywood could open our eyes to new vistas of awareness, beauty, art
 enchant us with unprecedented Storytelling

celebrate the joy that giving more than taking brings
 heroicize non-violence. inspire sensitivity

and just as we can correct the fundamentals at the Personal level
 so can we transform our Institutions, Economic and Political Systems

a true democracy implies this Right
 in the United States, Article V of our Constitution guarantees it
 Human dignity and the quest for Integrity assure it
 in democracies, the People run the government
 in totalitarianism, the government runs the People

were patterns of Loving One Another to emerge across the Globe
 the Wealthy using their accumulations for the Common Good
 returning trillions of dollars to the Lower and Middle Classes
 finding ways to heal the Earth, stop the hurt
 Everyone everywhere treating every animal more lovingly...

in every public place a new respect for One Another would become visceral
 discourse about our World would take on a changed tone
 unbelievable even as it would begin to happen
 with outcomes of greater Wonder than will ever have been imagined

sooner Life could do without the rain
 than to think we could change the World without each Other

it's what Each of us do
 in our starring role in Life's larger Story
 of Personal goodness, courage and authenticity
 no matter how improbable
 makes a Phase Transition possible

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