

1. The Ancient Worldview. This is the worldview reflected in the Bible (see fig. 1). In this conception, everything earthly has its heavenly counterpart, and everything heavenly has its earthly counterpart. Every event is thus a simultaneity of both dimensions of reality. If war begins on earth, then there must be, at the same time, war in heaven between the angels of the nations involved on earth. Likewise, events initiated in heaven would be mirrored on earth. There is nothing uniquely biblical about this imagery. It was shared not

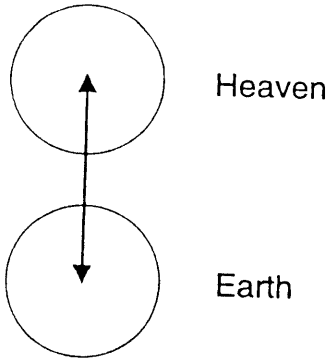


Fig. 1

only by the writers of the Bible, but also by Greeks, Romans, Egyptians, Babylonians, Assyrians, Sumerians—indeed, by everyone in the ancient world—and it is still held by large numbers of people in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. It is a profoundly true picture of reality.³

2. The Spiritualistic Worldview. What distinguishes this worldview (see fig. 2) from all other types is that it divides human beings into “soul” and “body”; one understands oneself as the *same* as one’s “soul” and *other* than one’s “body.” In this account, the created order is evil, false, corrupted. Creation was itself the fall. Matter is either indifferent or downright evil. Earthly life is presided over by imperfect and evil Powers. When the soul leaves its heavenly bliss and is entrapped in a body, as a result of sexual intercourse,

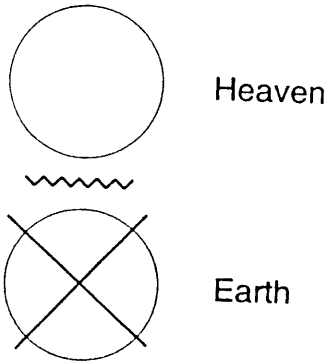


Fig. 2

it forgets its divine origins and falls into lust, ignorance, and heaviness. The body is a place of exile and punishment, but also of temptation and contamination. Salvation comes through knowledge of one’s lost heavenly origins and the secret of the way back. This worldview is usually associated with Gnosticism, Manichaeism, some forms of Neoplatonism, and, in regard to sexuality, Puritanism. (Something of the same picture would fit some forms of Eastern religions, except that they would see the world not as evil but as illusion.)

3. *The Materialistic Worldview.*

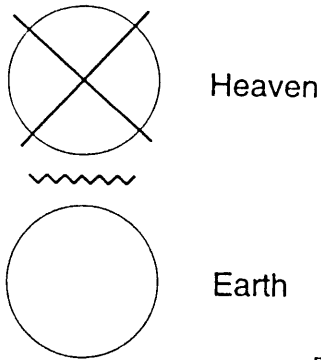


Fig. 3

This view (see fig. 3) became prominent in the Enlightenment, but is as old as Democritus (ca. 460–ca. 370 B.C.E.), and is in many ways the antithesis of the world-rejection of spiritualism. In this view, there is no heaven, no spiritual world, no God, no soul—nothing but material existence and what can be known through the five senses and reason. The spiritual world is an illusion. There is no higher self; we are mere complexities of matter, and when we die we cease to exist except as the chemicals

and atoms that once constituted us. This materialistic worldview has penetrated deeply even into many Christians, causing them to ignore the spiritual dimensions of systems or the spiritual resources of faith.

4. *The "Theological" Worldview.*

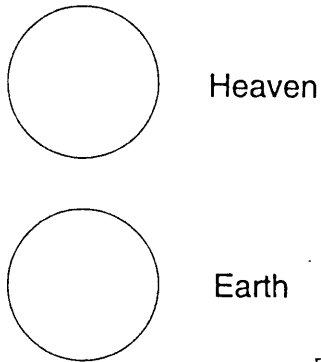


Fig. 4

In reaction to materialism, Christian theologians invented the supernatural realm (see fig. 4). Acknowledging that this supersensible realm could not be known by the senses, they conceded earthly reality to modern science and preserved a privileged "spiritual" realm immune to confirmation or refutation—at the cost of an integral view of reality and the simultaneity of heavenly and earthly aspects of existence. This view of the religious realm as hermetically sealed and immune to challenge from

the sciences has been held not only by the Christian center and right, but by most of theological liberalism and neorthodoxy.

ENGAGING THE POWERS

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5. *An Integral Worldview.* This new worldview (see fig. 5) is emerging from a confluence of sources: the reflections of Carl Jung, Teilhard de Chardin, Morton Kelsey, Thomas Berry, Matthew Fox, process philosophy, and the new physics. It sees everything as having an outer and an inner aspect. It attempts to take seriously the spiritual insights of the ancient or biblical worldview by affirming a withinness or interiority in all things, but sees this inner spiritual reality as inextricably related to an outer concretion or physical manifestation. It is no more intrinsically "Christian" than the ancient worldview, but I believe it makes the biblical data more intelligible for people today than any other available worldview, including the ancient.

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ENGAGING THE POWERS

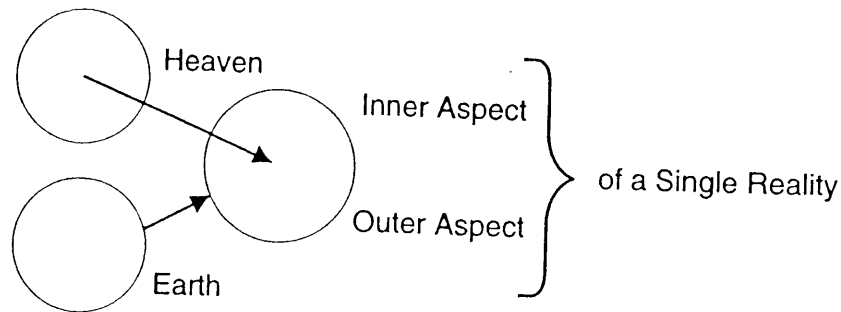


Fig. 5

The integral worldview that is emerging in our time takes seriously all the aspects of the ancient worldview, but combines them in a different way. Both images are spatial. The idea of heaven as "up" is a natural, almost unavoidable way of indicating transcendence. But in the West, which has been irremediably touched by modern science, few of us can any longer actually think that God, the angels, and departed spirits are somewhere in the sky, as most ancients literally did. (And some people today who disbelieve still do—including atheists. Remember the glee of the Soviet cosmonauts in announcing to the world that they had encountered no supernatural beings in space?)

The image of the spiritual as "withinness" is not, however, a flat, limited, dimensionless point. It is a within coterminous with the universe—an inner realm every bit as rich and extensive as the outer realm. The psychologist Carl Jung spoke of this rich inner dimension as the collective unconscious, meaning by that a realm of largely unexplored spiritual reality linking everyone to everything. The amazement of mystics at the discovery of this realm within is matched only by the amazement of physicists upon discovering that the "final" building block of matter, the atom, has an interiority also, and that the electrons and protons they had once thought so substantial are not best described as matter but as energy-events: what we might call, from the perspective of this book, spirit-matter. It appears that everything, from photons to subatomic particles to corporations to empires, has both an outer and an inner aspect.⁴