

## 5. Inside Out

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### Which dreamed it?

On her journey *Through the Looking Glass*, Alice encounters the Red King, lying asleep and snoring on the grass.

‘He’s dreaming now,’ said Tweedledee: ‘and what do you think he’s dreaming about?’

Alice said ‘Nobody can guess that.’

‘Why, about YOU!’ Tweedledee exclaimed, clapping his hands triumphantly. ‘And if he left off dreaming about you, where do you suppose you’d be?’

‘Where I am now, of course,’ said Alice.

‘Not you!’ Tweedledee retorted contemptuously. ‘You’d be nowhere. Why, you’re only a sort of thing in his dream!’

‘If that there King was to wake,’ added Tweedledum, ‘you’d go out – bang! – just like a candle!’

‘I shouldn’t!’ Alice exclaimed indignantly.

‘Besides, if I’m only a sort of thing in his dream, what are you, I should like to know?’

‘Ditto,’ said Tweedledum.

‘Ditto, ditto!’ cried Tweedledee.

He shouted this so loud that Alice couldn’t help saying, ‘Hush! You’ll be waking him, I’m afraid, if you make so much noise.’

‘Well, it no use *your* talking about waking him,’ said Tweedledum, ‘when you’re only one of the things in his dream. You know very well you’re not real.’

‘I *am* real!’ said Alice and began to cry.

‘You won’t make yourself a bit realler by crying,’ Tweedledee remarked: ‘there’s nothing to cry about.’

‘If I wasn’t real,’ Alice said – half-laughing though her tears, it all seemed so ridiculous – ‘I shouldn’t be able to cry.’

‘I hope you don’t suppose those are *real* tears?’

Tweedledum interrupted in a tone of great contempt.

*Through the Looking Glass, Chapter IV*

As it turns out, Alice with her *Lacrimo, ergo sum* and Tweedledum with his metaphysical interruption are both wrong: it’s Alice who’s dreaming the whole show – not Alice the character in this dialogue, but Alice who wakes up at the end of the story. But that Alice is herself a figment of Lewis Carroll’s imagination. But then who is this ‘Lewis Carroll’? And when Alice Liddell (the original model for ‘Alice’) read this story, did she see *herself* through the looking glass, or a figment of Carroll’s imagination, or of her own? When you read it yourself at this end of time, who does the King represent?

Who’s the real dreamer *now*? Certainly not Alice or any character in dream or story – including ‘that there King’ – and certainly not you as the person you imagine yourself to be. No, it’s you as the current embodiment of Mind, the Creator of *all* these characters. The one who speaks for that Creator is the *primal person*.

For the primal person there can be no difference between self and other, or subject and object, or appearance and reality. The lived and living universe of experience is *the universe*, period. Primal person has a *whole world*, and this *having* is not separate from *being*, nor this *being* from *becoming*. (Could you also call it *be-having*?)

The trouble with talking about the *primal* is that it eludes language, because it is presupposed by language, even by all semiosis. It is the First in Peirce’s triad of ‘categories,’ which are the basic elements of the Presence now and always. Here is how he

introduced the triad in his 'Guess at the Riddle' (c. 1888):

The First is that whose being is simply in itself, not referring to anything nor lying behind anything. The Second is that which is what it is by force of something to which it is second. The Third is that which is what it is owing to things between which it mediates and which it brings into relation to each other.

The idea of the absolutely First must be entirely separated from all conception of or reference to anything else; for what involves a second is itself a second to that second. The First must therefore be present and immediate, so as not to be second to a representation. It must be fresh and new, for if old it is second to its former state. It must be initiative, original, spontaneous, and free; otherwise it is second to a determining cause. It is also something vivid and conscious; so only it avoids being the object of some sensation. It precedes all synthesis and all differentiation: it has no unity and no parts. It cannot be articulately thought: assert it, and it has already lost its characteristic innocence; for assertion always implies a denial of something else. Stop to think of it, and it has flown! What the world was to Adam on the day he opened his eyes to it, before he had drawn any distinctions, or had become conscious of his own existence, – that is first, present, immediate, fresh, new, initiative, original, spontaneous, free, vivid, conscious, and evanescent. Only, remember that every description of it must be false to it.

