

Our Split, Jung's Split, and Tarnas' Re-enchantment of Our Cosmos

by Katie Givens Kime

Often, the best books are controversial. Richard Tarnas' *Cosmos and Psyche*, the culmination of decades of research and reflection, makes a powerful (if provocative) case for archetypal astrology. It represents commitment, conviction and courage: a bestselling author and widely praised cultural historian, Tarnas stakes his career on what he readily admits is "the gold standard for superstition." Many have suggested that if it were not for Tarnas' established credibility, it would be easier to discount and disregard the radical argument he dares to make: that there is a causal connection between the outer world and the human psyche.

In laying the groundwork for his findings, Tarnas makes a brilliant argument for the "double-bind" we all live with in our consciousness: our spiritual and psychological intuitions and experiences are quite often in direct opposition to our modern constructions of how the universe works. In other words, our sense of the Divine does not match our understanding of "reality." A perfect illustration of this split—which Tarnas argues is universal, to some degree—is C.G. Jung's biography, and the emergence of his *Red Book*.

Our "Disenchanted Cosmos": our freedom and our prison

One of the most valuable projects of *Cosmos and Psyche* is the concept of our "disenchanted cosmos." Tarnas lays out how, for most of our history as creatures, humans have experienced the universe as "ensouled." Until the last few hundred years (scarcely a hash mark on the meter stick of human history), people have felt presence in a southern wind or quiet lake, seen meaning in a particular bird flying at a particular place and time, felt significance in ordinary objects. Tarnas explains, "The primal world... communicates and has purposes. It is pregnant with signs and symbols, implications and intentions. The world is animated by the same psychologically resonant realities that human beings experience within themselves."

Readers of any Jung Society publication are usually open to broadening concepts of spirituality. Still, to absorb the full scope of Tarnas'

Katie Givens Kime is a Presbyterian minister and a doctoral student in pastoral theology at Emory University. Katie lives in Decatur with her family. Email: kgkime@gmail.com

findings and conclusions, it is important to note: even if we call ourselves "spiritual" or "religious" (or both), we live and breathe in a time and culture far removed from having *collective* consciousness of an *anima mundi*, or "world soul." Tarnas urges that we attempt to grasp "the stubborn fact that the primal cosmos was universally *experienced*, for countless millennia, as tangibly and self-evidently awake and alive."

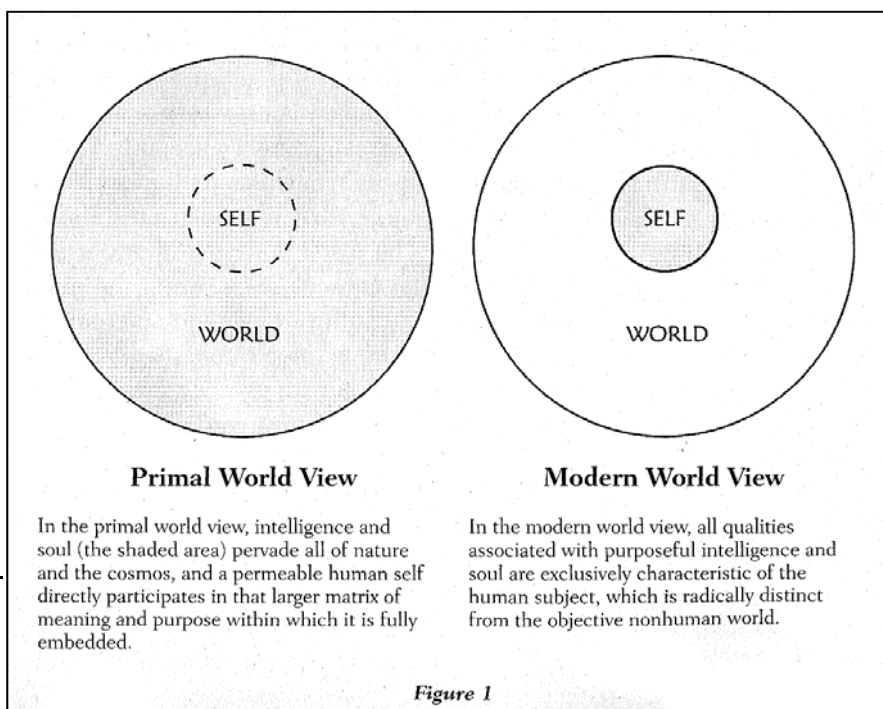
Tarnas brings immense credibility to the task of narrating the big arcs and movements of human history, especially those of the Western world. His 1991 bestseller, *Passion of the Western Mind*, continues to be a widely used college textbook, respected as a responsible, hefty, but single volume history of Western thought.

