The Mystique of the Nonrational and a New Spirituality

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I. The Nonrational and the Need for a New Spirituality

Among the most revered memories of Western civilization is the image of Socrates standing condemned before the tribunal of Athens, delivering his apology. "The unexamined life is not worth living," he protests with a master stroke of irony, at once asserting his preference for death rather than conformity and turning the judgment of the trial against the very ones who had just passed sentence on him. We treasure that scene as a noble embodiment of the ideal of critical reflection that is our own irrevocable inheritance: the highest value of human life is that it is life empowered to question itself; its deepest fraud, that it let itself go unquestioned. Now it was in the genius of Plato to have recognized the mystical quality of that empowerment. The urge to know the things of life, to doubt them and reason about them, became for Plato a daemonic grace, a "force" of human nature that grabs hold of one, not a mere "technique" that one is free to choose or not, not a mere slave to be kicked about at whim. For Plato the rationality in whose name Socrates accepted the sentence of death was not its own ground but the sublimest form of participation in a divine "givenness." Even the "divine madness" that erupts in human reflection in the form of ecstatic prophecy, ritual mania, poetic inspiration, and erotic release serves rationality in a secondary, therapeutic role, as a catharsis for mind frustrated with its own tardiness in attaining its full capacity, or as a check to the hubris
of mind grown smug with its own accomplishments. From there it was but a short step for Plato to identify the divine with the perfection of rationality, to see the theos as the consummate self-knowing to which the examined life of human beings compares at best as a shadowy reflection.\footnote{The lure of the rational ideal is, to repeat, irrevocable, however one happens to respond to it. One may join issue with particular deliverances of critical reflection or ignore them outright; one may turn a skeptical eye to metaphysical arguments for a transcendent ground underlying the urge to reason; but none of this matters a whit to the mystique that bears the lure along from one generation to the next. Nothing short of a major catastrophe hurling us back into the Stone Age or leaving us genetically twisted to the point that language and social order can no longer be sustained would be required to dispose of the allurement. Socrates did not invent the mystique of reason. He worshiped it, and Plato gave it a theology.}

The only real challenge to the mystique of the examined life in our present circumstances, then, is to advance the counterpoint of an opposing ideal, equally natural and forceful, to the effect that the unexamined life is worth living; or put conversely in the harsher words of Rousseau, that “a state of reflection is a state contrary to nature, and that a thinking man is a depraved animal.”\footnote{At first sight the protest may seem little more than a mischievous bit of rhetoric aimed at those who would rather think about life than live it. After all, who among us has not felt the burden that education in rational reflection can impose on our simple longing to let go and savor the untutored passions of our nature? “You are a nanny goat, poor old soul,” the poet (Kazantzakis) complains to himself. “You feel hung, but instead of drinking wine and eating meat and bread, you take a sheet of white paper and inscribe the words wine, meat, bread on it, and then eat the paper.” The point here is not that the very act of writing those lines, or reading them and nodding one’s head, confirms the mystique of the rational idea—which of course it does. It is rather to ask whether such thoughts are merely a flash of divine madness that is ultimately subservient to the divine force of reason, or whether it might not be the other way around: that letting go of reason represents another irrevocably given lure possessed of its own mystique and so essential as to be the proper lord of reason.}

This is in fact the possibility that Rousseau pursues. On the Origin of Inequality opens with an allusion to the Delphic inscription that had been the inspiration of Socrates, and immediately he asks the reader to imagine the book as a discourse held in the Lyceum of Athens with Plato standing by as judge. Nevertheless, it is clear that, unlike Socrates and Plato, Rousseau did not consider self-reflection a necessity for all people but only a subordinate, epiphenomenal manifestation of the more fundamental desire for the immediate “feeling” of existence. The course of training he outlines in Emile, we recall, passes from instincts and sensation, through ideas, and all the way to the limits of rationality, where it passes over into sentiment. In much the same way that Plato enshrined the Socratic ideal of self-examination as a force innate in our nature, Rousseau shifted the weight of the mystique to a “divine instinct” for “self-interest” (amour de soi) wherein the person is attuned to the higher rhythms of an all-enveloping nature, and in terms of which rational reflection gains its importance. From there it was a short step for him to identify God with consummate self-loving, to which the life of human feeling weighed down by selfishness and social convention with all its rationalizing trappings can compare only as a journey to a lost continent.

I have drawn the distinction between Socrates and Rousseau rather more sharply than the complexity of their thought allows because it gives us the opportunity to look straightforwardly at the way we are accustomed to take sides on the role of the nonrational in human life. On the one side, the nonrational is taken as a sign of a radical human imperfection that is vindicated only insofar as it impels us toward using reason more fully; on the other side, it is portrayed as the closest approximation we have to the perfection that human nature is capable of reaching, if only it can be emancipated from its servitude to the imperium of mind.

It is precisely this opposition that I wish to undercut in suggesting that we locate the nonrational primarily in the realm of the daemonic, the divine givenness, the lure of a mystique that presses us now toward self-examination and now toward self-interest, now toward reason and now toward feeling, now toward thinking about the things of life and now toward savoring them, now toward starving ourselves on the asceticisms of mind and now toward glutting ourselves on the appetites of heart. Moreover, it is not to some ideal, healthy balance of these urges that I wish to direct my attention here, but to the unknown and uncontrollable impulse to forfeit that balance in order to move beyond our everyday humanity to that “vision of things unseen” of which re-
It is against this background that I pulled the works of Whitehead, Jung, and Hillman off my office shelves for another perusal. The more I read them of late, the more I grow convinced that each in his own way gives us the very footings we need for a new spirituality, in a way that ancient Greece and the Europe of the Enlightenment cannot. They offer more than a convenient shelf of material for treating a topic that one might as well have treated through other books, even though I shall take advantage of that convenience in what follows. By the same token, criticism raised against one of them in the light of comparison with the others is really more than the mere academic exercise of bringing interesting thinkers into dialogue with one another in imagination and trying to surmise what they might have to say to one another. It is the attempt to discipline one’s search for a place to stand and assert one’s humanity in the present world. Accordingly, I shall be little concerned here with stating a question in the idiom of one thinker and replying to it in the idiom of another, or with recommending a synthesis of all three. For the most part the questions Whitehead is asking are significantly different from those that Jung and Hillman have asked, and many points of convergence and discrepancy that are critical to one side turn out to be incidental to the other. My aim here in focusing on the nonrational and its mystique in the context of their works has no ambitions in the line of correcting the conceptual schemes of any of the three, although that may turn out to be the logical consequence of some of my remarks. To borrow an image from the Japanese Buddhist philosopher Takeuchi Yoshinori, it is the standpoint of one standing outside on a dark street looking for something when suddenly light streams from out of a window overhead: “The window and the curtains cut me off from what is inside the room, and I probably have no way of ever really knowing what is in there. But if I am able with the aid of that light to see something that I might not otherwise have seen out here on this street, that is enough for me.”

What we are looking for, I have suggested, is a new spirituality. By spirituality I understand the essential temper of a person. A positive and explicit spirituality consists, on the one hand, of an increase of moral insight into the complexities of life combined with a vision of hope for the future, and, on the other, of an awareness of being possessed by a reality transcending the conditions of concrete individuality. It is a response to the nonrational by the rational, or perhaps better, an interaction between the two. It can therefore never be given adequate
expression in purely conceptual terms, which always reduce the non-rational without remainder to the rational. A spirituality's appropriate idiom is the symbol, whose meaning is partly determined, or collective, and partly in need of discovery and interpretation by the individual, or personal. A spirituality can weaken and its symbols lose their grip on us if it does not keep pace with the advance of public knowledge, or if it represses the function of the individuals who entertain it, as the older spiritualities of the great classical religions and the new spiritualities of our scientific-technological age show, respectively. In such cases we cannot speak of a spirituality for our times because it can no longer be appropriated at both the corporate and personal levels.

Thomas Berry, who has devoted his writings to this problem as singleheartedly as anyone, gives us a hint as to how the classic Western spirituality, which carried both the religious and the scientific-technological thought of this century to their present forms of alienation, is really at odds with how we experience the world. He singles out four conceptions in that spirituality that have become negative forces: (1) the identification of the divine as transcendent to the natural world, so that the natural world became less capable of communicating divine presence; (2) the establishment of the human as transcendent to the natural world, so that the world was transformed into crass matter, raw material for human consumption; (3) the millennial vision of a blessed future accessible to history through technological progress; and (4) the stress on salvation dynamics to the neglect of creation dynamics, so that our eyes could be turned away from our abuse of the earth to focus on moral revivalism and dedication to pious causes.

