



Emerging Worldviews



WHEN THE FORMS OF THE WORLD rattle, people have a tendency to grab something that seems solid or right and hold tightly to it. A single idea, a fixed principle, a unifying theory, or a blind belief becomes preferable to the growing tension of opposing forces and conflicting opinions. The tendency to simplify the complexities of life and insist upon an absolute way of seeing things becomes stronger. The true disease of the age is the rise of literalism and the corresponding loss of genuine imagination, for literalism reduces the world to fixed ideas and rigid dogmas while isolating people at the extremes of thought and belief.

Literalism has two factions that often oppose each other while secretly conspiring to reduce the mystery of the living world. One side champions positivism and a tyranny of scientism that obsesses over facts and figures and relies solely upon a statistical worldview. The opposite extreme insists upon fundamental religious beliefs that reject facts or alter them to conform to literalized stories. Each side gains some surety at the cost of a tragic loss of imagination and a dramatic reduction in the sense of wonder at the immediate world. Literalism takes the mystery out of life and eventually takes the life out of the mysteries. From there, it's a short journey to expecting the whole thing to end at any moment.



UNCERTAIN TIMES

GUIDO VROLA, COMPOSITED BY TOM JOYCE

Those who lose the mythic sense become fascinated with things that make sense only in limited ways. In referring to the facts of the matter, they miss the sense of the story. In denying the complexity of the world, they miss the divine aspects already present within it. Those who take the world to be simply literal or only a fallen place miss the fractal renewals playing at the edges of reality. The Unknown has always been the companion of the living. And seen mythically, this world continues to be a locus of mystery, and life remains an act of wonder in which some risk attends each breath and the necessity of love trumps all theories. The facts are never enough to explain the mysteries of the heart or the

wonders of the mind, never enough to grasp the living edge that stretches between the two worlds. It isn't that facts and measurements don't matter, rather that they can never tell the whole story.

It used to be better known that common reality offers a world of appearances, that behind all appearances stands the Real behind the real. In mistaking appearances for the Real, people wind up with the appearance of strength, the appearance of power, the appearance of leadership, the appearance of freedom, the appearance of meaning, while suffering a loss of all that is truly meaningful.

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The Gift of Life

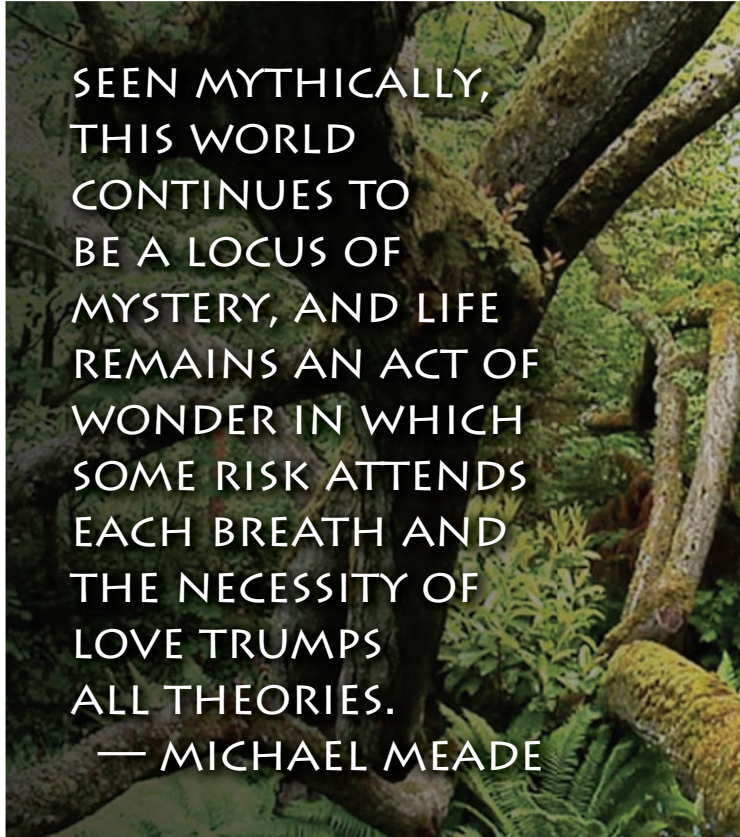
The eloquence of life was hidden behind appearances at the very beginning. The world was a hidden unity waiting to speak, and the first words would change everything by bringing the hidden to the fore. It was then that the original thinkers joined their words and their thoughts. They had names like Heart of Heaven, Heart of Sky, Heart of Earth, Hurricane, and Sudden Thunderbolt. Some say that there was only one being speaking at the beginning; others say that the One spoke with many voices. Everyone agrees that the speaking had to begin and that the naming still continues in the darkness behind things and in the voice of every dawn.