— Peirce (EP1:248)

As Ta Hui put it, 'the mindless world of spontaneity is inconceivable' (Cleary 1977, 19). This would explain why those 'mystics' who try to articulate the primal experience typically testify to the inadequacy of their own expression. It's not that the First can't be described, it's just that all descriptions are false; and the burden of being false to the First is just too much for the mystic to bear.

Jesus said, 'When you see your likeness, you are happy.  
But when you see your images that came into being  
before you and that neither die nor become visible,  
how much you will bear!'

— *Gospel of Thomas* 84 (Meyer; 5G marks the last part as a question.)

There is nothing mysterious about the element of experience which the mystic tries to express, and common sense itself can account for the failure of his expression. Accounting for it, though, does not in itself bring you home to the heart of all experience, if you aren't already there. For that you have to turn your own expression, as the living of your life, inside out. This chapter will settle for showing why *the world* is inside out.

## The split and image

If the primal is Peirce's Firstness, separate existence – setting self against other – is Secondness. What brings them together again is Thirdness, the element of *mediation* and *representation*. In his first exposition of 'phenomenology,' Peirce introduced this third category with a story from the *Arabian Nights*:

The merchant in the Arabian Nights threw away a datestone which struck the eye of a Jinnee. This was purely mechanical, and there was no genuine triplicity. The throwing and the striking were independent of one another. But had he aimed at the Jinnee's eye, there would have been more than merely throwing away the stone. There would have been genuine triplicity, the stone being not merely thrown, but thrown at the eye. Here, *intention*, the mind's action, would have come in. Intellectual triplicity, or Mediation, is my third category.

CP 2.86 (1902)

This element of *intention*, mediating between two otherwise separate events, is necessarily involved in all semiosis, including the attempt to lend a tongue to the primal. Still, you can't expect

the primal to speak consistently: to grasp it is to lose it.

If the primal person could take a philosophical stance, it would be the one called *solipsism*, which turns Tweedledum's opinion inside out: as a solipsist, rather than taking us all to be figments of somebody else's dream, I take everybody else to be figments of mine. But since any philosophical stance presupposes a dialogue with *other selves*, as we saw in Chapter 2, a solipsistic stance would contradict itself in practice. The only practical common-sense belief, then, is some kind of *realism*: you have to believe that the *other* is really out there, and you're not making it all up. (Here the gulf opens up between you and the primal person.)

Reflect: if you *were* making it all up, there would be no difference between appearance and reality – between the world and your perception of it. But you know there's a difference because the world is full of surprises: your expectations often turn out to be wrong. Your knowledge is fallible: there's a difference between the reality out there and your experience of it: therefore, you (and the other) exist. As Peirce put it, your 'separate existence is manifested only by ignorance and error' (EP1:55). Besides, you have every scientific reason for believing that your whole *experience* of the external world is a performance of your brain. Yet it's a performance that you can't watch as such; only an observer beyond the performer could do that.

As Maturana (1978a) pointed out, only an observer can distinguish between the 'inside' and 'outside' of an organism. It is only when you recognize 'yourself' as one subject among many, and thus become a *self-observer*, that you have an 'inner' life. Whether we should speak of this inner life as 'observed' or 'inferred' by others is not a simple question, but clearly they can observe (if suitably equipped) a sequence of brain states, a network of neural dynamics, which correlates so closely with your experience that it appears to *constitute* your inner life. Talking about this from the 'inside' complicates the language even further, though, because the experience generated by the activity of your nervous system appears to you primarily as your body and the world around it, and only in a secondary sense as your 'inner' world of private thoughts and feelings. But the nervous system itself appears in the external world, the world which offers resistance to your will and appears to others as well as you. Careful

observation of that world leaves little room for doubt that the nervous system itself does all the thinking and feeling, including observation. Realistically, then, you have to agree that the world is inside out. It appears 'out there' because of your own inner workings, which in turn appear to be 'inner' only from the outside.

It's as if you have twin 'selves,' one to experience the world – the *subject* (who is also the king) of experience – and one to play a part in the world (and thus be subject *to* it). Let's call the former *Dum* and the latter *Dee*. Language being a social phenomenon, it's Dee who does all the talking. In trying to trace the other self, the subject who is king, Dee conjures up a ghostly twin of itself in the form of a disembodied person (selfhood, mind, soul). No matter what the scientific observer says, getting rid of this ghostly Dum self (even if we wanted to) would be a task akin to eliminating the first person from our grammar. What you can do, though, is realize that the first person is only one limited point of view – even though it contains all the glories of heaven and earth – because there are others, 'who are every one sole heirs as well as you.' To achieve this exalted humility requires us to experience the inconceivable and to see the familiar as utterly strange; it requires a resurrection of the body.

