

BODY-VESSEL-MATRIX: CO-CREATIVE IMAGES OF SYNERGETIC UNIVERSE

by Nancy Corson Carter

Abstract: In his essay "Goddesses of the Twenty-first Century," R. Buckminster Fuller's use of woman and goddess as metaphor suggests a fruitful source of images illuminating synergetic principles. Using five images, clustered as body-vessel-matrix, the article suggests an epistemology and a heuristic for connecting the personal-physical and the universal-metaphysical. These images are (1) the Egyptian goddess Nut, (2) the Greek earth goddesses, (3) Neolithic Maltese goddess temples, (4) the double spiral, and (5) the Apollo Mission's Earth photographs. These images are intended as transformational synergetic/ecofeminist figures to replace images of deprivation, alienation, and destruction with images of abundance, intimacy, and co-creation.

Keywords: body; ecology; R. Buckminster Fuller; Gaia; goddesses and goddess images; synergy.

R. Buckminster Fuller's *Synergetics: Explorations in the Geometry of Thinking* (1975), together with his essay "Goddesses of the Twenty-first Century" (1968), are the conceptual framework for this discussion of a cluster of images I've named body-vessel-matrix. Through these images I invite the reader to transformative coalescence of self-image and universe image, a process epitomizing the dynamic of synergetics.

I consider both this discussion and Fuller's work, especially in synergetics, part of a continuing paradigm shift (using Thomas Kuhn's now-popular term) that I believe is necessary for the survival of our planet and ourselves. This shift involves a turning away from

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mechanistic and hierarchical worldviews toward ecological and holistic ones—from a view of the universe as atomistic and fragmented to a view of it as a web of interconnections.

In December 1985 twenty-eight leading proponents and critics of holistic and systemic thinking met for a “New Paradigm Symposium” at Esalen Institute and, despite disagreements on many particulars, agreed that “the most encouraging shift they see taking place in Western culture today is toward what was generally called a ‘female perspective’—not ‘feminism’ and not confined to gender—which is a type of ‘inclusive thinking’ that complements rather than replaces the ‘dominant male view.’ It gives ‘intangible’ qualities such as love and caring a higher priority in decisionmaking, . . . makes decisions based on a ‘field of relationships’ rather than on isolated circumstances, and takes into account distant as well as immediate effects” (Marquand 1986, 19).

Fuller’s “female perspective” functions as context in our presentation of four images from goddess-worshipping traditions. I see these ancient images not as sources but as analogues, a paradoxical linking of a “new paradigm” with ancient ones. I therefore present this paper as an *essai* in synergetics, and we begin by examining Fuller’s definition of synergetics, particularly as it emphasizes the principle of microcosm-macrocosm relationship.

For Fuller, synergetics represented an impetus toward increased freedom, consciousness, and order, achieved by interaction of the parts and the whole: “Synergy means behavior of whole systems unpredicted by the behavior of their parts taken separately” (Fuller 1975, 3). Humans are “maximally synergetic” when they commit their gifts to benefit all humanity, when they understand how to interpret the laws of matter as correspondent with transcendental or metaphysical principles. Synergetics might be viewed ultimately, in other words, as a metaphysical will-to-good that encourages humankind to perceive and to act upon the micro-macro correlations between the particular/human and the universal/divine.

In a section of *Synergetics* titled “Humans as Local Universe Technology,” Fuller states the principle of microcosm-macrocosm: every human unfolds, in her or his integrity, the “eternal, timeless principles of Universe” (Fuller 1975, 85).

In his concept of “Scenario Universe,” Fuller shows the correlation between the experienced events of our personal “local universe technology” and metaphysical principles: “The rate of change and the numbers of special-case self-retransformings of *physical evolution* tend ever to accelerate, differentiate, and multiply; while the rate of change and the numbers of self-remodifying of generalized law

conceptionings of *metaphysical evolution* tend ever to decelerate, simplify, consolidate, and ultimately unify” (Fuller 1975, 87).