The original thinkers conceived the growth of mountains, the generation of trees, the pulsing of animals, the eruption of all life-forms, at the beginning when everything was possible. They say that after being at creation for a while, Heart of Heaven desired that the gift of life be recognized on earth, that gratitude become part of the expressed eloquence of existence.

Yet somehow the animals were unable to pronounce all that the creators desired to hear. Their sounds and even their songs couldn't express a certain knowledge that was needed to complete the song of creation. With the idea of more expressive creatures in mind, Heart of Heaven shaped some beings from mud. These mud beings had unique shapes and soft contours. That turned out to be a problem with them: They were simply too soft. When the rains came, those mud people became mushy and soon melted right back into the earth.

Heart of Heaven allowed the rain to melt them down and soon fashioned some new creatures from wood and hollow reeds. The new creatures were an improvement: They were able to walk about and soon began making things themselves. In some ways, they reflected the ongoing creation. They even spent their time developing primitive ideas and related technologies. The wood people were superior to the mud people. They didn't melt when it rained, and they stood up for themselves.

However, it turned out that the wood people lacked hearts, and their minds were as narrow as reeds. Yes, they could make things, but they did not remember their own maker and could not provide the expression of gratitude and appreciation for life that had been the inspiration for their creation. It was as if everything in creation spoke out against them; the animals and the trees and even their own utensils eventually turned upon them. Soon, Heart of Heaven caused a thick rain of black water to fall, and the wood people were scattered and destroyed.



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— MICHAEL MEADE

Heart of Heaven wasn't finished with the notion of creating creatures conscious of the gift of life. It seems that even at the beginning, things had to be attempted three times before the hidden could become visible. Heart of Heaven shaped some maize into dough, breathed some life into it, and soon the corn people were born. Right from the beginning, the people made of maize were different. The primary distinction involved their ability to see. The corn people were the first creatures to look past their immediate condition and see beyond immediate needs. They survived and thrived on earth because of their awareness of the world, for they had enough insight to immediately recognize the gift of life and the wonders of creation.

Heart of Heaven became pleased with this turn of events, and it seemed that the missing piece of creation had been added. However, another problem soon developed. Some people say that there is always one problem after another. Some even believe that the problems in the world keep creation going along.

At any rate, the new beings had a remarkable ability to see into the very heart of the world. They could see beyond the obvious and see deep within themselves. Their sight made



STEVEN BOE

The Eye of the Heart

True vision requires an open heart as well as an open mind. The eye of the heart is shaped for seeing the mysteries of life and love and for sighting new ways for making both. The eye of the heart is made to see beyond, to glimpse the whole cosmos, and to perceive its own paradoxical place in that great arrangement. When the world seems weary with ignorance and threatened by the hardening of minds and hearts, the eternal youth in the heart tries to awaken to visions that connect all the way back to the beginnings of time. In the end, the human soul tries to become ancient again, and being ancient means having the courage of beginnings as well as the wisdom of survival—not the simple survival of the fittest, but an awakening of surprising visions that don't fit within literal ways of seeing. The eloquence of creation and meaningful imagination wait to be found where they always reside, in the heart within the heart, in the living stories that reconnect the mind and the heart.

In order for things in this world to change, people might have to listen to little things, learn to hear again the language of nature and learn to trust the little voice that speaks from within. Noah, who built the biblical ark, had to follow the dream that awakened in him whether or not others understood his calling. Manu, who assisted Lord Vishnu disguised as a baby fish, had to accept that little creatures have important needs and can communicate them. This immediate sense of the sacredness of all life appears in most religions, yet it becomes forgotten whenever the high doctrines and solemn dogmas claim to be the only fish in the ponds of spirit.