The body of man is a microcosm, the whole world in miniature, and the world in turn is a reflex of man.

— *Haggadah* (Barnstone 1984, 25)

In ourselves the universe is revealed to itself as we are revealed in the universe.

— Thomas Berry (1999, 32)

Yet all this which seems, in a way, so paradoxical and so difficult to grasp, is the simplest and most obvious thing in the world. It is neither more nor less than discovering, rediscovering, where one actually stands, the actual ground of one's experience.

— Oliver Sacks (1984, 182)

Be strong, and enter into your own body: for there your foothold is firm. Consider it well, O my heart! go not elsewhere.

Kabir says: 'Put all imaginations away, and stand fast in that which you are.'

— Kabir II.22 (Tagore 1915)

Jesus said, 'I took my stand in the midst of the world, and in flesh I appeared to them.'

— *Gospel of Thomas* 28.1 (Meyer)

Why abandon the seat in your own home to wander in vain through the dusty regions of another land? If you make one false step, you miss what is right before you. Since you have already attained the functioning essence of a human body, do not pass your days in vain; when one takes care of the essential function of the way of the Buddha, who can carelessly enjoy the spark from a flint? Verily form and substance are like the dew on the grass, and the fortunes of life like the lightning flash: in an instant they are emptied, in a moment they are lost.

— Dogen, *Fukan zazen gi* (Bielefeldt 1988, 186)

## The astonishing hypothesis

Once the primal One has fallen apart, splitting into *self* and *other*, the view from within the system thus self-defined is oriented outward (toward the other) by default. You simply can't navigate the world without seeing it as something really *out there* to be navigated. Questioning that default assumption would interrupt your navigation. This is not necessarily a bad move, since a temporary interruption might improve navigation in the long run; but you'd be sunk if you did it all the time.

Science, being the formal and public face of common sense, has to make that same default assumption in the course of its inquiry. Therefore when it looks *into* subjects like you and the way you see your world, it can only confirm the words of Blake, that 'in your own Bosom you bear your Heaven and Earth & all you behold; tho' it appears Without, it is Within' (*Jerusalem* 71:17). Current science may prefer 'brain' to the poet's 'Bosom,' but that's a matter of style that doesn't really matter.

The discovery that the world is inside out is not new. Indeed it was clearly stated close to 3000 years ago in the *Upanishads*:

Within the city of Brahman, which is the body, there is the heart, and within the heart there is a little house. This house has the shape of a lotus, and within it dwells that which is to be sought after, inquired about, and realized. ...

As large as the universe outside, even so large is the universe within the lotus of the heart. Within it are heaven and earth, the sun, the moon, the lightning, and all the stars. What is in the macrocosm is in this microcosm.

— *Chandogya Upanishad* (Prabhavananda and Manchester 1947, 119)

However, some discoveries continue to be surprising long after their truth is recognized, because they still appear to conflict with entrenched conceptual habits. We might call them macro-surprises, or *revelations*. They are startling at first, shaking up the cognitive scene just as revolutions shake up the political scene (or the scientific scene, according to Thomas Kuhn). But they also *continue* to seem paradoxical because they collide with our habitual way of seeing the world – which we habitually confuse with the world itself. We may therefore see revelations as coming from *beyond* the world or anyone in it. Many religious traditions would trace them to a ‘supernatural’ source, since ‘nature’ is identified with the world as we habitually know it. Yet our explorations of the natural world itself bring even bigger surprises. In the human dialog with nature which we call *science*, nature talks back to us in unexpected ways. The current renewal of the revelation that the world is inside out follows upon a string of scientific revelations, many of which have only confirmed things we could have guessed but weren’t prepared to believe.

We had known for centuries, even some of the ancient Greeks knew, that the earth was a sphere floating in space; but the knowledge never really came home to us earthlings until the first pictures of our planet were taken from far enough away to see it all at once. (It still amazes me that this took place within my own lifetime; and it amazes me still more that people can lose sight of



that big picture so completely as to carry on the petty squabbles and power struggles that still afflict the planet.)

