

The Skull Grins in at the Banquet

By Mark Kirwin

Preamble

Caveat: Please note that these ideas and reflections are offered not in the manner of asserting a kind of transcendent truth but in a spirit of 'Imagine it this way, look at it through this lens filter and see what happens, if anything' and It's no kind of an academic essay, more a collage of impressions and intuitive connections.

I've gathered together some threads that I've frequently alluded to over the years in these meetings and this came out more Historical / psychological than philosophical but I hope that you might hear them as 'mutually arising'. The same story could be told with a different set of perspectives (some that I actually prefer to the ones used here).

The material forms just part of a response to the question; What is the relationship between existential crisis and Trans-personal awakening? which has bugged me for decades. Put another simpler way, what is the relationship between the confrontation with death and awakening to non-ordinary awareness?

INTRODUCTION

There are three principles here which I take as givens. The principle of repression, which was Freud's masterstroke. He got so much else wrong, even if impressively but the idea of repression could be said to be one of the most original insights ever. It seems that it never occurred at all in the world before Freud and it has probably changed everything since.

The second is less well known – the principle of identification / dis-identification. Basically, that whatever our attention is fixed on, whatever we identify with, possesses US, like a spell until we recognise it's part-ness rather than being convinced of its complete-ness. Dis-identification may then follow and we are liberated to a deeper inclusivity, a wider self-hood, reducing alienation from self and world.

Third – that the world consists of inseparable relationships - including across time- not a mere juxtaposition of objects. Philosophy, said Gabriel Marcel ' must begin not with the artificially isolated ego, the thinking or doubting self but with the self that exists within an intersubjective communion, a self already linked to other beings '

With the exception of some suffering humans, everything living wants to continue to live. Life is sweet and nothing wants to die, yet everything must, even Bristlecone pines and Greenland sharks, eventually.

Shakespeare said: 'A man can die but once : We owe God a death ' We all arrive here in debt to the sum of one life and it's a debt that will be collected.

This mysterious conundrum, our living -mortal state, this predicament from which nobody escapes alive, was a major pre-occupation of our ancestors, shaping culture, finding expression in myth, religion and philosophy.

From the very beginning of human thought, we have stared into the dark mirror of our mortality and studied the reflections of our life. The struggle to overcome mortality is the theme of the Gilgamesh Epic- the earliest written story, over four thousand years old. Heroic King Gilgamesh is brought to fear and trembling by the realisation of his mortality. Shocked out of his heroic confidence by the death of his friend Enkidu, he leaves his kingdom to find a way to overcome death.

If the main point of the pursuit of Philosophy (the love of wisdom), is to enable us to live well by having a little insight into the mystery of our being, then it is surely also about enabling us to reflect on death and to die well . It would seem that our forebears thought so.

We moderns though have an utterly different take. We seem to avoid death and even actively avoid reflection on it. Death for us is an occasion for embarrassment, a technical problem that we have not yet cleared up.

The Historical context

There seem to be two streams of attitude to death among the notable philosophers, which I think divide into the pre-modern and modern, survivalist and non-survivalist broadly but not exactly . The first is exemplified by Plato's metaphysical dualism, but many others could be cited“a philosopher is constantly meditating on death”. Or Socrates in the Phaedo, “Philosophy is really having practised how to face death easily ” All the way through to ... Montaigne 16th c ‘To philosophise is to learn how to die ‘.

Basically, there is a being that survives / transcends death and /or to whom the fact of Death is central, it should command our attention and frame our understanding of life. Dissociating this essence from the concretely literal world is the true work of philosophy. Whereas, an early adopter of the non-survivalist school was Epicurus ‘ death is nothing to us ... since, so long as we exist, death is not with us; but when death comes, then we do not exist’ etc. - probably much in the minority in his time.

Come the 17th century, Spinoza's advice was the opposite of Plato's, for him “a wise person thinks of nothing so little as death.” And by the 20th c. Wittgenstein, “Death is not an experience in life”. An intriguing drift of perspective over the centuries on such a fundamental subject.

Differing ages and their world views give a different sense of life, a different context of being and therefore a different imagining of death. Historically, relations with the ancestors were and still are for many cultures, of principle importance e.g. The Ancient Greek mythology, related the majority of daily acts to both the underworld realm of souls below and a cast of Olympians above. In fact, the whole religious pantheon grew originally out of family ancestor cults.

In Britain and Europe up to the end of the middle ages, – in the context of Christian religious certainties, the remembrance and contemplation of death was serious practice. All Saints

day and all Souls day being the culmination of the annual cycle of commemorations and concerned with care for the souls of the dead.