When the end seems near, little redemptions can shift the underlying patterns of both nature and culture. Seen this way, there's no need for this world to end. There's no need to believe in some great salvation if the divine can be found in nearby aspects of the incarnate world. The notion that little saves big, that a small change can have a huge effect keeps being lost and rediscovered as the seas of time both wash things away and return them again to the shores of awareness. We are the descendants of old characters like Manu and Noah. We are the current inheritors of the dream of life and the mystery of creation. Our hands are never far from the core issues of life and the old

them knowledgeable of the earth and of the ways of creation. Not only could they recognize the creators, but they could see in ways that were similar to the vision characteristic of the early deities.

That capacity for great vision was a primary power and ability for the first real ancestors of humanity. But it also became the source of some discomfort for the gods of creation, for it soon seemed that the corn people would become the equal of the gods. That troubling possibility caused the early deities to ask Heart of Heaven to reduce the vision of the people. They asked that the people have more short-term vision and less ability to see the way the creators saw things.

Heart of Heaven agreed, and the vision of the ancestors was reduced to the ways that people tend to see even now. However, Heart of Heaven added one stipulation: The people would have their vision diminished, but they would have access to the stories of creation and to the images that appeared when everything was just beginning to appear. Humans would have a seeing instrument, which would allow them to see with genuine vision: By attending to the original thoughts with open hearts and minds, the living people could open the eyes of true vision again and see in ways that helped creation to continue.

practices for remaining creative and fully imaginative. Old folk myths whisper that it's time to bend down and connect to the old ways of earth wisdom and the hidden Self within the self.

The old idea of the *atman* described the essence of the world as being both bigger than big and smaller than small. This sense of big and little also exists in the soul of each person, so that each person has an innate ability to resonate with the smaller than small and to imagine that which appears bigger than big. The old Greek thinkers called it the *cosmos*, from the root *cosm*, meaning "order or form." Cosmos is the big picture, the whole thing seen as a whole, yet also a story that makes sense on all levels.

Cosmology was the study of this whole, both the cosmic ligaments and the mythic narrations that considered it. In cosmology, turnabout is fair play. While it's evident that a big shift in the heavens can change everything on earth, it turns out that under certain circumstances, a small shift can alter the whole thing as well. Microchanges can affect the macrocosm—"As below, so above," and what happens deep within can become so throughout.

There is a hidden continuity in the world that sometimes reveals itself, as in microphysics, in which a small change can be seen to have a big effect. In a sense, physics always verges upon becoming metaphysics again. The knock-on-wood physical world keeps slipping out of hand and hinting at cosmic schemes and universal designs. All genuine studies, including the hard sciences, verge upon encounters with the open secrets of the universe, where all things are revealed to be secretly connected and interacting, despite differences in size and

levels of being. Cosmology is revelation ongoing, with the bigger than big and smaller than small interacting in surprising ways, sometimes seen through science, always being revealed by myth.

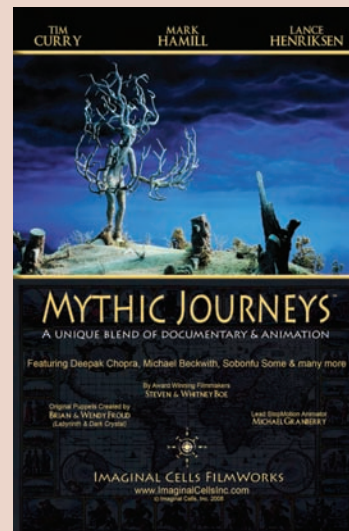
In this world, things appear doubled, big and small, left and right, inside and out, high and low. Similarly, there are two ongoing stories, each weaving ways through the wonders and disasters of life: the cosmic tale of the whole world and the intricate stories that can only be lived through particular lives. Both tales are told simultaneously, concurrently, meeting at certain points and conversing in subtle ways. Each is a grand experiment, each a mystery revealing itself to itself, eternity continuing to speak through the visible world and through each living being.

We are part of that great telling whether we know it or not—each person a story that the soul of the world tells in the continuous conversation between beginning and ending, in the middle waters between life and death. One long story needing to be lived out again and again and never lived the same way twice. We inherit the ongoing story as well as the ongoing disasters that occur within it.

When the story of the world wants to explore endings and find some new beginnings, people are plagued with last thoughts and fears of finality. The End seems close at hand and we feel unable to handle it. Everything moves faster and faster, like a rushing tide. There seems to be no time left and no way to change the course set for disaster. Yet fears that everything is coming apart, that this is The End, are part of the continuing tale of the world. All told before, convincingly too, with storms and desperate people and animals being lost.