This was a revelation from science which turned our point of view around. Earlier we had imagined that the earth was the center of the universe, that the starry heavens and those ‘wanderers,’ the planets, revolved around the earth. Then we discovered that the universe looks this way to us simply because this planet is the point we are looking from. We were limited to a first-planet point of view, as it were, but we had no way to realize this until we could shift our point of view elsewhere – first in imagination, by revising our concept of the cosmos, and later by launching ourselves (or our prosthetic viewing devices) far enough into outer space to become observers of the earth.

All scientific inquiry requires observation, but not all observation requires special technologies such as telescopes or microscopes. Amateur naturalists such as Thoreau, by looking closely at the human-scale world around them, and pondering their place in it, prepared the ground for other revelations. The idea of natural selection, for instance, was already dawning on Darwin around the time that Thoreau walked the shores of Walden Pond – but he didn’t publish it until 1859 (worried perhaps about the dismay it would cause). Later on, when the molecular basis of genetic inheritance was discovered, the ‘missing link’ in modern evolutionary theory was filled in, thus completing its broad outline. Many of the details are still under construction, and there are competing interpretations of some facts in evolutionary biology; these are signs that the theory is healthy and flourishing. Opponents of the theory, or of science generally, prefer to consider these signs of health as weaknesses, thus following in the footsteps of those who have opposed every revelation. Like the Pharisees who rejected Christ, they simply don’t want their habitual view of the world turned upside down, or inside out. So they demand *proof* before they will ‘believe’; but the kind of ‘proof’ they have in mind is contrary to the spirit and method of science. As Gregory Bateson put it (1979, 32), ‘science *probes*; it does not prove.’

Then there was Einstein’s theory of relativity, which (much to his dismay) spawned The Bomb – meanwhile upsetting our understanding of space, time, energy and matter. All of these mindquakes have been disturbing, and continue to be so for many

people. But in our time, perhaps the most astonishing of all – for those who manage to get past their dismay – is the realization that the world is inside out. This revelation is both mysterious and mundane, perfectly obvious and totally unimaginable. The explanation in this chapter may be inadequate for some readers and superfluous for others. If you are bored or bewildered by it, the author can only beg your patience, as the main thread of our story must pass through the eye of this needle.

Francis Crick, who played a role in the genetic revolution by co-discovering the double-helix structure of the DNA molecule, also wrote a popular book about the neuroscience of consciousness, *The Astonishing Hypothesis*. Here is his version of the inside-outness of the world:

In perception, what the brain learns is usually about the outside world or about other parts of the body. This is why what we see appears to be located outside us, although the neurons that do the seeing are inside the head. To many people this is a very strange idea. The ‘world’ is outside their body yet, in another sense (what they know of it), it is entirely within their head. This is also true of your body. What you know of it is not attached to your head. It is inside your head.

— Crick (1994, 104)

The reason this hypothesis remains so ‘astonishing’ is that you can’t *see* or *experience* the world as being inside your head, nor can you normally talk about it as if it were. The brain is in the body, the body in the world, and the part cannot contain the whole. The world is inside out because all of your experience, everything from your most intimate thoughts to the furthest reaches of ‘outer space,’ the whole universe of your awareness, can only appear to empirical science as something going on in your head – and that includes how empirical science itself appears to you. The world that exists *for you* is called *the phenomenal world*, after the Greek word *phainomenon*, which comes from the verb for *appearing*. As it often seems that you are looking out at that world ‘through a glass darkly,’ you may well decide that some appearances are more ‘real’ than others; but nothing can be real for you if it doesn’t first *appear*

to you. This *appearing* has its material cause in your brain dynamics, consisting of billions of neurons firing and triggering each other in constantly shifting yet reiterated patterns which constitute the formal cause of your experience of the phenomenal world. Its final cause is your 'mission.' That is why you are the 'sole heir' and 'king' of the whole world, no matter what role your puny *persona* might play in the social scheme.

We cannot simply dispense with our habitual way of talking about the world, but as Crick says above, now we need to speak of it 'in another sense.' You can do this only by projecting your point of view outside of your 'self,' making an imaginative leap into the role of *third person*, becoming a virtual observer of your own brain and its maps of your body. You can do this because you can observe other bodies and learn about their brains; but you can't do it *without* an imaginative leap because it *is* always the first person speaking, and the first person *seeing*. (Don't imagine that this imaginative leap is made deliberately or consciously. Ordinary human consciousness is grounded in this leap, or in the *intent* which motivates it – not the other way round.)