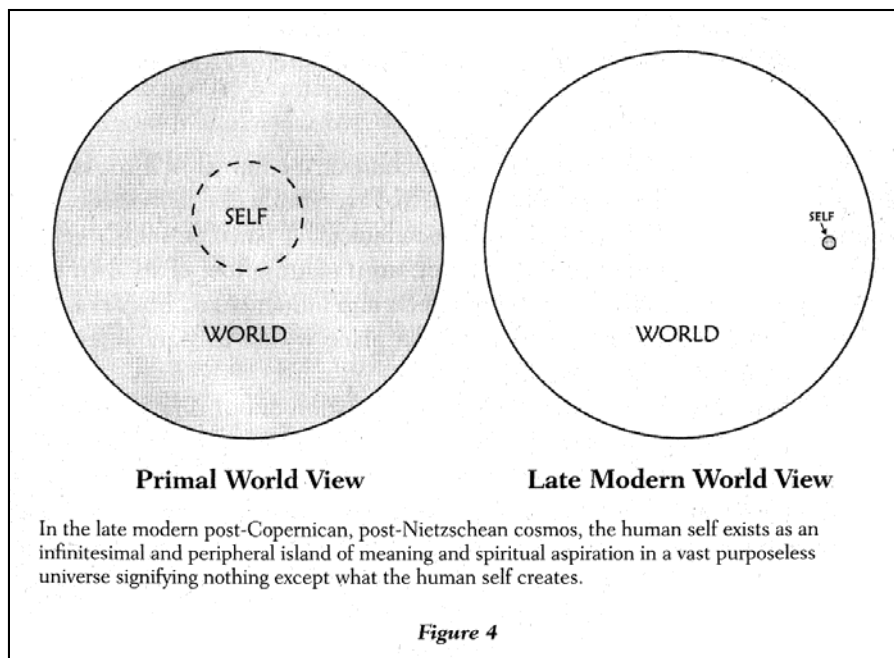
Take a look at Tarnas' "Figure 1" for a visual picture of the shift in worldviews across the centuries. Contrast the primal worldview's porous boundary between self and world with modernity, where a solid line represents the emergence of sharp distinction between inner and outer, human and not-human, subject and object. The shaded region represents meaning, purpose, the sacred, and/or conscious intelligence.

So it was that our worldview became that of a "disenchanted cosmos." Gods and goddesses, unseen divine powers, sacred ends – the Copernican Revolution and the Age of Enlightenment gave us new measures and new vision. Modernity tells us that gravity, not gods, holds our feet to the ground.

Make no mistake: disenchantment served crucial purposes for human becoming. Tarnas is careful to note that disenchanting strategies helped humanity "to differentiate the self, to empower the human subject, to liberate human experience of the world from unquestioned pre-given structures of meaning and purpose inherited from tradition and enforced by external authority." Most Jungians (certainly Jung himself) treasure human freedom from oppressive collective systems, so we should be careful not to entirely project shadow onto disenchantment. It is disenchantment that allowed us to move beyond religious systems that no longer served to point us God-ward!

But ultimately, a disenchanted worldview leaves any of us





“The achievement of human autonomy has been paid for by the experience of human alienation. How precious the former, how painful the latter.”