Philippe Aries maintains that: Death was tamed by the belief in evil and heaven, by religious ritual, identification with community and the continuity of tradition which took the edge off death, weakened its personal quality and made it one more transition in every life. Then, in the middle of the medieval period (and amongst the elites only at that time) a new mode of death appeared- the model of the death of the self. Death was re-defined as the curtailment of an individual life. Prior to this, the mode of self was less acutely individual.

The loss of the Mythic / the loss of the imaginal

Nietzsche said that 'The terrible historical need of our unsatisfied modern culture ... the consuming desire for knowledge – what does all this point to, if not the loss of myth, the loss of the mythic home.' By 'The mythic' I understand he means the actual world around us, infused and transfigured by imagination. (N.B. The science museum in Florence).

It would seem that in the 16th c and 17th c this loss of the mythic gathered pace, with the gradual erosion of confidence in the literal truths of the Bible. Add in the influence of that poor un-mothered Jesuit, Descartes and all began to change.

A de-mythologizing process accelerated the disowning of ancestral stories, rationalising and hyper-rationalising, suspicion of metaphysical speculation, de-sacralised our view of the world, and altered also in the process, was our imagining of the mysteries of death, our relationship with the dead and of the processes of mourning.

The enlightenment shattered those last remnants of the medieval world that still perceived the world as en-souled and animated – William Blake and the Romantic poets excepted. The later Frankenstein's monster story expresses the 19th c feeling of the total collapse of a sense of Myth, of an encompassing Anima Mundi, soul of the World, as industrial materialism finished off what Descartes had started... perhaps it also expresses the disturbance arising from the disruption in ancestral relations with the dead.

Now, we believe matter to be dead, can't imagine it any other way and so, at the same time as strip mining it, we feel compelled with science and technology to re-animate it – 'It's alive! It's alive!' fetishizing robots and A.I, substituting every living process with a mechanical, electronic one. 'In an era of happy industrialism, nobody has time for the dead' said some Frenchman. In an era of not terribly happy, post-industrialism, soon we'll not have time for the living fears this Englishman.

Ironically, perhaps inevitably, it's a move from imagist-animism at the beginning of civilisation to imageless in-animism at the end.

A.N. Whitehead famously critiqued modern scientific materialism's effect on nature as having reduced it to 'a dull affair, soundless, scentless, colourless, merely the hurrying of material endlessly, meaninglessly'. The resulting (?) Cultural Nihilism which can only see death as total extinction, is the child of the loss of myth and of rational materialism.

This process has historical echoes e.g. the death of Pan in the ancient world, Plutarch reported the death of the great god Pan and the quiet despair that nature had lost the animation that it once displayed. ...The sweeping away of the Pagan world by the Christian revelation, the battle between the imagists and the iconoclasts of the early church, the Protestant revolt against Papism and more recently the extremism of Wahab-ism in Islam, and BLM statue toppling.

In common, always the 'progressive' move toward 'purity' the annihilation of the image, the triumph of the abstract ideal over the world of the soul-infused-flesh. It all adds up to the pitiless excision of Eros from cultural life, - a modern example - 'critical theory,' has now demoted aesthetics in art to a bourgeois irrelevance - The return of the repressed, in trying to triumph over the 'bad fairy' death, we only invite it in through the back door to choke the soul and beauty, from the life that would exclude it ?

A new mode of perceiving brings on a new mode of self. Our way of being in the world, is known as the position of 'Subjective idealism'. This asserts that things are dependent on the individual mind of the human knower, the fictional identity, the isolated, atomised ego, the human parody, stripped of mythic connection. This was for the majority, mostly inconceivable before the 17th c.

Whatever causes one might ascribe the emergence of the modern mode to the objectifying of the world-as-object went hand in hand with a process of focussing and intensifying the sense of the subjective (soul) entirely within the human awareness. As we drained the natural world of its psyche – we dis-encharmed it- and concentrated it all within the subjectivity of an intensified form of 'me' This in turn, enabling an amplified sense of personal agency that can further act upon the world-as-object in a feedback loop, to impressive, if eventually catastrophic effect.

As the sense of sacred Hierarchy collapsed we wound 'the great chain of being' into ourselves and the gods became psychological diseases, as Jung said. So, back to the theme of death...

Death as the principle of Limits

Where Being meets Non-Being - all our powers of reason of course, fall short. Apart from the assertions of mystics and of faith, we cannot know anything about death directly, all we can know is from the standpoint of life.