So the revelation in a nutshell, the astonishing hypothesis, is just as our previous chapter said: the *subject* of your experience is none other than your living bodymind. The experiencing subject is also the subject of this book (the object of this sign) and its ideal reader. Crick's own version of this revelation/hypothesis takes a cue from Alice when she's about to wake from Wonderland. On trial in the dream kingdom, Alice loses her patience and tells the court that its proceeding is all 'Stuff and nonsense!'

'Off with her head!' the Queen shouted at the top of her voice. Nobody moved.

'Who cares for you?' said Alice (she had grown to her full size by this time). 'You're nothing but a pack of cards!'

Crick says likewise to his readers, 'You're nothing but a pack of neurons!' (1994, 3).

However, Crick also wrote (later in the book) that 'the words *nothing but* in our hypothesis can be misleading if understood in too naïve a way' (1994, 261). The same is true of the inside/out

distinction.

What 'inside' and 'in' means is no simple question. The simple 'in' of a skin envelope assumes a merely positional space in which a line or plane divides into an 'outside' and an 'in.' But the ground pressure is exerted not just on the sole of the foot but all the way up into the leg and the body. From almost any single bone of some animal paleontologists can derive not just the rest of the body but also the kind of environment and terrain in which the animal lived. In breathing, oxygen enters the bloodstream-environment and goes all the way into the cells. The body is **in** the environment but the environment is also **in** the body, and **is** the body.

— Gendlin (1998, I)

## Umwelt and Innenwelt

Any animal's 'view from within' is primarily of the world without, to which it must adapt its behavior in order to keep on behaving. This 'world' includes only those objects with which the animal is equipped to interact (for as we will see in later chapters, perception is inseparable from interaction). Thus each species has its own *Umwelt* (a term introduced by the Estonian biologist Jakob von Uexküll). An observer of the interaction, who may belong to a different species from the subject involved in that structural coupling process, will see only those features of the subject animal's "environment" which belong to the observer's own *Umwelt*. Some of these may not be included in the subject's *Umwelt* because they are irrelevant to the coupling process in which it is involved; and some features of the subject's *Umwelt* may be quite invisible to the observer, who will therefore not fully understand the process observed.

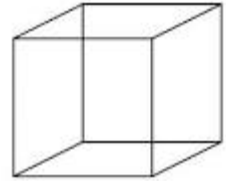
In any case, such an observer will see this coupling as a relationship between the subject organism's *Umwelt* and the *Innenwelt* constituted by its 'inner' states of feeling, intention and cognition. As structures, *Umwelt* and *Innenwelt* are complementary, each defined by its relations with the other. The

cognitive aspect of this is a modeling or mapping relation, the organism's Umwelt being that face of the external world which its own embodiment enables it to map. The interplay between this model and the animal's intentions constitute its experience of the world, most of it seen by the subject *as* the world and not as itself. From this point of view 'all experience is subjective' (Bateson 1979, 33) – it's always *somebody's* experience. Biosemiotically, though, experience can also be seen as the mapping of Umwelt into Innenwelt reciprocally coupled with the projection of Innenwelt onto Umwelt.

The complexity of your Umwelt is a reflection of the complexity of your own bodymind. The human Umwelt appears to be qualitatively different from that of any other species because our modeling capabilities extend far beyond immediate biological needs, or because modeling (sense-making, theorizing) has become for us an end in itself. This enables us to reason about entities, relations and situations other than those presenting themselves to us as percepts. We imagine unknown realities and unrealized possibilities. We know of no other animal who can theorize about itself or its own Umwelt or Innenwelt; without conscious symbolizing, a living system knows only *through* its modeling and not *about* it. Not even other social animals project their attention so far beyond immediate needs as we do with our enhanced means of mediation. (In other words, no animal that we know of is as absent-minded as we are.)