What Berry suggests we now need is a new and “functional cosmology” that will be grounded on the symbols of differentiation (the recognition of the unique value of each articulated form of being), subjectivity (“the inner form, the radiated intelligibility, that shines forth from the deep mystery of each articulated mode of being”), and communion (“the relatedness of the universe in its every manifestation” so that it can be “a unity that enables us to say that the volume of each atom is the volume of the universe”). In an earlier essay, he adds to these three features of a functional cosmology a fourth: the experience of a transcendent, numinous mode of being as an indication of a new consciousness arising more from than from within traditional religions. It is, he says, a “reassertion of the most primordial modes of religious consciousness,” which function at a level beyond the specific religious focus of the immediate past. It is not that this consciousness is undifferentiated, but that the conditions in which such spiritual experience takes place, the basic methods of interiority, are similar enough for people of differing religious backgrounds to enter into profound spiritual communion with each other. This leads him to predict that “as this interior identity increases, the Oriental-Western differentiation of religious experience will be seen as more a differentiation in the human modes of consciousness than simply as a differentiation based on geographical or cultural factors.”

The scope of such ideas is gigantic, but it is not for that reason inappropriate to our situation, because if a spirituality commensurate with our age and its understanding of the world and the human is to function, it can do so only by facing the twofold challenge of the scientific-technological achievement and the common search of the great world religions for common ground. The antagonisms and competitiveness that have characterized our response so far are quite literally out of time.

The scientific and technological advances of this century have ushered in altogether unprecedented potentials for the human community. Scientific method has given the peoples of the world their first common language, and communications technology has made it possible for ever-increasing numbers of people to exchange vast amounts of information with one another across the globe in ever-shorter periods of time. Astronomy and space exploration have given us a glimpse of our planet from outer space and led us to appreciate its fragility as it pulsates through the immense energetic movements of the universe. Ecological studies have taught us the dangers of abusing resources and the folly of tampering with atomic and subatomic explosives.

And yet the moral stature of our civilization is bent and dwarfed, laden with anachronistic myths of the place of the human in nature, sacralizing our apparatus to the point that our ultimate standard of value is to be “plugged in.” Until such time as we can begin to see our knowledge and our tools as extensions of the human spirit and not simply as neutral kits of facts and equipment, we have no hope of walking erect in the world we now inhabit. In the same way that the farmer's plow, the fisherman's boat, and the shepherd's flock served as symbols in the classical religions for defining the values and hopes of what it was to be human for former civilizations, the television, the computer, and the robot need to be given a symbolic value in a new
spirituality. And this can happen only if they are first experienced as expressions of the nonrational.

As for the encounter of the world religions, we can point with Wilfred Cantwell Smith to the growing aspiration among academics to see the religious history of humankind as a global continuum, which has its counterpart in "the fact that young people today not only are, but are beginning to see and to feel themselves as, heirs to the whole religious history of humankind." Once the step has been taken toward the ideal that one religious outlook should understand another, he points out, nothing can ever be the same again. And once it is understood that religions are not merely something that humans create, have, and keep, but the expressions of a quality to human life itself, endlessly variegated across time and cultures, the absolutism of dogmatic apologetics no longer has a place to stand. The discovery on a logical plane is adequate to tear down; only the complementary discovery on the nonrational plane can sustain the building up of alternatives.

Although Whitehead, Jung, and Hillman have none of them put the issue in quite this form, there is an unmistakable sense in their works of the disservice done to our present civilization by structures of reflection inherited from the past, of being in a critical period of transition, and of the need to rescue the individual from the individualism in which we have trapped ourselves.

In his autobiography Jung sounded one of the keynotes of his life work when he wrote, "One half of humanity battens and grows strong on a doctrine fabricated by human rationalization; the other half sickens from the lack of a myth commensurate with the situation" (MDR 331). Under such circumstances the only foreseeable future for an unrepentant world was that it would "destroy itself through the might of its own technology and science." The vision he offered in lieu of this impasse between inflated rationalism and crippling nihilism was based on the conviction that "we are living in a time which the Greeks called the kairos—the right moment—for a 'metamorphosis of the gods,' of the fundamental principles and symbols," and that it is only the individual who is the "makeweight that tips the scales," "that infinitesimal unit on whom a world depends" (CW 10:587–88). Hillman has taken this standpoint over into his own work, arguing that much of what goes by the name of revolutionary thought on contemporary intellectual battlefields lacks sufficient depth to extricate us from "that soulless predicament we call modern consciousness," based on a "positivistic nineteenth century system of mind" and reducing morality to the obedience of methods and conventions established according to requirements internal to science (FG 3; RVP 3, 132). We need rather to recognize that we are already being swept up in a "revolution going on in the individual soul . . . for a wholly new (yet most ancient and religious) experience of reality" (I 79).

When Whitehead speaks of grounding the hope for a rational order to things that metaphysics shares with science on "an ultimate moral intuition into the nature of intellectual action," he may seem close to confirming the very thing that Hillman and Jung have in mind to censure, and yet he goes on to acknowledge the "religious" quality of that intuition. By this he means that religion complements intellectual action by connecting "the rational generality of philosophy with the emotions and purposes springing out of existence in a particular society," and more particularly by dealing with "the formation of the experiencing subject." Like Hillman and Jung he was not interested in constructing an ethical system and was aware of the damage wrought in the name of religion. The morality and religion he proposes are aimed at upholding the ideal of rational thought by "stretching individual interest beyond its self-defeating particularity" (PR 42, 15). The form that this self-defeating particularity takes for Whitehead is perhaps best seen in his account of the fatal impact that certain biases carried over from the nineteenth century have had on the morality of our own century. In this regard he speaks of the extension of the doctrine of the private, substantial mind into economic and political metaphors for industrial manufacturing, the wanton destruction of the environment, the unbalanced infatuation with professionalism and expertise, the repression of aesthetic values by scientific materialism, and the failure to appreciate that the ethical neutrality of technological power throws the ethical responsibility back on society.10

As to the challenge of religious pluralism, we find little in Whitehead other than a clearly nonparochial mood in approaching world religions and the history of religion, a hint that the day of the great religions may be coming to an end (RM 43), and a conviction that Christian theology is in need of reforming its attitude toward religious truth. When we turn to Jung and Hillman we find a quite different picture: not only considerable breadth of exposure to the doctrines, rites, and symbolism of primitive and institutionalized religion, but a commitment to viewing them all democratically from the selfsame per-
spective, that of the experiencing subject in its deepest reaches. As we have just indicated in the remarks cited above, this is also the standpoint from which science and technology are criticized as antireligious, which probably accounts for the general lack of social criticism of the sort that flavors so many of Whitehead’s essays.

In any event, what makes these three thinkers important here is surely not only the analysis they offer of the challenges of science, technology, and religions, but the fact that their achievements already represent, each in its own way, a step in the direction of meeting those challenges. Rather than attempt to catalogue the details of their conceptual schemes relevant to these issues, I restrict myself here, as I have already stated, to trying to draw their thought closer to the task of uncovering a new spirituality for our times by showing how each has contributed to a recovery of the mystique of the nonrational, which is essential for any spirituality to take root, for in the last analysis the birth of a living spirituality equipped with appropriate symbols is not the invention of any one person or group, but the fruit of a process largely without our control, a process whose workings we perceive only dimly when we label it a Zeitgeist and try to follow its devious and unpredictable ways. At most we can hope to prepare ourselves critically for the uncovering. Like the sower in the parable, we prepare a field and till it in furrows, but we cannot stop the wind from scattering our seeds where it will.

II. The Rational, the Arational, and the Irrational

Simply and initially put, the nonrational refers to a frame of reference within consciousness distinguished by events that intrude spontaneously and unannounced into the world of an experiencing subject in such a way and with such a force as to remove them from the reach of the rational operations by which the conscious subject knows and controls its environment. Although that frame of reference is never quite the same for each age, nor for each individual within a particular age, it should not be confused with an undeveloped mode of rationality corrigible by general advances in method or individual discipline; neither should it be limited to some transcendental and esoteric stage of enlightenment reserved for the few. It is a permanent, albeit imperfectly appropriated, feature of all human consciousness. In this section I pre-
pare the way for a discussion of the nonrational by exploring the rational frame of reference, which includes the arational and the irrational.