The link between Fuller’s concepts and our discussion of body-vessel-matrix images is in his 1968 *Saturday Review* article “Goddesses of the Twenty-first Century,” in which he tells why woman, worshiped by early civilizations but since then deposed by males, now seems about to be restored (by evolution) to a central role. His belief is that woman’s role may now exceed any previous one. Discussing the mid-twentieth-century recognition that unity is plural and, at minimum, two, he writes that “all experimentally detectable phenomena have their unique [nonmirroring] opposite sites,” and that “in structural systems’ phenomena we have ‘compression’ and ‘tension’ ” (Fuller 1968, 14). He defines tension-compression complementarity as a female-male metaphor: “Women are tensional and continuous. Each new female as well as male comes from the womb of the woman. We have, then, the new female life as a series of expanding waves, the new ever emerging from within the older wave. Women are thus continuous, like the single-cell creature, Hydra—the newer part breaking off from the older with its early life overlapping its mother’s later life—ergo, never dying. Males are discontinuous. The new male is noncontiguous to the previous male life. Men are, then, islanded, individual discontinuities” (Fuller 1968, 45).

Although both components of such a pair comprising unity “always and only coexist,” in synergetics it is not the discontinuous male-compressional element but the female-tensional element that links the physical and the metaphysical: “The universe is cohered only by the continuous tensional integrity [a principle called tensegrity in later work] which is sometimes magnetical, sometimes gravitational, and sometimes produced by forces as yet unexplained by experimental science” (Fuller 1968, 15).

In his use of woman and goddess as metaphor, Fuller indicates a fruitful source of images reinforcing synergetic principles. Following suggestions in his work, I have selected a cluster of images I find particularly illuminating; this cluster, chosen from various ancient goddess-worshipping traditions, I designate as body-vessel-matrix. Four foci for my central discussion are (1) the Egyptian goddess Nut, (2) the Greek earth goddesses Gaia and Pandora, (3) Neolithic temples in the form of the goddess, and (4) the double spiral (found, in this case, on a Neolithic funerary urn). These images guided the ancients and may, with some revisions, guide us. They suggest a context within which humans may examine their lives from both particular and universal perspectives, establishing an enhancing,

even comforting relationship between individual finite life and the infinite regeneration of Universe.

The first image is that of the celestial goddess Nut, from the classical Egyptian pantheon (Argüelles 1977, plate 61; also see figure 1). In identification with the goddess Net or Neith, Nut was the prototype of parthenogenesis in the matriarchal symbolism subsequently reworked in the "official" patriarchal religion and mythology (Neumann 1974, 217). Besides being known as the feminine form of the primeval ocean, Nut (sometimes Nu or Nun) is also the cow goddess of heaven (Neumann 1974, 221). This great goddess, Mehurt, one of Nut's many variants, gives birth to the sun god (Neumann 1974, 218). In hieroglyphics, Nut is symbolized as a water jar, a symbol that also stands for "female genital," woman, and the feminine principle (Neumann 1974, 128). As the water jar, Nut presides as the vault of heaven or the matrix of life-giving water-milk, and she is also the vault of the underworld waters, which encompass death and rebirth. So Nut, as vessel, is both womb and tomb, cradle and bier. Depicted as a celestial body bent over the earth, she is known as "The Door," and "Coverer of the Sky"; in this form, she is the one who "causes the stars to manifest their souls" (Neumann 1974, 222).

On the lids or floors of sarcophagi, however, Nut is the western waters who takes her children back into her arms at death. According to Neumann, she "is the same mother of death as the Christian Pietà, the Madonna, holding in her lap the dead Jesus, the child of death, who has returned to her" (Neumann 1974, 222). Furthermore, "she is the ocean of life with its life-and-death-bringing seasons, and life is her child, a fish eternally swimming inside her, like the stars in the celestial ocean of the Mexican Mayauel and like men in the fishpool of Mother Church—a late manifestation of the same archetype" (Neumann 1974, 222).