The human nervous system is the most complex that we know of, and each individual human has a world differing in some details from any other; but because each is an incarnation of the human kind, all humanity has its Umwelt in common. This conjunction of unity and difference makes culture and communication possible among humans. It also makes the human Umwelt so distinctively variable that some prefer to use another word for it (or for its variations). Husserl called it *Lebenswelt* ('life-world'; Deely 2001, 10). Inhabiting such a *Lebenswelt* allows us to be *virtual* observers of ourselves, and thus to see ourselves as it were from within *and* without, though not quite both at once. We cannot sustain both views at the same time, just as we can sustain only one view at a time of a Necker cube:

When you see this as a transparent 3-dimensional object, do you see it from slightly above or slightly below? If your brain works in the usual way, you see it one way or the other. The front and back 'faces' appear to change places as you stare at it,



your view flipping from one perspective to the other. Each view is a complete form or *Gestalt* (a term lifted from German by psychologists), and the flip is a 'gestalt switch.' When you flip the first-person view from outward- to inward-looking, or vice versa, the world turns inside out.

We generally become self-conscious only when our interaction with the world has already been interrupted. In the normal ongoing action-perception cycle, you are minimally conscious of your body (that is, of the body seen by others as you). The body at its most transparent – as it is for the player immersed in the flow of the game, for instance – does not appear as an object at all, and what happens appears 'out there' in real spacetime.

The tennis player learns how to be guided by perception so that the approaching ball is transferred to a designated position in the opposite court. Indeed, there is evidence that motor-perceptual learning that concerns distal events of this kind is more primitive than motor-perceptual learning that concerns merely motions of the organism's own body.

— Ruth Millikan (2004, 199-200)

The view from within sees the world (the *Umwelt*) as animated; in other words the *actual* body is the world where the action is, not the contents of the skin-bag seen by somebody else. But insofar as the system can view *itself* from within, it sees (or infers) a subject of experience with 'the world' as the object of that subject's attention and perception.

In Chapter 2, when you were asked to turn your attention to a mirror, you had to make a choice: either do that "literally" (and stop reading!) or *imagine* the experience. If you did actually look into a mirror, you must have stopped doing that in order to read on. As you read on through the words about looking into the

mirror, your imagined (or remembered) experience of doing that was the *object* of those word-signs. When you imagine, remember or think *about* an experience, it becomes an *object* of some sign – some thought, word, image or idea. The result of that semiotic process is a new experience, differing in some respect from the more direct experience of the *object*, the one you are thinking about. That new experience is the immediate *interpretant* of those thought-signs.

Your Innenwelt is a semiotic system and therefore a single sign, with your Umwelt as its object, and the conduct of your life as its interpretant.

An ‘experience’ that you can think or talk *about* cannot be your present experience, just as a physical object that you see outside the window cannot be your experience of seeing. An ‘experience’ of yours, when seen or imagined from the outside (whether by somebody else or by your own remembering), can only appear as a process, or at least an *event*. What appears from the outside as a semiotic process or event appears from the inside as immediate experience – but only so long as you don’t think about it, or try to describe, imagine, remember or name it: as soon as you do that, the experience is gone, and in its place is the object of a new sign, a new nexus in the flow of semiosis.

You’re not just a pack of neurons, then, but a process animating everything they do. That’s how it looks from the outside; from the inside, you’re the one and only reader of these words and of this world. And to this one reader, ‘you’ *yourself* are a *symbol*, just like all the other selves that you imagine to inhabit the world. All of them, and your ‘self,’ are the objects of (your) attention – which you can only give wholeheartedly if you believe implicitly that they *really* are who they are, no matter what you (or anyone) thinks of them.

When an ideal observer of your brain at work interprets what she sees as a semiotic process, she does not see what you see from inside that process, but she does see that process itself in a way that you can’t. Insofar as what she sees can be made public, it can serve you as indirect (virtual) self-knowledge, if you internalize that public model.

To be a distinct individual with ‘a local habitation and a name’ is to wear the mask of a *third person*, to be an object of public

attention, to play a particular role in the universal drama. On this vast stage, even a starring role is a bit part, a particle. This is the self you present to others, and to yourself in your self-conscious internal dialogue. Wearing the *persona* is something that you as *first person* can do in your sleep, and indeed most of us do it quite unconsciously most of the time, personality playing itself out like a dream. Waking up is realizing that all these *persons* or ‘points of view’ are expressions of a single self (or a single process, to put it impersonally). In reality, the distinction between you and the universe is local and temporary. ‘If that there King was to wake, you’d go out – bang! – just like a candle!’ This *little bang* at the end of time is what Sufis and Buddhists call ‘extinction’ (*fana, nirvana*). It’s waking up to a world undivided between shadow and light, subject and object, self and other.