There are almost as many definitions of reason as there are philosophers to cudgel their brains over trying to compose them. In a sense, we might say that the very notion of rationality itself does not point in the first place to some thing or faculty or set of operations, but to the perennial question of what it is that sets the human mode of being apart from the rest of the natural world. That the human being is so set apart, in some way or other, is an assumption we need not question here. Nor need we, for our present purposes, shy away from assuming that the distinguishing quality is in the nature of an essential and not merely historical condition. As Whitehead remarks, and archetypal psychology would agree, “however far we go back in recorded history . . . , it would be difficult to demonstrate that mankind has improved on its inborn mental capacity” (AI 48). As for what the capacity consists in, Whitehead would surely have been most comfortable with the traditional formula, animal rationale; Jung would likely have preferred Cassirer’s alternative, animal symbolicum;11 and Hillman seems to lean in the direction of yet a third possibility, animal imaginale. But what is common to all of them, and what is definitive of the rational frame, is the capacity for self-consciousness.

Now provided we grant that conscious experience entails both an attentiveness and an object or intention of that attentiveness, any further elaboration of the data of conscious experience that we speak of as rationality can be specified as a form of self-consciousness. As such, self-consciousness is the minimal essential requirement for all mental operations that entail abstracting from immediate or “pure” experience to a state of mediated reflection. In this sense we may speak of rationality as a frame of reference that enables not only expression in concepts, symbols, logic, art, and other forms of abstract language, but also a critical review of the way in which the variety of modes of intelligent activity can be disciplined, impeded, related to one another, and communicated, as well as of the limits—general and particular—under which intelligent activity functions.

This critical review is possible because the rational frame of self-consciousness itself depends on a distinction between the experiencing subject and its attended object, consciousness and its intention, the abstract idea and the concrete reality of experience. However much experience one may accumulate, attend to, organize, and express, and
however rigorous the method by which this is accomplished, there can be no objective data in consciousness that are not to some extent affected by their genesis as subjective capta. Hence the commonplaces about ideas never describing experience fully, theory never embracing all there is to reality, and so forth—all of which come down to defining the rational relative to what is not of itself rational, namely the arational. When we speak of conscious experience as a stream (and, by association, of the ocean of events in the world of which consciousness is a tributary), we are speaking of such an arational. To say rational is to say arational; to say self-consciousness is to say self-consciousness of the non-self-conscious. This is the fundamental insight from which all critical review of self-conscious activity begins. Without that insight into the correlatedness of the rational and the arational, reason slips quietly and unobtruded into one of the many forms of unguarded rationalism of which self-consciousness is capable.

The critique of such unguarded rationalism occasioned by focusing on the arational takes three forms—or rather contains three elements, one of which is topically dominant—and each form in turn is characterized by its own ulterior, rational motive.

In the first and most obvious place, we find a trust in empiricism, which insists on the primacy of the actual world of experience and the inexorably hypothetical nature of all conceptualization and theory. The writings of Whitehead and Jung, and to a more modest degree those of HIlman, are replete with paraphrasings of this principle, occasionally technical but most often rhetorically flourished. Here too all three have expressed the same deep admiration for the example set by William James, whose whole intellectual life, in Whitehead’s words, “was against the dismissal of experience in the interest of system” (MT 3; CW 8:262, 9:1:55; RVP 64). Despite Jung’s repeated repudiation of all metaphysics as a nonempirical pretense to “knowing the unknowable,” which Hillman has adapted to a censure of the “abstract literalness” of metaphysics, Whitehead’s language and intentions could not be more congenial to archetypal psychology when he forthrightly rejects concern with any unknowable that might lie beyond the reach of human experience and admits to the “asymptotic” and even “metaphorical” nature of all attempts to formulate metaphysical first principles in precise terms (cf. RVP 136; PR 3–5).

Not only their statement of the empiricist principle but the motives behind it would also appear similar for all three. First, they clearly mean to acknowledge the need for that “imaginative flight” of reason that lifts one above the arational field of consciousness and opens up a perspective in which experience for the first time can become “fact” and “theory.” Second, they mean to defend their respective conceptual schemes by appeal to an arational ground given apart from those schemes. And third, they wish to draw attention to the improvements they have wrought on existing theories by giving better accounts of the publicly accessible data. In a word, although Whitehead was the only one of the three who seemed eager to say so, for all of them empiricism meant nothing less than an open commitment to “that ultimate rationalism which urges forward science and philosophy alike” (FR 61).

In the second place, the critique against unguarded rationalism takes the aesthetic form of an imaginative wallowing in the sheer depth and immensity of the arational, which awaits rationality as its unfinished task. One thinks here of the passage in the Dialogues where Whitehead derides our human attempts at intelligence by looking at them as phenomena occurring on “an insignificant planet swinging round a second-rate sun in no very important part of the universe” (D 192–93); or Jung’s pausing in his seminars to liken our efforts to understand the psyche to a fly crawling about on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel or a cockroach scurrying across the pages of Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason. Or again, we find Jung in the fever of a grave illness at age seventy-six expressing his sympathies for the author of the Apocalypse who was able, in the evening of a long and eventful life, to “see immense vistas of time stretching out before him,” to rise up above the everyday world to “live in the sight of many aeons and in the movement of ideas as they pass from century to century” (CW 11:717). Although we shall return later to the place that feelings have to play in the rational frame, it is already possible to read these images as reconfirmation of the rational precisely insofar as they serve as rational reflections on the limits of reason. They are cut out of the same cloth as the awesome idea of Whitehead that “each present occasion prehends the general metaphysical character of the universe” (AI 194) and Hillman’s idea of the soul as the stage of an “eternal mythological experience” that transports centuries of past human history into the present (PP 4–5, 61).

In the third place, the most radical critique generated from within the rational frame is what we may call the problem of the “psychological circle.” Simply put, it refers to the fact that consciousness itself cannot become an object to itself, that ultimately self-consciousness must be
reduced to some form of reflection on a consciousness reflected through its intentions. Jung frequently complained of the impossibility of finding some Archimedean point above or beyond the psyche from which to view the psyche at work. "I am fully aware that I am entangled in the psyche and that I cannot do anything except describe the experiences that there befall me" (CW 16:254). Even in so-called unconscious experiences, which may be the closest that we can come to an objective experience of the psyche, Jung sees no escape from the circle that even the barest modicum of attention or mentation must circumscribe about those experiences (CW 11:774). The rational and arational thus define one another mutually not only when we have to do with the world outside of the psyche but also when the focus is turned on the psyche itself. Jung favored a Kantian vocabulary—without, we might add, the complexities of the Kantian argument—to pose this problem. For one thing it enabled him to include the psyche in the class of the Ding-an-sich, and thus resign himself to its ultimate unknowability; for another, it supported his model of the structure of unconscious functions (the theory of the archetypes) as an intuitive extrapolation parallel to the a priori structures of cognition that Kant had postulated for consciousness.

Hillman has joined issue with the "container" imagery that splits the world and the psyche into "outside" and "inside" as unsuited to Jung's actual intentions, and goes further to dismiss Jung's appeal to the "noumenal archetype" as an "unnecessary theoretical encumbrance" (FG 33). While he honors the basic insight that "from the soul's point of view we can never get out of the vale of our psychic reality" (PF 57), Hillman is inclined to view this fact less as a vicious circle than as a virtuous one. When he writes that "whatever 'objective' idea we find in the pattern of data is also the 'subjective' idea by means of which we see the data" (RVP 126; cf. LE 6), he means that psyche or soul lends depth to our every experience by filtering consciousness, quite without the controls of self-consciousness, through its own innate and archetypal patterns, and that at the same time it restores the subjective dimension to the objective world by making every event an event of meaning available for conscious attention and reflection. "Truth is the mirror, not what's in it or behind it, but the very mirroring process itself: psychological reflection." This in turn leads him to an announcement: "I shall be adamant, even arrogant, in my claim for psychology. . . . The psychological perspective is supreme and prior because the psyche is prior and must appear within every human undertaking" (RVP 109, 130). In so doing he brings to the fore the rational aim at work in Jung's allusions to the problem of the psychological circle, namely the appropriation of the unshakable assumption "that everything belongs somewhere" (LE 50), into the field of psychological inquiry, without falling back into the dichotomy of a subject assigning a place to the objects of its experience.