We can't even think about death directly, especially our own, as it is a concept with no object, un-representable, a no-thing – a burning bush in the negative, upon which we cannot gaze. As both Epicurus and Wittgenstein stated, we only ever know life, we don't experience our own death, only others do.

But as far as our existential, day-world person goes, death marks the supremely unsurpassable limit - and we can at least think about the principle of limits which are perhaps, death's emissaries in the day world.

Whatever the Final and spiritual cause of our individual uniqueness, in the manifest, extended mode, it is not experienced without the principle of limitation. We have uniqueness insofar as we live and differentiate our own life, not that of a collective or of species sameness. I only incarnate MY life (in the modern mode that is) to the degree that it is differentiated from yours, and - only I can die MY death. Birth and death mark the limits of our life, our character and fate. That is to say, on the basis of our defining limits, we can become the individuating, authentic expression of our given character and be true to the law of our own being, as Jung advised, not someone else's. My individual life arises mutually with my individual death, I necessarily, only have so much time and no more, or I would not truly exist. As Hegel put it: 'The nature of finite things as such, is to have the seed of passing away as their essential being: The hour of their birth is the hour of their death'. The mythic views of the ancient world understood this principle.

In Ancient Greek cosmology, Ananke Goddess of Necessity is un-opposable by any of the Gods. She is even Zeus' wet nurse. In Pythagorean thought, Ananke was mated with a giant serpent Chronos (time), forming a binding coil around the cosmos. Ananke is present at the birth of the Cosmos, Necessity gives limit to all existence and without limit, no existence.

By extreme contrast with our ancestors, the key feature of the spirit of modernity and more so with post-modernity, is the commitment to limitlessness, - Which is to say, the refusal of death and relations with any ARCHE which transcends human, personal agency.

The late-industrial, post-historical, utopian fantasies of global-consumer culture, would seem to have banished death from daily life. We are a civilisation under the spell that says, "nobody should ever die", our collective faith is placed in personal agency, calculation, machine-think, the technocracy and a more or less conscious determination to eschew the principle of limit. We call it progress, for we are Spengler's Faustian man, hubristically defiant of the ultimate limit, 'rage, rage against the dying of the light ... said Dylan Thomas.

According to Spengler we are Faustian men of what he called the Gothic civilisation, whose prime symbol, mythic driver is - infinite space - the urge to infinity, and boundlessness. Prometheus unbound, you might say.

Skyscrapers, space flight, quantum computers, fiat currency, compound interest, 'quantitative easing', the refusal to grow old and our pathological idealising, all attest to our collective 'ecstatic flight to infinity' - the delusion of having overcome LIMIT.

These achievements of course express the genius of the modern age but simultaneously, they give the lie to the myth, because the Skull does indeed still 'grin in at the banquet', and will for ever more. As William James (from whom I've taken the title for the talk) said, 'Death is the worm at the core of man's pretensions to happiness' Ananke, binding the cosmos, WILL have the final word.

Repression – one way to view the cause of our 'flight from death'

As N.O. Brown put it, 'The irony of man's condition is that the deepest need is to be free of the anxiety of death and annihilation, but it is life itself which awakens it.'

To precis Brown, Humankind, the anxious, discontented, agitated, neurotic, half-animal / half-angel has a different relationship to death than any other creature. For the simple, pure animal, living and dying are an inseparable unity, an instinctual wholeness where life affirms (is not split from) death.

Animals live in an unbroken and 'eternal' present tense, mankind, except perhaps for a few brief months of timeless, almost pre-conscious unity as an infant, does not. In the human, the simple animal instinctual unity is rent, split. Our fall from Eden is a fall up, into 'self-consciousness' i.e. out of the instinctual unity (timeless Eden), into time, the exit from Eden is the fall out of the pre-conscious oneness, the eternality of the purely, instinctual repertoire of the animal, into time and separation and potential Individuality. For Kierkegaard, man is a creature in dread owing to being a synthesis of animal and soul. Humankind is a creature that is both physical flesh AND crucially, one who has awoken to symbolic being, become a Symbolic Self.

So naturally, the first thing Adam does after the fall (and every child since) is NAME the animals – attach a symbol to the beings. With the birth of a human being, aware of being aware, self (in the form of a symbolic ego) and non-self (body and 'other') come into being. A primary dualism, and therefore opposites come into being. Buddhist scripture puts it thus... 'Where there is Self, there is other, where there is other, there is fear' and anyway, the world IS terrifying – we creatures exist by eating one another!