## Mythic universe

As a social animal, you also inhabit a *cultural* or social body with its own *Innenwelt* or *Lebenswelt*, its own inner world which appears from the inside as the “outside” world (although the boundaries between cultures are less definite than the boundaries between the physical bodies of their members). This inner world is made of shared beliefs, often represented by the ‘sacred stories’ or *myths* of the culture. The views of a myth from inside and outside the culture to which it belongs can vary widely, and so can the usage of the term, as Tom McArthur shows by giving two definitions of *myth* in the *Oxford Companion to the English Language*:

- (1) A culturally significant story or explanation of how things came to be: for example, of how a god made the world or how a hero undertook a quest. As such, myth is opposed to *history*, in that it is usually fabulous in content even when loosely based on historical events.
- ... (2) A fictitious or dubious story, person or thing: *That’s a myth; it never happened*. Stories once regarded as true (and therefore not myths) may lose their power to convince (and be demoted to the status of myth), because other stories replace them (as pagan accounts



of life were replaced by Christian accounts) or they are no longer considered relevant, credible or useful. The adjectives *mythic* and *mythical* are synonymous, but *mythic* is often kept for the first sense of *myth* ('Mythic figures like Zeus and Heracles'; 'a story of mythic proportions') and *mythical* for the second sense ('the mythical land of El Dorado'). In classical Greece, *mythos* was contrasted with *logos*; both derive from verbs that translate as 'speak,' but where *mythos* subsumed poetry, emotion, and mythic thought, *logos* subsumed prose, reason and analytical thought. The present-day dichotomy between poetry, literature, and the humanities on the one hand, and reason, logic, analysis, and science on the other dates from the anti-mythic and anti-poetic stances adopted in the 5/4c BC by such philosophers as Plato.

*Myth* in the first sense is the imaginative representation of universal forms, explicating (making explicit) those implicit forms vaguely but intimately sensed by the primal person. As Yuri Lotman (1990, 153) observed, 'Myth always says something about me. But "news," or an anecdote, is about someone else.' Intimacy with the real world of imagination, the world of mythic reality, is at least as essential to our guidance systems as contact with 'empirical' reality and knowledge of historical fact.

The difference in usage between the *mythic* and the *mythical* corresponds to a distinction (pointed out by Northrop Frye) between the *imaginative* and the *imaginary*: the former is 'culturally significant' while the latter is factually untrue. But the fact is that a story, or a theory, has to be imagined, has to appear as an *image*, before any question of its truth can arise; and a culturally significant story or image may represent a truth that is too deeply entangled with our very being to be seriously questioned or empirically testable.

It is only when a myth is accepted as an imaginative story that it is really believed in. As a story, a myth becomes a model of human experience, and its relation to that experience becomes a confronting and present

experience.

— Frye (1980, 29)

The historical facts about Jesus of Nazareth, sketchy as they are, cannot compare in cultural and personal significance with the gospel stories about him and the sayings attributed to him. If you try to pin down the Savior to a fixed location in history, as an individual with a fixed proper name, you crucify him again. And he evades you again, leaving behind an empty tomb while the Spirit (semiosis) moves on.

For myths, legends, stories, plays and so on, there is no difference between verification and propagation: fictions tend to circulate to the extent that their significance is recognized (though the process can be distorted by marketing). For this reason fictions tend to be more conventional than facts, which can be circulated, stored and retrieved regardless of their relevance (or lack of it) for universally human feeling. (This is why factual 'truth is stranger than fiction,' at least until it becomes familiar.) Scriptures, whether narrative, descriptive or expository in form, are *imaginative* fictions in this sense. To read them as factual is to discard their deeper significance and restrict their function as guidance, in effect banishing them from the realm of pure intent to the realm of externalities.

## The lightning glass

It's all very well to say that your world is all in your head, including your habit of projecting it *out there* – but we don't really believe this, do we? We believe instead that *there is* a real world out there, and what we see is an *appearance* of it: an edited, scripted, domesticated version. How can we truly recognize that wild reality out there, when all a body wants to do is to find a safe way through it?

We begin with the discovery, always begun, never finished, that the finding of ways is part of that very world. We are not in fact alien visitors from another dimension or ghosts in a machine; rather we are habitual itinerants. We are on our way back to the strange paradise which we desperately miss even though we have

never left it. Somehow this never quite sinks in, which is why the revelation of it, and our sense of the sacred, can be constantly renewed.