For Whitehead the assumption that everything has its place, apparent in his rational aim that "everything of which we are conscious . . . shall have the character of a particular instance of the general scheme" (PR 3), clearly lay behind his own efforts to dissolve the fiction of a world of subjects viewing a world of objects. He did not do so, however, by arguing for the priority of the intrapsychic generations of human meanings. Rather, he boldly and adamantly stated his hope in a universal order within which each event or actual occasion comes into being as a center that appropriates the world about it into a unique configuration or concrescence, which holds it in being as what it is. Whenever we may speak of consciousness in such an order of things, we may speak of the center as a subject and the surrounding world as its objects, but not in such a way as to constitute an exception to the wider principle of interconnectedness. The fact that there is self-consciousness to recognize this order does not therefore compel Whitehead to reduce the order itself to a mere metaphor of meaning for self-consciousness entrapped in its psychological circle. Rather, he drew the final entrapment as an ontological circle, which for him constitutes the supreme and prior perspective. The rational and the arational continue to define one another, as with Jung and Hillman. The difference is that the arational, that "everything of which we are conscious," embraces consciousness (and thus also the experiences psychology would call "unconscious") as one phase in a greater totality. In place of the psychological act of faith that the only possible meanings are meanings entertained by persons, Whitehead offers the wider act of rational faith that precedes metaphysics: that the only universe that can include intelligibility is a universe that is itself intelligible (SMW 18; PR 42).

The correlation of the rational to an arational thus sets internal limits to the rational frame in terms of the distinction, though not necessarily the separation, of the world of subjective self-consciousness from the world of its objective intentions.

A second way of approaching the rational frame, already implicit in what has been said above, is to focus on the conditions under which
that range of operations we call reason functions in virtue of the fact that it takes place within the concrete human personality, where directed self-consciousness is more the exception than the rule. The autonomic element permeates all the activities of self-consciousness with the force of both spontaneity and habit, forcing us to distinguish between Mentation that lies within our power to control and that which does not. In other words, the non-self-consciousness that is entailed in all our talk of self-consciousness cannot be restricted merely to an arational world tolerant of our conceptions and misconceptions alike; it also must include mention of a range of functions taking place below the threshold of our attention and reflection in that shadowy world we call the unconscious. Whatever we may suppose about the structure of that subliminal underworld itself—the crucible in which all consciousness is concocted and to which it returns its yield—its eruptions into self-consciousness are too obvious and too important to omit from the essential ingredients of the rational frame. These eruptions are what we may call the irrational.

The coordination of the rational to the irrational is a common concern in Jung, Hillman, and Whitehead, and in all three it is connected to a notion of “feeling” that reflects the way subjects relate themselves to objects. As soon as we look at this more closely we get ourselves in a knotted tangle of noncoincident terms and distinctions, which I have no intention of trying to unsnarl here. More important is to note that this is the case precisely because each of them has seen the need to take into account the complex patterns by which the rational operations of consciousness are affectively toned and guided by irrational processes whose functions are consciously perceived far less clearly than they are felt. For Jung and Hillman the complexity is due to their focusing on the problem within the psychological circle; for Whitehead the wider ontological circle demands that these higher levels of the problem first be rooted in a pattern of relationships already present in preconscious nature as a whole. But let us then set these differences aside in order to look at two principal ways in which the irrational, in our particular use of the term, works correlatively with self-consciousness to constitute the rational frame.

In the first place, the irrational erupts in the form of intellectual intuition, that “instinctive apprehension,” as Jung calls it, which carries with it its own “intrinsic certainty and conviction.” In like vein, Whitehead speaks of proof and logical arguments as a “feeble, second-rate procedure” providing “merely subsidiary helps” for the conscious realization of more basic intuitions. Intuition breaks into experience with the force of self-evidence no less strong than that of immediate sense-perception, and for that reason is also liable to its own varieties of illusion and error against which the only check is the integration of intuitions into the totality of the rational frame. The clearest indication of how this works is to be seen not in the theoretical explanations that Whitehead, Jung, or Hillman offer of intuition, but in the quality of their rational adventures as such. All three show a creative vitality of thought that sees far more connections and speculates on far more possibilities than they are able to track down and reason out systematically. And yet that creativity is shored up by the discipline of an equally vital determination to make sense and to approximate fully logical explanations. Without such determination, the flashes of inspiration that appear so regularly in their writings would surely have been swallowed up in the darkness of yesterday’s news instead of continuing, as they do, to attract the critical attention of us who reread them today. Jung once diagnosed in himself a certain tendency toward “hysterothy of intellectual intuition.” Hillman has remarked in passing that he finds intuitive thinking “automic and unreflected” (JT 82); and Whitehead freely acknowledged his own “muddle-headedness.” But in each case it is confession of limits to the control of one’s own rationality, not a call to dismantle the rational frame altogether or disinherit methodical thought from its right to a universal aim.

In the second place, the irrational shows up in the form of the “double-meanings” that attach themselves to our rational products, a sort of substratum of meanings, or an overlay, resulting from the interferences of mind working outside of our conscious dominion. Here the irrational denotes nothing other than the depth of depth psychology, so that all attempts to dispose of it through the “single-meaning” genre of literalism amount to a repudiation of that psychology itself. “Literalism is sickness,” Hillman warns us. Even in the most materialistic and objective of ideas, “nothing is literal; all is metaphor” for the psychologist (LE 3; RVP 175). Whitehead, although less concerned with any “meaning” involved in unconscious interferences in the rational process than with their surface meaning for reason, was certainly aware of the phenomenon. For him all conceptualization, even the most abstract, was emotional in its derivation, and this emotionality took on personal qualities wholly lacking in preconscious “feelings.” “The con-
cept is always clothed with emotion," he wrote, "that is to say with hope, or with fear, or with hatred, or with eager aspiration, or with the pleasure of analysis." He was also aware that such emotions are never simple but always complex, far too complex indeed for anything more than the vaguest of conscious analysis (MT 122; PR 237; AI 176, 215, 262). Aside from certain elaborations worked out in his notion of "importance" (which Hillman has linked to Jung's description of the "feeling function" [JT 107-8]), there is not much here in the way of actual psychological insight. It is more a matter of one of those inspirational intuitions we just referred to, whose underdevelopment is all the more in evidence when we move over into the field of archetypal psychology, where it has become a major preoccupation.

For Jung, the irrational belongs to the psyche because the basic unit of all psychological activity and the carrier of all meaning is the "complex," which is by nature ambivalent. The complex may be likened to a cluster of "feeling-toned representations" held together like electrons attached to a common nucleus, which gives it autonomy while preserving the plurality of forces that constellate it. One knows the complex only through the images or representations thrown up to ego-consciousness, which is itself a complex field of forces. When an image gains in clarity and power, we may presume that we are approaching nearer the nucleus, though never to the point of resolving all meaning into a single and univocal insight. As Jung's interest in the impersonal and collective aspects of psychic imagery grew, he gradually replaced "complex" with "archetype," a term he felt better represented the sense of archaic mimetic and teleology he saw at work in the basic ambivalence of the image. For all that, he never lost his critical sensitivity to the way that "illegitimate and thoughtless projections" can distort our view of reality, reducing us into every form of stupidity and superstition, blocking our way to fuller understanding. The irrational remained for him a mixed blessing that called for an increase in rationalreflection, not its abandonment. Throughout his life he held to the principle that "man's worst sin is unconsciousness" (CW 9/I.455). Even if the power and function of the irrational cannot be made subservient to ego-consciousness, we must continue our attempts to analyze and evaluate the double-meanings that attach themselves of their own accord to our every effort at rationality (CW 8:5).