Ken Wilber describes individual self-hood as the imposition of a primary boundary on a unified reality, that is at yet undifferentiated in consciousness. 'I' identify with what is on the inside of this symbolic boundary as myself, what is outside, is other. Sounds simple enough, but being a symbolic ego, behind a symbolic boundary, that 'other' happens also to include my own physical body. The primary split.

For Psychoanalysis it is the infant's incapacity to accept separation from the mother and therefore to mourn, which originates the inability to die and therefore to live, and begins the war against death. The human is aware of their nakedness, of their reliance on a body that is mortal, vulnerable and unreliable. Its vagaries threaten the security of the symbolic self and must be controlled. 'WE ARE A GOD THAT SHITS'. (N.O.B.)

The symbolic self must triumph over the other, which in the first instance is the instinctual body, to avoid the unbearable anxiety and overwhelm, of spontaneous Life in its fullness - which threatens the symbolic self with annihilation (the dissolution of its symbolic boundaries, 'the psychological cell wall'). At the most basic level of existence therefore, awareness of self is awareness of death.

Opposites have to be made of life and death, we repress death but inevitably, tragically, repress life also in the same move. Ernest Becker said, 'repression fulfils the vital function of allowing the child to act without anxiety, to take experience in hand and develop dependable responses to it.'

Thus, this symbolic animal, you and me, is also the only creature that can and is compelled, to repress itself. (N.B. ergo, repression is normal for humans, inevitable and necessary, no repression, no creative self). We can only take so much reality- Life it would seem, is impossible for most of us without illusions.

In order to maintain a sufficiently strong sense of individuality, the symbolic ego must maintain a sufficiently strong repression of death. In short, the need to control a basic ontological anxiety is the hidden motive of much human behaviour.

Here's the tricky bit. Two psychological truisms – for that of which we are unconscious, there is no chronological time and that what's repressed doesn't undergo any change. Incidentally, characteristics that 'the unconscious' shares with the shades in Hades

Repression fixates instinct to the past, freezing our living responsiveness – a loss of the present tense- which we can observe easily in our own neurotic compulsions ... Our neuroses can be seen as a way we have of narrowing and reducing the intensity of impossible conflicts (e.g. life against death, 'me' against 'my body'), simplifying them into symptoms with which we CAN wrestle. They are also ways we have of avoiding the overwhelming, novel, immediacy of existence by experiencing the present in terms of the past and imagining that the future will be like the past. We drive our life looking in the rear view mirror.

We cease to flow, become fixated, emotionally armoured in a character fortress, 'telling ourselves -' this is the way it's always been, therefore this is the way it / I has to be now ' . Unconscious injunctions, effectively beginning with ' I can't ...'dictate and maintain repetition - the predictability of which is exactly what is desired - being secretly self-created, we know the outcomes are assured and predictable – you know how the story ends, so no overwhelming surprises, no novel experience...repetition.

I've shrunk the overwhelming possibilities of myself / Life / Spirit to a comforting size where I feel as if I have it, rather than it has me. We keep the terror at bay with character armour, repressing the Eros of the body creating a character fortress that strangles psychic life. Repression takes care of the death anxiety with the magical omnipotence of the child and we seem to get on top of life '

The 'Oedipal project' as Brown re-phrased Freud's concept it, can be seen as the attempt to become 'Father to oneself' a striving for a symbolic immortality. We repress the body to acquire a self, the self-contained sense of being self-created and self-replenishing. A kind of psychic Indian rope trick. The irony is that in acting out the repetitious compulsions to avoid death, we only diminish our life.

What's repressed is subject to repetition yet paradoxically, repression creates historical time by setting in motion a counterpoint forward movement 'in time' a bit like chucking a rock out of the back of a dinghy (in the attempt to recover the lost harmony) – I experience being a 'figure', a separate "self" – "becoming" in chronological time, against the unseen background of what's become unconscious in the process. It would seem that the desire for the permanence of a sense of 'I' sets in motion the rush of historical time.

Guilt and time

The difficulty is that creating historical time (through repression and the repetition compulsion) generates debt. Mircea Eliade showed that the archaic time of pre-modern peoples is based on periodic redemption and that our historical, progressive time is based on ultimate redemption at the end of time.

Nietzsche postulated that with the accumulation of culture (civilisation) the sense of indebtedness to ancestors (guilt) increases, climaxing in Christianity as a theology of unpayable debt.