To contemplate the body-vessel-matrix symbolism of Nut is to realize what Fuller might recognize as an example of "coordinated nonsimultaneity"—that our bodies, like Nut's, are locally mortal (cradle and bier)—but as cosmic metaphor she reminds us that the body is "eternally integrated with Universe." Fuller notes: "Humanity cannot shrink and return into the womb and revert to as yet unfertilized ova. Humanity can only evolve toward cosmic totality, which in turn can only be evolvingly regenerated through new-born humanity" (Fuller 1975, 85).

As the primordial sky-ocean from which life springs, Nut stands as an anthropomorphic metaphor for an infinite possibility of Universe. As vessel of birth, death, and rebirth, she incarnates the truth of



Fig. 1. Nut in sarcophagus relief. From Miriam and José Argüelles, *The Feminine: Spacious as the Sky* (Boulder and London: Shambhala, 1977), p. 62.

eternally cyclic pulsations of matter-energy; humankind is one of these frequency forms. Nut is the Great Goddess whom Neumann describes: "As a whole [she] is a symbol of creative life and the parts of her body are not physical organs but numinous symbolic centers of whole spheres of life. For this reason, the 'self-representation' of the Great Goddess, her display of her breasts, belly, or entire naked body, is a form of divine epiphany" (Neumann 1974, 128). The creative life that Nut represents correlates with Fuller's discussion of conceptuality and frame of reference: "The system actually regenerates itself; it is an eternal rebirth system" (Fuller 1975, 303).

When the Egyptians saw Nut's body in the sky, which was filled with sun, stars, moon, and planets, surely they felt the majesty and mystery of their own bodies. So Fuller and other scientists point out the macro-microcosmic relationships of humans and universe. "We have only one counterpart of total complexity," says Fuller, "and that is Universe itself" (Fuller 1975, 85).

Nut demonstrates that a Creator Goddess may reign over the celestial as well as terrestrial oceanic zones, but far more familiar to us are the telluric or earth goddesses. Two of the primary earth goddesses from prehellenic myths illustrate this aspect of goddess as vessel: Gaia (or Ge), the ancient Earth Mother, who brought forth the world and the human race from "the gaping void, Chaos," and Pandora, the *kore* or maiden of the Earth Goddess (Spretnak 1978, 42).

The great vessel or jar, the *pitios* (rather than the box of later accounts) of Pandora, is the container for the abundance of the Earth Goddess's gifts that Pandora (literally, "giver of all gifts") showers upon humankind. Gaia, the Earth Mother, gave gifts on her surface and accepted the dead into her body; she is matron of the *pitios* gifts and, at the same time, the great underworld vessel itself (Neumann 1974, 162). "Offerings to Gaia of honey and barley cake were left in a small hole in the earth before plants were gathered. Many of her temples were built near deep chasms where yearly the mortals offered sweet cakes into Her womb" (Spretnak 1978, 46-47). In these chasms and over deep clefts, her oracular priestesses translated messages that arose from the darkness of her earth-womb.

Let us now examine the etymologies of the words in our cluster of images: *body* likely extends from the Germanic *bot-*, "container"; *vessel* originates from the late Latin *vascellum*, diminutive of *vas*; and *matrix* comes from the Latin *matrix*, "womb" (originally "pregnant animal," from *mater*, "mother"). From the context of this tightly interwoven group of words, all related to the Earth Mother's vessel, it

is easy to appreciate Mircea Eliade's assessment that "the Earth-Mother constitutes a form that is "open" to, or susceptible of, indefinite enrichment, and that is why it takes in all the myths dealing with Life and Death, with Creation and generation, with sexuality and voluntary sacrifice" (Eliade 1960, 185).