Hillman has emphasized even more strongly than Jung the self-regulatory nature of the archetypes in informing the way we "personify" experience to understand it and the way that our normal habits of understanding are "pathologized" to gain greater depth. Yet his treatment of "psychologizing" makes it amply clear that the "soul's reflection upon its nature, structure, and purpose," the psychological work that takes place at a rational remove from mere consciousness, is the point at which the archetypes first acquire meaning for us. His writings on selected mythical motifs, straddling the borders of historical research and free reinterpretation, attest to the fact that he does not treat myth as a crude and chaotic heap of archaic fantasies there for the scrapping, but as rational products possessed of intrinsic conceptual forms that can aid us in the "transformation of consciousness," including the reformulation of myths that creep into our most methodical and controlled modes of intelligence (FG 151). Even his anarchistic harassment of the ego as undeserving of the imperial status Jung gave it in practice, and his call for a democracy among the community of complexes to which the ego belongs (RVP 24-34), do nothing to shake his fundamental conviction of the solitary, rational subject who poses those questions and thinks through those possibilities. For all the "falling apart" we experience when we turn inward, self-consciousness stands firm as witness, arbiter, and final bearer of the responsibility that nature has laid upon humanity: know thyself.23

III. The Nonrational Frame of Reference

My purpose in the previous section in including the arational and irrational dimensions of experience within the rational frame—that is, of broadening our picture of the nature of self-consciousness beyond the narrow range of operations marked by deliberate and more or less methodical reflection—has been to prepare for an account of the nonrational dimension of experience as something distinct from the arational and the irrational, and therefore as something essentially disruptive of the rational frame as such. The problem is more than one of clearing up ambiguities by giving new definitions to words; it is a matter of restoring to the nonrational its own unique and particular frame of reference. On the side of Whitehead, this has been obstructed by overextending the rational frame to absorb the nonrational into the arational or the irrational, thus cutting short the full reach of his own insights into the nonrational. On the side of Jung, the obstruction has rather taken the form of overextending the nonrational frame to include what
really should be classified as arational or irrational, thus cutting short
the full reach of his obligations to rationality. To some extent Hillman
has taken over Jung's bias here, as we shall see. But of all three, Hill-
man's understanding of the nonrational frame stands out as the clearest.
His project of re-visioning psychology by recovering a vision of “soul”
may serve as a catalyst to crystallize the nonrational frame in the thought
of Whitehead and Jung, and to open their ideas further to the role they
might play in the construction of a spirituality for our times.

The doctrine of “soul” that Hillman describes most fully in Re-
Visioning Psychology cannot be said to challenge in any of its essentials
the map of the psyche that Jung left behind in his Collected Works. It
is rather a change of accent, a turning away from a process centered
on the work of individuation that goes on when ego interacts with uncon-
sciousness with the aim of achieving a unity in the Self, and toward the pure
psychic structure from which the psyche itself, multivalent and uncentered soul.
Strictly speaking, soul and psyche are interchangeable for Hillman, but more
often than not the latter carries a connotation of structure and inter-
reating elements, whereas the former connotes the totality of the dyna-
mism as it is reflected in every phase and product. The dynamism
of soul makes itself manifest through everything that is present in con-
sciousness, and infuses everything that is elaborated representationally
through self-consciousness (which Hillman calls “sirim”). The funda-
mental activity of soul to which these manifestations point is “imagi-
nation,” the transformation of concrete and particular experiences of life
into meanings that draw the subject out of itself and into a wider reality.
Thus he speaks of soul as the reenactment of collective myths and
fantasies through the script and setting provided by everyday life, and
conversely as the restoration of the collective to its seat in personal
experience. On this understanding, the search for soul is not the search
for some thing, the wizard behind the magical world of Oz, but the
search to appropriate the perspective that psyche assumes toward itself
and to locate oneself within that perspective. The subject of this search,
the “imaginal ego,” experiences life archetypally: everything becomes
a part in an eternally recurrent play with a restricted cast of typical
roles whose players are the Gods. Thus the imaginal discovery of ar-
chetypes among the things of life amounts for Hillman to a theophany.
Once again “all things are full of Gods” because the Gods have become
imaginal manifestations of the multifaceted perspective called soul.

Now if soul is the one perspective that encircles all others as an
ultimate horizon, the one thing one cannot find is soul itself, because
to do so would be to gain independence from soul, which is as impos-
sible as living a physical existence outside of one's skin. The task of
psychology is not to define soul in terms of anything else, but to “see
through” all human experience to what is not human, to “make soul”
by uncovering the imaginal structure of all the things of life that I
otherwise presume to be thinking with my mind and feeling with my
heart. It is to allow thought and feeling themselves to reappear as “the
revelation of the uncontrollable, spontaneous spirit, an immortal, divine
part of the soul, the memoria Dei” (MA 182). In terms of the examples
of the opposing ideals with which this essay opened, soul is the mirror
in which self-examination and self-interest are reflected as the mystique
of the nonrational in one's life. Setting Hillman's re-visioning of psy-
chology against the backdrop of the rational frame just outlined, I single
out four characteristics of the nonrational frame that it is my concern
to describe here.

First of all, the nonrational frame is the locus of the encounter with
the numinosum. Unlike the experience of the “otherness” of the world
as an arational, we have here to do with an otherness that can be named
only the way that Otto has named it: mysterium tremendum et fascinans.
It is an experience of an unknown and uncontrollable, yet awesome and
enchanting, takeover of the everyday self by a force so sheerly other
that we can speak of it only by denying it our words. Jung, as is well
known, welcomed Otto's descriptions as pointing to the very events that
had most impressed him about the psyche, and frequently spoke himself
of the numinosum, not only in association with extraordinary religious
and mystical experiences but also in referring to the commonplace
experiences of dreams and fantasies and the allure of symbols. To
document the point is superfluous. There is no place anywhere in the
Jungian corpus where one can drop one's nets without dragging up some
allusion to the importance he accorded this sort of experience. To leave
this out of account is to drain the very lifeblood from his work.

Hillman's description of soul as a middle ground between the per-
ceiving subject and the world that is perceived helps to draw attention
here to the “force” of the nonrational rather than merely to our own
feelings of weakness before an apparently alien power. He speaks of
"a sort of conscious unconsciousness" that is "non-directed, non-
ordered, non-object, non-subject," in which elements separated in the
rational frame seem to rise up in unison out of a common original and “transpersonal background” (MA 185; I 42, 66; SS 43–45). Like Jung, he acknowledges a certain esoteric quality to such experiences—they remain of necessity ineffable and incommunicable because the experience does not “know” what has happened—and yet Hillman clearly intends for us to admit it as an abnormality that belongs to every normal life. It is the typical “pathos” accompanying the archetype along with the “logos” or meaning that the archetype represents. This is perhaps the main reason why he would have us imagine them as Gods, that is, as “forces I cannot control and yet which want something from me and intend something with me” (RVP 105, 129; SS 176; PP 57).

The recovery of collective meanings in an individual life begins with the recovery of the nonrational, for “psychology may be based on archetypal themata, but psychology proper begins only when these dominants experienced as emotional realities through and within our complexes, are felt to pull and shape our lives” (PP 18).

Whitehead’s interests in experiences of the numinosum are no more than tangents he drew occasionally but never ventured out on. We find him distinguishing between the “ordinary average experience of mankind” and “occasions and modes of experience which in some degree are exceptional.” In reference to the latter he even alludes expressly to “the sublimation of the egoistic aim by its inclusion of the transcendent whole” (AI 294). But the context of his remarks makes it clear that his concern is with grounding the appeal of metaphysical notions. Even when he speaks specifically of religion, it is the theological content that is made to validate the experience. He notes the characteristic “intensity of the emotions” that religion generates as “evidence of some vivid experience” but immediately turns his attention to the interpretation of those experiences. On the one hand, it is the beauty of theological doctrine that attests to the “supernormal experience of mankind in its moments of finest insight” (RM 31). On the other, he rejects the notion of a special, subconscious religious faculty as symptomatic of the tendency to let religion slide into the “dark recesses of abnormal psychology,” not because he intends to argue a place for religion in the psyche but because he wishes to preserve a “solid foundation for religious doctrine” (RM 120). I have no cause to dispute the point that the denial of rationality is as fatal for religion as it is for philosophy, but would only insist that the denial of the nonrational quality of religion is no less fatal. The “intensity of sensitive experience” that Whitehead upheld as a categorial obligation is always and forever linked to a harmonious complement in the “breadth of thought,” because “conscious, rational life refuses to conceive itself as a transient enjoyment, transiently useful” (PR 16, 340). If the concreteness of our conscious, nonrational life is to have any meaning other than that of symptom of our less than ideal existence, if the mystical element of life is to reach its “depth of feeling” and if its “direct insight into depths as yet unspoken” is to be attended to (MT 174), these things need first to be understood as disruptions of the rational frame.