Mythic Journeys,

a fusion of documentary and animation from award-winning filmmakers Steven and Whitney Boe, explores how myths and story can change the world. Narrated by Tim Curry, Mark Hamill, and Lance Henriksen, the film interweaves the classic folk tale "The Bone Orchard" with interviews from some of the world's leading mythologists, psychologists, and spiritual leaders, including Michael Meade, Sobonfu Somé, Deepak Chopra, and Michael Bernard Beckwith. *Mythic Journeys* asks the provocative question: "Will you know who you are when you die, or will death have to tell you?" To learn more, see www.ImaginalCellsInc.com.



The Living Covenant

When news of The End came to Noah, he understood the nature of the work to do. The dream of the deluge awakened something already in him. Inside the news that The End was coming were instructions for beginning again. It wasn't just that he gathered pairs of animals and became a savior. There was a thread joining those pairs to begin with; there was a dream waiting to awaken in him. Inside the ark, there was a living covenant, subtle threads and lifelines that held one level of life together with others.

Only those convinced by their own dreams can see the hidden designs behind the troubles of the world. To the common eye, Noah looked particularly foolish. Yet he would have been foolish in a worse way had he refused the inner project. Who can explain this to those whose eyes have not yet opened to their own inward seas?

These aren't religious stories intended to teach moral lessons or substantiate abstract rules; rather, they are tales that try to recall the nature of the cosmos. The old flood stories don't persist in order to inform us what happened before but to remind us of the project we came here to undertake now. The dream came, and Noah got hired to do eccentric things. Animals began to long for faraway places. Water dissolved familiar shorelines. The certainty of life began to slip away. Those who held anything too tightly were unable to shift when the tide changed. The problem wasn't that the end of the world had come; rather, the issue was how to act when it seemed that way.


When The End seems near, old ideas return in order to be known again. Subtle voices hint at unseen designs. If we begin listening, as Manu did, as old Noah did, we become gainfully employed and find the exact projects and practices needed to keep things afloat for a long time to come. Secretly, each of us is a Noah sent on a distinct and seemingly foolish errand that can

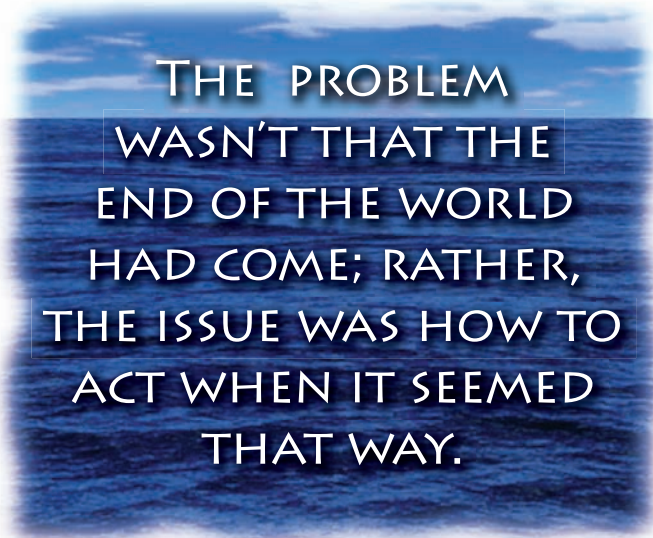
help the world as well as fulfill us. If we listen, we add to the story of life; if not, we join those who become foolish in the wrong way.

These are Noah times. Whole species disappear each day, languages go mute, forests fall heavily, and people increasingly forget who they are before they die. It's a time of loss, a period of great atrocities, an epoch rampant with refugees. We are forced to look at the ways in which things end and disappear. Everyone

becomes a refugee when life changes so rapidly, so tragically, so inexplicably.

We are the direct and indirect descendants of old Manu, who knew when to bend low and what to raise up. We are the grandchildren of old Noah, who survives inside the waters of human imagination and continues to design projects and dream on the inward seas. If we settle for a statistical worldview and a literal view of life, we will lose the subtle

connections to those dreams and find ourselves on the wrong errand in life. Whenever we can recall what is threaded through us, life's bigger designs appear again. Then we are carried on by the winds of the world. The old stories continue, no matter what; they pull threads of eternity through the loops of history. 



GUIDO VROLA

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