Viewed as a unity, the Earth and Sky Mothers provide a matrix within which humans may live with a deeply cosmobiological participatory sense (Eliade's term). In the strongest autochthonic traditions, wherein a people feels deeply rooted in its *place*, it was felt that "the mother did no more than to bring to completion the creation of the Earth-Mother: and at death, the great desire was to return to the Earth-Mother" (Eliade 1960, 165). On an individual level, the relationship between a human body and the body of the deity gave rise to the awareness of homologues permeated with the sense of the sacred. The homology of body-house-cosmos is used traditionally in Indian religious thought and described by Eliade in *The Sacred and the Profane*: "In the last analysis, the body, like the cosmos, is a 'situation,' a system of conditioning influences that the individual assumes. The spinal column is assimilated to the cosmic pillar (*skambha*) or to Mount Meru; the breaths are identified with the Winds; the navel or heart with the Center of the World, and so on" (Eliade 1959, 173).

For Eliade, the body-house-cosmos equivalent images are "capable of receiving an upper opening that makes passage to another world possible" (Eliade 1959, 174). For him and for others in search of the sacred interconnectedness of all things, "we might say that for the nonreligious men of the modern age, the cosmos has become opaque, inert, mute, it transmits no message, it holds no cipher" (Eliade 1959, 178). Nonreligious humankind is "no longer aware that having a body and taking up residence in a house are equivalent to assuming an existential situation in the cosmos" (Eliade 1959, 175).

The great Neolithic Maltese temples built in the form of the body of the Great Goddess illustrate the body-house-cosmos metaphor. Of the Maltese temples of the Great Goddess, including the Mnajdra Temple (ca. 3300 B.C.E.) and the Hal Tarxien Temple (ca. 2400-2300 B.C.E.), architect Mimi Lobell writes: "The Maltese temples take the form of the body of the Goddess more clearly than do any other temples. Colossal and diminutive statues found in the temples show that the Goddess worshipped there had the same shape as her temples—ample, rounded, generous; thus entrance into any of these temples was tantamount to entering the Goddess for physical and spiritual rebirth" (Lobell 1978, 34).

In his work on the Silbury treasure, Michael Dames discovered

that the monuments derive meaning from being modeled (each one) on a critical stage in the human life cycle. He reminds us that “the cruciform church was a *picture* of Christ’s crucifixion, and a picture which the worshipper could enter, and wished to enter, in order to achieve total union with the divinity. The body of the building was synonymous with the god, and through faith it becomes synonymous also with the worshipper’s own body” (Dames 1976, 59–60).

Documenting his evidence with the reactions of a number of other archaeologist-researchers, especially on the Maltese temples, Dames concludes that “in the Neolithic, where the godhead took the shapes of a woman, and the primary form was that of goddess as seated woman,” the temple shapes followed the female model (Dames 1976, 60). He adds that “recent excavation carried out in Shetland enables one to say that the goddess is also to be found in the design of over sixty Neolithic houses belonging to the British Isles” (Dames 1976, 60).

R. A. Schwaller de Lubicz’s studies on the Temple of Luxor show the possibility that it was devoted to the human microcosm: “The entire temple becomes a book explaining the secret functions of the organs and nerve centers [as] . . . the Egyptians apparently considered the organs of the human body [to be] images of the divine universal organism” (Schwaller de Lubicz 1977, 25).

In all cultures that revere some form of the body-vessel-matrix symbolism, a basic notion of transformation exists. First, energy manifests from chaos or the void through the birth of a human child; the child metamorphoses into an adult; upon death another metamorphosis occurs: rebirth of some form, whether into another dimension or back into the physical world through the next generation. In some way or other, human cultures affirm that we may trust the eternal regenerative.