The second characteristic of the nonrational frame rests upon the first. It is the self-conscious experience of the providence of the craving for meaning. Here it is no longer a question of the ideals that we deliberately entertain, nor even of desires deliberately rejected that return to haunt us. It is the experience of the directeness, the dynamism and vitality, of the entire rational project of a human life as a given. We have been provided with urges that govern our physical adaptation to a changing environment, and we have been provided with a lure toward the higher experiences of the conscious life. Even if we cannot say to what purpose we are so lured, and even if the flow of our lives never seems to respect the ideals we forge in response to that lure, the mere fact that we reach for the “more” of consciousness is a grace whose mystique we can acknowledge only by saying, “it is there.” In this sense, the psychological circle of the rational frame can be said to disclose itself as a psychic circle. As Hillman notes, somewhat cryptically, it is not only that “psychology depends on the psyche of the psychologist” with regard to collective and individual limitation, but that “the psyche requires an adequate psychology to reflect itself” (LE 7). Here soul is viewed less as a trap we are caught in than as the impulse of life to supply itself with meanings. The rational subject is the soul’s way of looking at itself. The otherness that impresses us in heightened moments of consciousness as an alien force is here felt as a permanent feature of our every attempt to be human.

Appropriately, Hillman speaks of a vision of “meaningness” in which all particular insights into meanings are gathered up. Here soul is viewed as an imaginal realm from which all images spring. Because we are “in” soul and not soul “in us,” imagining is not something we freely choose to do or not to do (RVP 173; I 56, 119; JT 81). That the representations of self-consciousness may be linked to subliminal conditions is secondary to the primary miracle, that there are representa-
tions at all. Thus when Hillman states that the purpose of therapy is to increase awareness “that fantasy is a dominant force in life” (LE 2), he is saying in the first place that making soul means accepting one’s responsibility as caretaker of the grace of rationality. We do not build a rational frame about us to shield ourselves from the unknown, so that the encounter with the nonrational would consist in leaving our artificial shelters. We build it because we must, and the encounter with the nonrational consists in confronting the providence of that “must.” To see reason as fantasy is to restore to it its primary value as a force of nature; it is not to forsake its achievements under some pretense of mystical enlightenment.

By his own admission, Hillman is following Jung here in grounding archetypal imagery in an instinct to reflect that belongs to human nature and determines the richness and essential character of the psyche. Like any drive of nature, of course, it is as liable to repression as to expression, and in fact becomes concrete precisely through the interaction of control and release. The main point here is not to get waylaid by the inadequacies of instinctual or energetic models of description before one has caught the nonrational import of Jung’s idea: that there is an “objective” psyche on which all “subjective” reflection rests, just as a bird takes to the skies or a fish to the sea (RWP 244–45).

It is, of course, true that Jung opposed this instinct for reflection to a “religious instinct” (or “religious function”) impelling the conscious ego to confrontation with the collective unconscious through the use of symbols. But his concern was to disassociate the psychic value of religion from the dogmatic rigidity he found in rational, conceptualized religion, to which end he preferred to distinguish the former from reflection and align it closer to what we have called the arational and irrational components of the rational frame (MA 31–40; CW 6: passim). This is one of the clearest examples of the fact that Jung’s failure to give the nonrational its proper place followed from his not seeing that the commitment to empiricism, the repudiation of dogmatism, the role of direct intuition, and the emotional background to ideas are the very things that place the capacity for reflection (or self-consciousness) within the rational frame of reference.

Whitehead’s stress on the intelligibility of the world as the basic givenness from which metaphysics takes its start may be seen as the formal statement of the generally nondistinct and tacit reverence he paid the providence of the drive to intelligence in his writings. His impasioned strictures against anti-intellectualism and dogmatism as stifling potential and his recognition of the failure of reason due to the overwhelming complexity of the world or the internal complexities of emotional interference both attest to this reverence indirectly. Though he did not himself say as much, the craving for meaning may be seen as the way that the self-conscious subject experiences the “principle of empiricism” as dependent on the “ultimate irrationality” (read: nonrationality) of a “principle of concretion” (which was Whitehead’s early term for God) (SMW 178). Although the existence of some world or other may be necessary, there is nothing necessary about just how our world is (SMW 178). When this idea is applied to the rational subject as one of the data given in the world, we are led to posit an act of faith in the craving for meaning and reason that, one way or another, has us in its grip. There is nothing any more necessary about that craving than about most other features of the world; it is a nonrational providence, belonging perhaps to the fact of “appetition” that underlies all concrete prehensions of eternal objects, in much the same way that “meaningness” and the “collective unconscious” underlie specific archetypes for Hillman and Jung. If there is a sense in which Hillman’s infusion of “soul” into the psychological circle draws the whole question into the nonrational frame and out of its purely epistemological dimensions, an infusion of soul into Whitehead’s ontological principle may help us to reframe his commitment to rationalism as an unformulated acknowledgment of the nonrational frame. To fail to see the concrete mystique of the givenness of reason is to fall into a subtler form of the “fallacy of misplaced concreteness,” of which Whitehead accused the abstraction-jugglers of the seventeenth century (SMW chap. 3).

These first two marks of the nonrational frame, as the locus of the encounter with the numinosum and as the providence of the craving for meaning, involve the conscious subject in a mainly passive capacity, and even the insight that is generated here tends to bear the form of a revelation more than that of a demonstrable conclusion. As we have shown, however, what defines the rational frame is not the self-conscious, rational subject but rather the naming of the objective and subjective conditions of reason as arational and irrational, that is, as accessible to the range of operations by which self-consciousness constitutes itself. What defines the nonrational frame, similarly, is not a repudiation of the self-conscious rational subject but rather a new per-
spective whose focus is on the radical inaccessibility of experience to our controls and conceptualizations.

The acceptance of such a perspective, or its rejection, remains the work of the rational subject. I shall refer to this acceptance as the appropriation of the nonrational, which takes two forms: spontaneous and deliberate. Viewed from within the rational frame, such appropriation would be recalled as the interaction of the powers of reason with the arational and the irrational. But here rationality reaches satisfaction through the pure act of representational recognition of the mystique of its limitations. This “letting go” of reason does not contribute anything to the rational frame in the way of new conceptual controls; nor does it weaken the controls that are there in force. It is a reversal of the asceticism of the abstracting consciousness justified only by the intensification it brings to one’s urge to savor the things of soul. Its fiat is at once passive and creative; it appropriates into consciousness a process that goes on working whether one reasons well or poorly about it. In fact, it is nothing more than the attempt to make the rational frame livable for the human beings that we are. It is here that we may speak of a spirituality for the life of self-consciousness.

The spontaneous form of appropriating the nonrational is the third characteristic of the nonrational frame. We may call it, with Hillman, personifying. Hillman argues that the major contribution of Jung’s work lay in the “radical, personified formulation” he gave to the map of the psyche, in sharp contrast to the hydraulic and functional metapsychologies of Freud. Instead of thinking of mental events as hidden motives, instinctual drives, dim memories, traumatic events, and the like, Jung imagined them as persons. He imagined the complexes of the psyche as the players who people our dreams and fantasies; in myth, symbols, and rites handed down from tradition he saw not preconceptual Ur-dummheit but the projection of the depth of feeling that pervades all representation on whatever level of sophistication it occurs. And the whole process, for Jung, was not the outcome of deliberate attempts of gifted persons to allegorize ideas for the sake of rhetorical or emotional impact, but the work of a habitual, instinctual, ineluctable demand of the psyche to transform all of life into the image of persons so that it might have “real” meaning for us. When Jung says that “the psyche creates reality every day,” Hillman understands this as the final justification for all soul-making, “to experience the fantasy in all realities,” to see all ideas as metaphors of soul.

This personifying should not be confused, he cautions us, with “personalizing,” a surrogate form of personifying, which is symptomatic of a coldhearted conceptualism that represses the imaginal in the name of clarity of thought and seeks compensation for its sins by coating its ideas with a layer of no-less-conceptualized moral values. Personalizing returns everything to the conscious ego, which passes judgments on its value; it reduces soul-making to a pampering of one’s preferences for a world of neat and tidy meanings. Personifying by contrast protects the soul that mediates my way to the world by letting it do what it does, and what it has always done: imagine the world as the playground of daemonic forces which give vitality to the givenness of experience (RVP 1–51, 64). Through its personifying, personality ceases to be the private, skin-bound possession of individual subjects; it becomes an instance of a collective and transcendent realm, namely soul, which personifies everything it touches because it is the soul that possesses persons and not the other way around. In this way the arational and nonrational are great grist for the mill of reason but are drawn back, together with reason and the whole “spiritual” life itself, into the primordial mystique of the nonrational.