Jung’s “Personality #1 and #2”: the story of our split

C.G. Jung figures as prominently as anyone in Tarnas’ *Cosmos and Psyche*, and Jung’s work on synchronicity is a major fulcrum on which the premise of the book turns. Though Jung’s *Red Book* had not yet been released when *Cosmos and Psyche* was published, it is fascinating to employ Tarnas’ “disenchanted cosmos” model as a way of understanding Jung’s biography and the deep pain from which the *Red Book* necessarily erupted. Though an exceptionally imaginative child and son of a Swiss Reformed pastor, in his 20’s and 30’s, Jung considered himself a “thinker,” opposed to fantasy of any sort: “I held [fantasy] to

who see divine presence or purpose in the world around us to be merely silly, unevolved children. “From a modern perspective, if I see the world as if it were communicating humanly relevant meaning to me in some purposeful, intelligent way, as if it were laden with meaning-rich symbols – a sacred text, as it were, to be interpreted—then I am projecting human realities onto the non-human world...[and I am in a] naïve state of awareness: intellectually underdeveloped, undifferentiated, childish, wishfully self-indulgent, something to be outgrown and corrected through the development of mature critical reason.” Ouch!

Indeed, it is a damning, deep, and false dichotomy we hoist up our cultural flagpole: “*facts* are out there, *meaning* is in here.” And it gets worse. See Tarnas’ “Figure 4”, where he illustrates how late modernity not only enforces deep schisms (between human being and nature, self and world, spirit and matter, mind and body, conscious and unconscious, personal and transpersonal, secular and sacred, intellect and soul, science and the humanities, science and religion), but goes a step further. Now, human meaning is a small and lonely island. Tarnas explains, “The soul knows no home in the modern cosmos. The status of the human being in its cosmic setting is fundamentally problematic—solitary, accidental, ephemeral, inexplicable... He is an insignificant speck cast adrift in a vast purposeless cosmos, a stranger in a strange land.”

What happens when we feel rootless, pointless, and isolated? We eat, consume, numb, and destroy ourselves and our planet. Collectively and individually, consciously or not, we stomp down our deepest spiritual and psychological aspirations, or wildly project them in dead-end directions. “The underlying anxiety and disorientation that pervade modern societies in the face of a meaningless cosmos create both a collective psychic numbness and a desperate spiritual hunger, leading to an addictive, insatiable craving for ever more material goods to fill the inner emptiness and producing a manic techno-consumerism that cannibalizes the planet.”

In other words, disenchantment served us well, but we are past due for evolving beyond its limitations, for the sake (and soul!) of ourselves and the Earth. One of Tarnas’ best quotes:

to be altogether impure, a sort of incestuous intercourse, thoroughly immoral from an intellectual viewpoint.” Later in the *Red Book* he wrote, “The divine appears to me as irrational craziness. I hate it; it disturbs my meaningful human activity.”

One hundred years ago, the “meaningful human activity” about which Jung was entirely focused was the exciting, promising field of a new scientific psychology. At last, by introducing scientific methods to the blossoming field of psychology, “all prior forms of human understanding would be revolutionized...nothing less than the completion of the scientific revolution.” As a rising star in the field, Jung was one of these “Men of Science” promising to quantify, verify, and solve the mysteries of human nature.

But remaining only a “thinker” and a “scientist” was not working out so well for Jung. Some crucial part of his psyche was not finding expression, or even the ability to breathe. Jung was suffering what Tarnas calls “**the basic double bind of modern consciousness**: Our deepest spiritual and psychological aspirations are fundamentally incoherent with the very nature of the cosmos as revealed by the modern mind.” Typically, Jung leaned into the double bind, allowing himself to be “crucified between the opposites and delivered up to the torture until the ‘reconciling third’ takes shape.” And thus emerged the *Red Book*, where Jung experiments with what he later termed Active Imagination, recording his interaction with various figures and parts within him.