The cyclic nature of life is expressed by many ancient wisdom traditions closely relating body and cosmos. Schwaller de Lubicz writes: “The Upanishads also teach that it is impossible for us to learn elsewhere what we are incapable of learning within our bodies” (Schwaller de Lubicz 1977, 79). Within the Mother’s body-matrix, within her embrace and closure, we may harmonize the patterns of human life with the cosmic. Thus we reconcile the five seasons of life (as understood in goddess lore)—from birth, initiation, consummation, repose, to death—within our own body temple and, at the same time, within the world temple.

With reference to the alchemical tradition, we may think of the body vessel as the hermetically sealed vessel or *vas* of spiritual transformation. Ann Belford Ulanov, in *The Feminine in Jungian Psy-*

chology and in Christian Theology, writes: “The feminine symbolism of the vessel at its highest level is the vessel of spiritual transformation—the Grail, the cup of the Last Supper, representing not only ‘the earth and heaven of the retort that we call life, and . . . the whirling wheel revolving within it,’ but . . . also the supreme essence and distillation to which life in this world can be transformed” (Ulanov 1971, 190).

A funerary urn from Neolithic China (2d millennium B.C.E.) bears the last of the body-vessel-matrix images I’ve chosen from goddess traditions (Purce 1974, plate 54; see figure 2, page 160). By its shape and its decorative motif, it represents these images. In an introductory work on ceramics, Philip Rawson says that “it is no accident that we, as well as other peoples, have always used anthropomorphic terms to designate these different parts of the pot, which is seen to be, in some sense, a symbolic analogue of the human body” (Rawson 1971, 100).

Seldom do pots have heads, but all have lips (encircling the rim) and a belly (main bulk of the container), and most have a neck and some have a waist and a foot. Furthermore, notes Rawson, many traditions have felt a “close metaphorical relationship between their pottery—especially certain particular shapes—and various functions of the feminine which that culture recognizes. Woman as nourisher has usually been her family’s cook and food transformer. Both she and the family have thus tended to identify her vessels with herself” (Rawson 1971, 101).

In looking at this Chinese urn, it is important to remember “that pots have overtones of ‘the container,’ ‘the receptive’ (in China one of the names of the Yin), ‘the generous,’ of the maternal and feminine in general” (Rawson 1971, 101), because these overtones coincide with the meaning of the coiling and uncoiling of the double spiral pattern on its shoulder and upper belly.

Jill Purce explains the double meaning of the form and patterns of this funerary urn: “Entering into this womb-shaped cavity, the spirit of the dead is put into contact with the cosmic forces of regeneration represented by the double spirals. Between the two spirals, the opening of the womb symbolizes the division between life and death, death and rebirth” (Purce, plate 54 text).

This simple pattern, the double spiral, which appears frequently on buildings and other artifacts relating to the Great Goddess, is a distillation into abstract form of the image cluster we have been examining. It symbolizes the unwinding of life from one center, birth, to the other, death; it suggests rebirth as well. It also suggests a number of analogies with Fuller’s “basic patterns.”



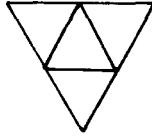
Fig. 2. The continuity of the coiling and uncoiling of life is the theme of the huge spirals found on Neolithic Chinese funerary objects, such as this urn (2d millenium B.C.E.). Redrawn from Jill Purce, *The Mystic Spiral: Journey of the Soul* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1974), pl. 54. (From Victoria and Albert Museum, London; original photo by Eileen Tweedy.)

Fuller discusses the triangle as a spiral: “A very flat spiral, but open at the recycling point” (Fuller 1975, 4). His basic structural pattern, the tetrahedron, is shown to be composed of two triangles: one positive + one negative event = tetrahedron (see “Two Triangular Energy Events Make Tetrahedron” [figure 511.10], in Fuller 1975, 243). If we take these two flat triangles apart and lay them flat, we can arrange them into the pattern of a double spiral:



Again, if we imagine the tetrahedron as an origami structure, folded from one triangular sheet of paper, we see that the necessary fold lines form a triangle within the large triangle; thus we have made

a pattern recognizable as the foundation of a classic *sri yantra*, or “seed” (the *sri yantra* being the most important Tantric *yantra*, or meditative pattern):



The upward male triangle and the downward female triangle are vortices of ascending and descending creative energy. Jill Purce (1974) expands upon the symbolism of this figure, writing that “from the marriage between the central point (the original non-manifest seed Bindu), which is the pure consciousness of Siva, and his own first manifestation as the initial involutory and creative vortex of the female Sakti (the downward triangle), comes the differentiation of the entire manifest world” (Purce 1974, plate 61; see figure 3).

Fuller’s statement that “unity is complex and at minimum two” seems to demonstrate the same principles embodied in the *sri yantra*, the yin-yang (see his discussion of “Yin-Yang as Two” [Fuller 1975, 122]), and other classic symbols of unity encompassing diversity (Fuller 1975, 63).

As we manipulate these configurations, we are experimenting in what Fuller calls “self-remodifying of generalized law concep-

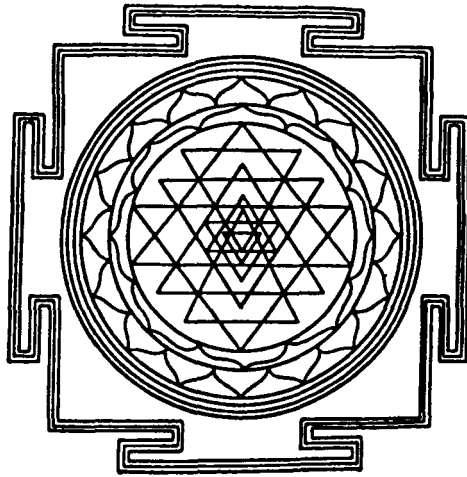


Fig. 3. A classic *sri yantra*. From Ernst Lehner, *Symbols, Signs & Signets* (New York: Dover Publications, 1950), p. 97.

tionings of *metaphysical* evolution” that, as he states in “Scenario Universe,” “tend ever to decelerate, simplify, consolidate, and ultimately unify” (Fuller 1975, 87). Archetypal patterns may provide one systematic approach to expression of these “generalized law conceptionings.” It is interesting, for example, to compare the design relationship of an archetypal pattern such as the life journey, as seen in the double spiral, with the tetrahedron components.

The beauty of the tetrahedron, as well as the beauty of the configuration body-vessel-matrix, is that both have elegant physical functions as well as metaphysical numinosity. Fuller’s statement and expansion of the principle of “tensegrity” provides a synergetic bridge between the two sets or systems of approach to Universe. “The word *tensegrity* is an invention: it is a contraction of the phrase “tensional integrity.” Tensegrity describes a structural-relationship principle in which structural shape is guaranteed by the finitely closed, comprehensively continuous, tensional behaviors of the system and not by the discontinuous and exclusively local compressional member behaviors. Tensegrity provides the ability to yield increasingly without ultimately breaking or coming asunder” (Fuller 1975, 372). In terms of his “Goddesses” article, the female-tensional qualities are fundamental.

Fuller’s focusing not upon the discontinuous compressional components of Universe but upon the continuous tensional ones coincides with contemporary physicists’ focus upon fields and probabilities not of things but of interconnections. Fritjof Capra, in *The Tao of Physics*, writes: “Quantum theory thus reveals a basic oneness of the universe. It shows that we cannot decompose the world into independently existing smallest units. As we penetrate into matter, nature does not show us any isolated ‘basic building blocks,’ but rather appears as a complicated web of relations between the various parts of the whole” (Capra 1977, 57).

Fuller’s prediction, a relation of physical, pragmatic qualities of tension and compression to metaphysical evolution of humankind, is appropriately transcendental. It is a vision of re-sacralizing our worldview, a way of seeing the basic salutary interconnectedness of all things. In his wonderfully prolix yet precise language, he reminds us that “insect and avian bumbling in general inadvertently cross-fertilizes all vegetations’ impoundments of the star-radiated energy which alone regenerates all biological life around Earth planet” (Fuller 1975, 30–31).