Hillman’s arguments for personifying draw our attention to an aspect of Whitehead’s metaphysics that tends to get obscured through purely philosophical appropriation. I do not refer to any slack-witted attempt, of which there are examples enough, to interpret the ideas as symptomatic of the private life of their author. I mean rather the curious predilection that Whitehead showed for expressing his most abstract notions, even in his strictly systematic language, in personal terms. He spoke of feelings, consciousness, conceptual prehension, valuation, society, satisfaction, urge, subject, appetition, creativity, aim, harmony, symbolism, and so forth, in reference not only to human persons but to the subhuman world as well. It is not enough to dismiss them as colorful “projections” cast on the world of nature. To do so would be to confirm Hillman’s own complaint that “modern science and metaphysics have banned the subjectivity of souls from the outer world of material events” (RVP 2), which is surely not the case with Whitehead. His recognition that even technical terms “remain metaphors mute appealing for an imaginative leap” (PR 6) points to something deeper than a mere statement about the arational. It is Whitehead’s way of appropriating the nonrational spontaneously into metaphysics. I say “spontaneously” because it seems to me that his own justification for the
procedure—that he was taking human experience as the prime analogue for lower forms of nature from which human life evolved (PR 112; FR 16)—is hardly sufficient to account for the lengths to which he followed this procedure. In personifying the categories of metaphysics, Whitehead was making his own rational adventures liveable for human beings even as he stood firm against what Hillman calls personalizing (AI chap. 20). In this way Whitehead left an opening in his thought for the nonrational, whose charm we still feel as a distinct but hard-to-locate presence.

The fourth characteristic of the nonrational frame is a second and more deliberate mode of appropriating the mystique of the nonrational: mythologizing. Hillman follows Jung in using this word in a broad sense as a synecdoche extending the technical meaning of the Greek tales of the Gods to serve as a representative for all forms of symbolic narrative fictions that show universal, collective, and recurrent patterns of psychic response to the experiences of life. Although the myth itself speaks literally of a world of impossible events, “always a myth is the psyche telling of itself in disguise” (PP 155). What Hillman has in mind here is not only the fantastic tales of ancient times—whose genre as metaphor dressed in falsehoods we have been familiar with ever since the dawn of philosophy—but a quality of any human representation seen from the viewpoint of soul.

To recover this standpoint toward our science, philosophy, and everyday common sense, as well as toward our own fantasy life, Hillman insists we must first learn to see through their literalness and recover the God. This is a way of reversing the course of history in order to protect our own ties with history. “The myth that is alive is not noticed as mythical until seen through,” and “seeing through” is the business of psychology. Hence only in the act of mythologizing does the mythological activity in which soul is constantly engaged come to light. Psychology translates back into the language of soul what has come to be spoken of in the language of the abstracting spirit. Hillman’s aim is to dig under the tidy garden of our conventional idioms to unearth the tangle of “root metaphors” that join us to the soul of our humanity. There we find the basic types of life and thought, be they apparently of the most generalized or most privatized form on the surface, as part of a collective, unconscious, and polytheistic inheritance. In taking this step as resolutely as he does, Hillman backs away from Jung’s lifelong insistence that psychology be accepted as a “science,” locating it rather in the mode of a hermeneutics of soul whose primary method is not nonobjective empiricism but an unabashed absorption in imaginal activity (FG 33n5). “Remythologizing” means not anything so crude as the free invention of myths but a rereading of the stories we tell of our lives in the light of the archetypal stories which have come down to us in our corporate tradition, in order to discover the greater dynamic that is sweeping us along in our every rational adventure. It is “an exploration of soul by spirit for psychic fecundation” (PP 68). We do not set up a supreme court of reason in which the solitary ego can sit to pass judgment on the meanings behind the surface meanings of things, because even our psychologizing itself is in obedience to the archetype of soul-making. All things are full of Gods, even that statement itself. The archetyping imagination and the archetyped imaginal are one within the psychic circle.

In order to safeguard remythologizing from slipping into a subtle but uncritical form of reason, therefore, we must view soul as a perspective of inexhaustible mythifiability. This is the final rationale for Hillman’s polytheism: to revere one God alone as natural to the soul is to constrict the nature of the soul into the expectations of the rational frame, and any spirituality so based rings shallow and unavailable in the concrete. No doubt Hillman is right to insist in this way on the uniqueness of the nonrational frame. We sippon off the mystique of soul when we dwarf it to the size of conceptual logic. Like the arrows the ancient Gauls shot at the heavens, the names we hurl at the divine never bring it tumbling down to earth. The experience of the givenness of life, whether felt through the presence of an otherness or through the craving for meaning, remains mystical. Remythifying accents the way the nonrational appears in life, in splinters, flashes, bits and pieces. What the speculative spirit weaves by day, the interior life unravels by night.

Nevertheless, the unity that Hillman denies our image of the divine, in refusing to speak of a single noumenal reality behind the plurality of phenomenal theophanies, returns in the form of the mythology of a common psyche participated in severally by all people everywhere, essentially unchanging, eternally repeating itself over and over again in the same patterns. The idea of soul as a universal temple of the Gods may not be the soul to which monotheistic theology turns as the locus of the experience of the divine. But for a psychology committed to viewing all realities as images, and to viewing the image-making soul itself as too transparent to “see through,” one could hardly hope for any
clearer "root metaphor" of the single Godhead behind all our ideas of God than the image of the one soul larger and more enduring than the individual humans who happen to inhabit it from one generation to the next. Any psychology that attempts to mythologize the interior life by remythologizing within the psychic circle is—for all its reticence to speak of the ontological status of the Gods apart from our images of them, and its lack of concern with the problems of theological relativism ($SS$ 32)—more consistent with its principles if it terminates in a radical pantheism to complement its radical panpsychism.

In any case, the hermeneutic value of Hillman’s polytheism is that it enables the process of mythologizing to survive all attempts to remythologize ourselves once and for all into a single myth to replace all others. If the point of mythologizing is to appropriate the nonrational factors or Gods which dominate the way we think and act, it is not in order to return them tout court back into the fold of the rational frame, where we can leave the mystique of the Gods behind and treat them as mere surrogate ideas ($SS$ 32). In other words, although there is a solid base of systematic thought in both Jung and Hillman which is intended to be, and in fact amounts to, a fully rational metapsychology which needs to be judged on its own merits against the full measure of critical reason, the actual work of psychology as a therapeutics of interpretation deserves rather to be judged on its ability to locate the mystique of the nonrational in "a vivid, intense realization, transcending ego and revealing truth."  

The danger is at once obvious: confronted with metapsychological inconsistencies in its handling of the conceptualizations of the arational and irrational aspects of the psyche, such a psychology can beat a quick retreat to the mystical nature of its subject matter and indeed all our conceptualizations of it. Jung at least tried to keep these separate by focusing on the demand to be scientific. Hillman has taken over the conclusions Jung arrived at in these attempts but tends to slip away from the demands of the rational frame in which they were posed. The most telling example is the way that Jung’s arguments regarding the psychological circle have been taken over by Hillman into the nonrational context of the psychic circle, thus begging the epistemological questions that Jung’s metapsychology sought to answer and that philosophical inquiry comes to his thought prepared to ask.  

A more common and more frustrating example is the way that allusions to myths are used as arguments to bolster up logical connections between abstract ideas or even take their place altogether, a practice adopted unscrupulously by many who have gotten their feet only a little wet in archetypal psychology’s methods of interpretation. The process is simple: one cites a general idea, supplies it with an image from the world of myth to demonstrate its archetypal nature, identifies the idea with the image and leaves the idea behind to follow the image through its mythical context, and finally wends one’s way back to the original idea, which one clarifies in terms of the conclusions reached through the mythical excursion. Sometimes this takes place in the course of pages of writing, sometimes in a single sentence, but always there is the same confusion of frames of reference. Hillman’s elucidation of the imaginal work of soul as a remythologizing is, to my knowledge, the best case anyone has presented for the uniqueness of the relationship between therapy and mythology, but we are left wondering too often what to do with the conceptual generalizations offered to appeal to our abstract sensibilities without any clear, logical archaeology behind them.