In secular civilisation this debt/ guilt becomes unbearable and yet humans must still seek to expiate it,

The nature of Culture –Culture heroism and the war against death -

Civilisation and culture can both be viewed as expressions of a collective oedipal project – a heroic, collective striving for (timeless) immortality... taking, in the modern human the form of flight from death, seeking an impossible life-without-death ideal.

Undoubtedly early on, we humans learned that to band together and co-operate gave us a certain amount of power over death in the practical, survival sense. But also, from the point of view of the Symbolic self, if I join with others in a culture group, I achieve a symbolic immortality. I may die but that which I serve, to which I belong, will continue after me. – a kind of self-transcendence by membership. Shared myth and ritual worship further secures me. Wars too, affirm our power over death, especially if we are the victor.

In addition, we all of us have our own personal ‘immortality projects ‘ those ways, means and styles of fantasy and striving that enable us to maintain a confidence in our unassailable, personal heroism – those ways in which we try to self-transcend and emulate the ‘ Athnetos ‘/ deathlessness of the heroes and gods.

They can take an infinite variety, great and small – the seeking of power over others being a perennial favourite, fame and infamy,

Fetishizing the the accumulation of money as an immortality symbol - (Civilisation’s collective symbol of the power over death, par excellence), sexual conquests, the making of a family, acquiring social standing, proving our abilities, being a social justice warrior, collecting, etc. etc. etc.

In my little heroic ego way, I build myself up as a something, a self-creating, seemingly self-existing, self.

We are compelled to seek pseudo-immortality, minimising the sense of impotent vulnerability by the pursuit of heroic, personal and collective immortality projects. We need to become conscious of our style of earning heroism, in order to dis-identify from it .

Conclusion

Why bother troubling ourselves by looking at death, repression and all that?

Short answer, you’re not obliged to, you’re a free being. Don’t if you don’t choose to.

For the rest though, anybody that has an inkling that there is more to all this, it's about the art of living. UN secretary general, Dag Hammarskjöld - 'In the last analysis it is our conception of death which decides our answers to all the questions life puts to us'. It may well be that any ways through our present global crisis are asking of us a re-visioning of our relationship with death, and an in-depth re-imagining of the meaning and purpose of human life. Personally I think ecological adjustments alone, will fail, without equivalent adjustment in the realm of the Psyche / Soul of each of us. A global existential crisis is not simply a technical glitch.

Quite apart from any spiritual or religious accounts, if we are to live well, we are called by necessity to hold and to marry the tension of opposites. (you've therefore got to acknowledge the 'two-fold nature' of everything) It's the essential part that only humans can play in the scheme of things. Being the symbolic animal, we are the synthesisers of the animal and the spiritual, we are the ones who can make Soul - which is the bridge between the two. It is us who must endure the tensions and find creative responses that integrate, synthesise and realise the divine /archetypal forms at work in our daily situation, returning the mundane to its roots beyond the personal.

Keats said 'call the world if you will, the vale of soul making and then you will know the uses of the world'. But most often, this distracted, divine monkey seeks to escape the suffering and confrontation inherent in that creative obligation, by collapsing the polarities. On the one hand we seek release from history's guilt by regressive means, looking for a tension free state – avoiding the hard work by merger with a partner, or with a group, submission to the State and big tech, distraction in trivia, alcohol and opiates and so on. Pre-conscious merger with 'the Mother'.

On the other hand, we seek release via an often narcissistic, premature transcendent flight - an ecstatic attempt to shed the earthly limits and fly above it all. Youth being particularly prone to this one as expressed in the myths of Icarus and Bellerophon amongst others. Or a variation on this, the flight into disembodied abstractions, High tech saviour fantasies and living unrelated to the sensuous world. Plato's metaphysical dualism – the transcendental flight toward 'the Father'.

To be able to hold and synthesise the tension of opposites it helps to be able to have an image of the possibility, but the cultural collapse of the imaginal, the flatland of literalism, presents a major difficulty. It's acutely reminiscent of the kind of stuck-ness found with severe addictions. Besides which, consumer culture prefers to proceed as if it were anyway unnecessary. – it has been well said that 'where there is no imagination of death, there is the death of the imagination'.

In common with most pre- modern philosophers, I believe that contemplation of and reconciliation with our death and its inexorable, perhaps bitter horror, rather than being a merely morbid pastime, may precipitate the subtle conditions required to open the eye of Soul. It is a highly personal work, that we may come to only reluctantly. Failing that, outright existential crisis, significant loss or a major life disruption may do the trick- for the individual as well as an entire culture.