Despite his sanguine vision of a universe that befriends us, carries

on, and survives, Fuller stresses that it “is highly probable that universal comprehension of synergetics is strategically critical” (Fuller 1975, 31). He believes that humans are entering into “the realization that planetary society can spontaneously coordinate in universally successful life support,” thus achieving freedom from the “fundamental fear and political bias inherent in the ignorant assumption of life-support inadequacy” (Fuller 1975, 31).

This outcome, however, is not guaranteed. “Quite clearly,” writes Fuller, “our task is predominantly metaphysical, for it is how to get all of humanity to educate itself swiftly enough to generate spontaneous social behaviors that will avoid extinction” (Fuller 1975, xxviii).

Returning to Fuller’s image in “Goddesses of the Twenty-first Century,” of women as tensional and continuous, we see that inasmuch as woman bodies forth physical evolution as the earthly, continually regenerating vessel, she may also symbolize the principles of metaphysical evolution as the eternally regenerative cosmos.

In conclusion, I add one image: Earth as seen in the Apollo photographs. Here we have, for the first time in human history, portraits of Gaia, the entire global life web. Building upon the ancient Greek conception of Earth as a living organism embodied in Gaia or Ge, scientist James Lovelock has formulated the much-discussed “Gaia Hypothesis” that living organisms of the planet evolve with their physical and chemical environment in a single, indivisible process. This process is sturdy and patient, but human activities now threaten to disrupt and even destroy it. Lovelock warns: “Gaia is not purposefully antihuman, but so long as we continue to change the global environment against her preferences, we encourage our replacement with a more environmentally seemly species” (Lovelock 1988, 236).

In ecofeminist philosophy, integrated ecological and feminist concerns stress these central themes, themes implicit in both our examination of body-vessel-matrix images and in the Gaia photographic portraits from outer space: Earth and life *are* a web and not a hierarchy; diversity and continuity are intricately linked; and the fate of nonhuman nature is inevitably the fate of humans.

Anne Cameron tells the story “First Mother and the Rainbow Children,” reminding her listener/readers that “we are all her children and we all have the right to walk freely on the face of the Grandmother. We have the right and responsibility to live our lives fully, with dignity and with pride. And we have the obligation to First

Mother, and to the earth from which she was made, to protect and honor the Old Grandmother, the Earth who has always nourished us and provided for us" (Cameron 1989, 56).

Likewise, "eco-philosopher" Thomas Berry sees us moving into a new "omnicentric" period "to indicate that ecosystems are a comprehensive participatory process" (Berry 1988, 139). This period, he writes, "might also be termed the ecofeminist period since the spontaneities and nurturing qualities of the period might traditionally be designated as feminine" (Berry 1988, 139). Of ultimate importance in this period is a recovery of reverence toward our life context: "This universe itself, but especially the planet Earth, needs to be experienced as the primary mode of divine presence, just as it is the primary educator, primary healer, primary commercial establishment, and primary lawgiver for all that exists within this life community" (Berry 1988, 120).

Appropriately, emphasis on feminine nature as linking the human and the divine in these images of body-vessel-matrix, and of Gaia/Old Grandmother as well, is part of the archetype variously expressed as Mater Sapientia, Sophia, or Wisdom.

Wisdom seems deeply implicated in these images as we consider them in our contemporary context. How wise it would be to "unwarp" our cultural bias toward male-identified models of competition, dominance, and discontinuity with female-identified qualities of cooperation, nonhierarchical nurturance, and continuity. These goddess/feminine-connected images of body-vessel-matrix are congruent with the co-creative goal of synergy: achievement of harmonious cooperation between all members of the human community and between humankind and the order of Universe.

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