Both in the *Red Book* and in reflecting later on his early life, Jung identified his experience of division, even in childhood. As *Red Book* translator Sonu Shamdasani explains, Jung’s “sense of duality took the form of two alternating personalities, which he dubbed No. 1 and 2. No. 1 was the Basel schoolboy, who read novels, and No. 2 pursued religious reflections in solitude, in a state of communion with nature and the cosmos. He inhabited ‘God’s world.’” In fact, in a conversation with James Hillman following the publication of the *Red Book*, Shamdasani says that it is popularly believed that the *Red Book* happened as a result of Jung’s split from Freud, it actually had much more to do with how frustrated Jung was following his 1912 publication of *Transformations and Symbols of the*

Libido. Jung's vast study of comparative mythology and the history of religions felt insufficient. Shamdasani says that Jung realized his own mythlessness as he stood back and looked at his "rational text on fantasy thinking." And so, to use Tarnas' term, Jung sought enchantment, making the Red Book an em-

bodied example of Tarnas' conclusions that we are hampered and broken by our disenchanting cosmos worldview.

C.G. Jung's experience of duality and splitting, aligned with Tarnas' Enchanted/Disenchanted Cosmos:

Jung's Personality #1	Jung's Personality #2
Spirit of the Times	Spirit of the Depths
Thinker	Holy Person
Pursuer of Science	Pursuer of Humanities, Art, Myth
Bearer of Light	Follower, like a shadow
Basel Schoolboy reading novels	Religious Contemplative in solitude
Directive thinker: verbal, logical	Fantasy thinker: passive, associative, imagistic
Rational	Symbolic
Tarnas' "Late Modern World View" of a disenchanted cosmos	Tarnas' "Primal World View" of an enchanted cosmos

Table based on Shamdasani's "Introduction" to *Red Book*, and Jung's *Memories, Dreams and Reflections*.

How are we to respond and move forward in light of the disenchanted world view? Tarnas sees new vision on our horizon. "The present world situation could hardly be more ripe for a major paradigm shift...a genuinely comprehensive, internally consistent world view: a coherent cosmology." Here, we encounter **Tarnas' main purpose: to present archetypal astrology as a new light shining on the drama of history, reuniting science and religion, intellect and soul, modern reason and ancient wisdom.**

But before he stages his larger project, Tarnas narrates how the depth psychology revolution, in which Jung played a leading role, fits into the scope of the history of Western thought and our late modern world views. Most striking is the parallel he draws between the Copernican revolution and the depth psychology revolution; he credits Freud with first recognizing the deep affinity and continuity linking the two revolutions. Copernicus discovered that the universe does not revolve around the Earth—instead, the Earth revolves around the sun, and participates in a much larger cosmos. The Earth is displaced, no longer the center of everything.

With striking parallelism, the depth psychologists discovered that the Ego is no longer the center of everything. "Just as the Copernicans had displaced the Earth from the center of the universe to reveal a much larger unknown cosmos of which the Earth was now but a tiny peripheral fragment, the Freudians displaced the conscious self from the center of the inner universe to reveal the much larger unknown realm of the unconscious." Freud, Jung, and others frequently attempted to engage the "light of reason" (read: disenchantment) to the hidden mysteries of human interiority, but instead, Tarnas notes how they experienced the reverse. The "light of reason" itself was "transformed, reevaluated, and deepened by the very mysteries

it sought to illuminate!"

Thus, not only does Jung's biography and *Red Book* provide us with an elegant case study in understanding Tarnas' "disenchanted cosmos" theory on which he builds his formidable work in *Cosmos and Psyche*; the work of Jung and his depth psychology colleagues was perhaps the closest that Western thought has come, as of yet, to healing the wounds of our late modern world view. However, as Tarnas deftly explains, though depth psychology made room for a deeper and richer inner world for the lost and isolated modern soul, it failed to go far enough. At the end of the day, depth psychology still housed any truths about a transcendent spiritual dimension, no matter how convincing, in the individual and subjective human psyche.

At this point, with the force of thirty years of research, Tarnas swings the bat, presenting archetypal astrology and why, though regarded as a "gold standard of superstition," he stakes his vocational reputation on it being the new way forward, leading us into a re-enchanted cosmos.

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