We Humans cannot endure the condition of being nailed to the cross of the world unless we are able to relate the torture of it to a meaningful Cosmos. Mere consumerist materialism won't do, not does scientific explanation-ism. We need to feel and to know a sense of interdependence with that which prior to and beyond human individual being. This requires of us an expansion, via the imagination, beyond the simple logic of our calculative reason, a willingness to surrender to something outside the personal fortress. A passage through the constrictions of existential anxiety (etym. from *angustiae* = narrow straits), accepting the fictional nature of what I've formerly been comforted to call 'myself' – in order to be able to reconcile life with death.

What reconciling life and death seems to imply is called elsewhere, a state of non-duality. This cannot be a heroic undertaking, it requires instead a poetic logic, tolerance for ambiguity, not acting, restraint, remaining on the threshold of awareness in liminal space.

Keats, no stranger to death, spoke of developing a - 'negative capability - that is when man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching for after fact and reason.'

Being the creature that suppresses itself, we dare not let life in: full presence to life demands a fearsome price. but...the repression required to maintain the denial of mortal vulnerability, costs us dearly. Most often, we opt for a frozen state of pseudo-stability and pay the cost in shrivelled responsiveness to life, preferring a sub-optimal state of being. Sartre's *Mauvais fois*.

Sensually narcotised and psychically numbed, avoiding the void and refusing to be changed by life – and all change IS death, psychologically speaking - we miss out on the resurrection. This is considered normal, sensible and desirable of course.

We can practice facing death by loosening our attachments to the concrete and literal view of the world, (dis-identifying), developing via the imagination, a sense of the underworld and its invisibles.

De-repressing our awareness of death, leads to a dis-illusion-ment, the dissolution of character defences and opening to the source of Life. Not infrequently, existential challenge leads into transpersonal awakening.

I'll give N.O. Brown the last word from 'Love's body'. 'to rise from history to mystery is to experience the resurrection of the body, here and now as an eternal reality, to experience the Parousia, the presence of the present which is the Spirit.'

Musings, quotes and afterthoughts

1;

Muse on death not just as a future certainty but as an ever-present psychological reality,

In the form of psychological DEPTH. This is what perhaps 'the underworld' is, as Hillman suggests. There is no time in Hades, no progress or delay as there is no time in 'the Unconscious'. Re-vision Hades/death as the 'Under life' now, not 'after life' in the future – the psyche's ever present depth - which Heraclitus said was unfathomable.

Death and Soul (i.e. what emerges when you don't collapse the tensions ?) being intimately connected. Hades/ Pluto, ruler of the underworld of the dead = Lord of Souls = 'riches'.

Requires seeing beyond the surface view of the consensus world – which is what proper philosophy does.

N.B. The 'myth of the ultimate rescuer' and the 'myth of specialness' idea in existential psychotherapy.

Buddha's final words: 'All composite things are subject to decay, dwell in mindfulness'

Persephone rules as Queen in the underworld over the uniqueness of what is individual. She is the personification of consciousness below the ego level.

'There is a distinction between a stationary 'I' and a fluid 'I'. Between a subject 'I' which is a stable entity, and a predicate 'I' which varies in every context. Between an 'I' that is enduring substance and an 'I' that when taken for as substance is illusory. Seymour Bourstein.

... something akin to 'particle and wave' perspective? Also akin to alchemical 'dissolve and coagulate' we need to be able to move between the two possibilities to voluntarily 'die' to change and metamorphosise, in order to keep pace with Life in the present and to have life force flow through us. We coagulate as we fall under the illusion of being a singular entity (a self-existing-self-unto-myself) and fail to respond to the 'di manes' (the Romans always spoke of the dead as plural, even 'individual' ones). On a mundane level, my many sub-personalities ... the poly-centrism of my Being.

William Blake. For things are two-fold always. May God keep us from single vision and Newton's sleep.

Dis-identification again is crucial.

This enables the Higher / Deeper Self to organise the physical world body / personality.

[Covid response : We are a civilisation choosing to commit slow suicide, rather than face the fact of death.](#)

2;

If materialism and rationalism claim the world as wholly arbitrary, then why is it more arbitrary to believe in subtle realms and sacred order - surely in that world view either choice is arbitrary ?

' Secular and Bourgeois are other words for the fallen soul exiled in facticity..... we see things only with the eyes of the exiled .. and imagine the way out only as progressive development.'

The soul desires to return from facticity in which it feels daily exile' James Hillman

Perhaps our 'literal' economic debt is the secular expression of the psychic / spiritual debt?