Probably the closest Whitehead has come to an appropriation of the nonrational by mythologizing is in his Adventures of Ideas, particularly in the final five chapters on Truth, Beauty, Truth and Beauty, Adventure, and Peace. Although he does not there, nor anywhere in his work, revision ideas as mythologems, he does perform the mythological function of affirming the enchanting power of ideas in history, and centers attention on how this enchantment both controls “the formation of mentalities of different epochs” ($PR$ 338) and draws the individual out of the isolations of personality into the collective drives of the race. Here we see Whitehead at his most inspiring “muddleheadedness” in the medium of an extremely dense and technical idiom, trying to locate that “impulse towards higher things” which is the heart of all civilization because it is a permanent feature of all human nature. What we are given is more than a scattering of intuitions densely concentrated and in need of being pulled apart again by the reader, though that is surely our first impression. It is also an infusion of soul into ideas, in virtue of which ideas are set free to walk about as freely and uninhibitedly as the Gods that people Hillman’s essays or the chemical substances that are personified in Jung’s alchemical studies. The major difference is that Whitehead does not himself appear to see what he is doing as an essential departure from the rational frame. If there is anything like a nonrational mystique to the power that ideas exercise over us, the only way he could conceive of appropriating this mystique
was to “rationalize mysticism,” which means conceptualizing it (MT 174). In fact, one cannot escape the feeling that Whitehead ends up at times “mystifying the rational.”

One might take his treatment of art as a description of this process. He begins by ascribing to art the task of bringing to consciousness the shadows cast by our conventional habits of thought, thus protecting us from becoming inflated with the workings of our reason. But then he goes on to note, entirely reminiscent of Hillman’s characterization of therapy as a reenactment of the lives of the Gods in one’s own interiority: “The origin of art lies in the craving for re-enactment. In some mode of repetition we need by our personal actions, or perceptions, to dramatize the past and the future so as to re-live the emotional life of ourselves, and of our ancestors” (AI 270–71). This is as succinct a statement as one could hope for of the way that Whitehead wrestles with the mystique of ideas in the midst of his frustrations at dragging them into the rational frame. In suggesting that art is “a psychopathic reaction of the race to the stress of its existence,” he points to his own adventures with ideas as a pathologizing response to the stresses of rationality. This deliberate appropriation of the nonrational is Whitehead’s way of mythologizing.

In contrast to the mythologizing of Hillman and Jung, however, Whitehead’s mythologizing is more in the nature of a demythologizing of ideas, which sees “clear” as always only “clear enough” (ESP 123). If this amounts to the antithesis of religion as soul-making on Hillman’s terms (P 67), it is of the essence of religion for Whitehead: “The progress of religion is defined by the denunciation of gods. The keynote of idolatry is contentment with the prevalent gods” (AI 11). But all demythologizing that is fair to its subject matter, as Whitehead’s tries to be, rests on a recognition of the function of myth, which is the same as it is for the demythologizing attempt: to make rationality livable, to make it accord with the nonrational urges of our nature that reason expresses. I take this to be what Whitehead has in mind when he ascribes the abiding appeal of types of Platonic philosophy, with all their “arbitrary fancifulness and atavistic mysticism,” to their instinctive grasp of the way that the abstractions of philosophy are limited by the inexplicable creativity with which the facts of experience encounter the inquiring mind (PR 20). Accordingly, I would venture to characterize Whitehead’s attitude to the dominant power of ideas as inexhaustibly demythologizable. This lands him to err more on the side of ignoring the right of the nonrational to its own frame of reference, just as the

attitude to soul as inexhaustibly demythologizable inclines Hillman and Jung to an isolation from the right of the rational to its own frame of reference. In the end, however, depth psychology is not served by dictating to science and metaphysics what they can and cannot pursue with their methods to the benefit of the general advance of our knowledge of the human; and conversely, science and metaphysics are not served by dictating to depth psychology what procedures it must follow to speak meaningfully. Some understanding of what the rational frame can do is as important, for the full exercise of self-consciousness, as some understanding of what it cannot do.

IV. The Popular Imagination and Inspirations for a New Spirituality

To paraphrase Whitehead’s prediction about religion (AI 33): that spirituality will take hold which can render clear to popular imagination some eternal greatness incarnate in the passage of temporal fact. If, as I suggested at the outset, we are in a time of transition between the passing of classical spiritualities developed in isolation from one another and the coming to birth of new spiritualities global in scope and dialectical in their development, it is not surprising that increasing numbers of those for whom conventional habits of thought were once adequate are suddenly finding themselves adrift in a torrent of fundamental questions and struggling to keep afloat.

What makes thinkers like Hillman, Jung, and Whitehead so suitable for attention in such a mood is not only that they recognize the transition; nor only that their works rise up like islands in the sea, giving us a place to stand and weather the changes; but most of all because their hunches about our predicament are so downright full of inspiration to the adventure and creativity we need to carry on our journey into the future.

Three qualities account for this inspiration. First, we enter into their books not to find fixed ideas trapped inside a kaleidoscope and bouncing off of one another like pretty little bits of glass, but to see ideas brought to life like angels and demons of nature to be wrestled with before they yield of their promise. Second, at the same time as we find there an intellectually respectable portrait of the human painted in all its bright uniqueness as steward of the world of reflection, we are shown its essential continuity with the wider world of nature, which the individual
experiences at the highest level when it aims at self-transcendence. And third, each of them confesses a faith in the temporal process tossing us about with the surface winds and waves even as in its depths it is pulling us with currents stronger and steadier.

These three qualities are what I have tried to point to as the non-rational appeal of their works, grounded in the mystique that the non-rational has for each of them. When we stand with Jung and Hillman and watch the things of life transformed into archetypes and Gods, when we stand where Whitehead stands and see the incessant urge toward novelty pulsing through the interrelatedness of all things, more is going on than a disciplined exercise in conceptualization. We are joining in the work of conversion to a new spirituality. Whatever else needs to be said about the utility of process metaphysics and archetypal psychology—and far more needs to be said than has been said so far—there is no denying the impact the major thinkers of these traditions have had on those who teach and write about them, evaluate their ideas, apply their schemes and follow through on their intuitions, and in general experiment with the truth of their achievements amidst the host of questions that life throws up at us all. A few hours spent reminiscing over the past decade of Process Studies and Spring give one a sense of the conversion this entails.

But now, to return to my paraphrase of Whitehead's comment about religion: the task awaiting completion is that of weaving into the fabric of popular imagination insights about eternal value flowing through the temporal. The fact is, few people are likely to be persuaded to give their leisure hours to books on metaphysics or psychological analysis to resolve actual moral decisions and settle on hopes for the future. Life in spiritual anomic will always be more popularly appealing than the rarefied air that professional intellectuals breathe. Popular imagination leans on ideas appealing for their concrete, symbolic value, and it is this world of popular imagination that occupies the greatest part of the attention and interest of the intellectual as well. It may be little consolation to say so, but the failures of our inherited spiritual traditions to guide us here stand out more clearly than proposals for alleviating the situation. And yet nothing of lasting value has been done until the popular imagination has been reformed and put to work on reforming civilization self-consciously.

One should not get the idea, of course, that the requisite metanoia of imagination has already taken place in the universities, institutes, and academies that house the intellectual establishment around the globe, and now needs only to filter down into the general population to take root properly. Quite the contrary—such change begins with the vaguest sentiments widely diffused throughout a society and long seething there before it reaches the halls of learning. Take only the two instances cited earlier.

The demand for true religious catholicity, deeper and more serious than an academic spirit of fairmindedness that pounds the religious diversity of humankind into a single mass of dough, flattens it out, and then impresses it with a shiny kit of cookie-cutters, is a demand most obvious in experiments in religious pluralism being carried out uncritically by a whole generation of young people following their hearts from church to temple to cult. Likewise, the demand for humanizing technology is more appealing and creative when spoken in the idiom of the artists and fantasizers of science fiction, who animate our technology by giving robots a life of feeling and turning computer circuits into communities of little people, reminding us indirectly that in the course of investing our science in our machines we have also invested in them the scientist's heart, no less good or evil than the rest of ours. Most of the moralizing carried on at academic conferences about the "perils of technology" lags far behind the shadowy sentiments already astir in the popular imagination. One turns with such enthusiasm to the sort of rationally disciplined and revolutionary thinkers discussed in these pages, who give voice to needs neglected and aspirations trivialized by the force of conventions embedded into institutions, precisely because they are so few. Or, which is to say the same thing, because they seem to be recounting to us the spiritual story behind the story of our times from within the very non-rational mystique that we experience as we are living that story out.