We find ourselves in the cosmos, and our stories about the cosmos turn out to be autobiopsychographical. As Arthur Green suggests in an essay about the *Zohar*, scriptures often reflect a 'mirroring onto the cosmos' of one's own deepest experience.

The *language* of Kabbalah is cosmological. Hence, as our experiences are structured by the language system within which we work, the Kabbalist envisions his inner reality as the unfolding of universal life out of the Godhead; his chief preoccupation is the cosmos, not 'merely' his own soul.

— Green (in Fine 1995, 48-9)

Scriptures are about the structure of meaning space, which is the structure of the soul as the source and entelechy of the human body. That body is of cosmic proportions, like the primal man of Jewish myth:

According to the Aggadah, it was only after the fall that Adam's enormous size, which filled the universe, was reduced to human, though still gigantic, proportions. In this image – an earthly being of cosmic dimensions – two conceptions are discernible. In the one, Adam is the vast primordial being of cosmogonic myth; in the other, his size would seem to signify, in spatial terms, that the power of the whole universe is concentrated in him.

— Scholem (1960, 162)

A similar story of 'the fall' is told in the prophetic works of Blake and in *Finnegans Wake*. George Santayana conflated 'the fall' with a continuing creation:

The universe is the true Adam, the creation the true fall; and as we have never blamed our mythical first parent very much, in spite of the disproportionate consequences of his sin, because we felt that he was

but human and that we, in his place, might have sinned too, so we may easily forgive our real ancestor, whose connatural sin we are from moment to moment committing, since it is only the necessary rashness of venturing to be without fore-knowing the price or the fruits of existence.

— Santayana, *The Life of Reason*, Vol. 3, Chapter X

You forgive Adam's sin because you know that without venturing into existence, or Secondness, you would have nothing to know and nobody to know you. Because 'you' were thus left behind as a fragment lost in the cosmos, the mediator Thirdness comes to the rescue, as intimated by the *Bhagavad-Gita*:

They live in wisdom who see themselves in all and all in them.

— *Bhagavad-Gita* 2.55 (Easwaran)

In short, myth, science and philosophy agree that the world really is both inside and out. The subject and object of experience are two faces of a single coin, as it were, and not really separate, any more than mind and matter are separate. Peirce, in an 1892 article in the *Monist*, put it this way:

... it would be a mistake to conceive of the psychical and the physical aspects of matter as two aspects absolutely distinct. Viewing a thing from the outside, considering its relations of action and reaction with other things, it appears as matter. Viewing it from the inside, looking at its immediate character as feeling, it appears as consciousness.

— EP1:349

The title of Peirce's *Monist* article – lifted from *Measure for Measure*, II.ii.120, and quoted by Peirce below – is 'Man's Glassy Essence,' which brings us back to (or is it through?) the looking glass. The physical and psychical 'aspects' of a thing are in some sense mirror images of each other. Which side are you on? Both, or rather neither:

Inside and outside are inseparable. The world is wholly inside and I am wholly outside myself.

— Merleau-Ponty (1945, 474)

The world is inside in its Firstness, and you are outside in your Secondness; Thirdness as mediation, or semiosis, carries out the inside and turns the outside in:

whenever we think, we have present to the consciousness some feeling, image, conception, or other representation, which serves as a sign. But it follows from our own existence (which is proved by the occurrence of ignorance and error) that everything which is present to us is a phenomenal manifestation of ourselves. This does not prevent its being a phenomenon of something without us, just as a rainbow is at once a manifestation both of the sun and of the rain. When we think, then, we ourselves, as we are at that moment, appear as a sign.

— Peirce (EP1:38)

The way the self arrays itself is the form of the entire world.

— Dogen, 'Uji' (Tanahashi 2010, 105)

Or, with another flip of the coin, the world is the *substance* of the whole self. We recognize things as *parts* of the world to the extent that we are *partial* to them (because they play some part in our Umwelt). Before you can sort the universe into types, you have to divide it into parts; but 'immediate character as feeling' has no parts, as Peirce said above of the First. Nor does it have unity, since

Nothing can be sole or whole  
That has not been rent.

— Yeats, 'Crazy Jane Talks with the Bishop'

From this it would follow that whatever you 'view from the inside' cannot be a *particular* thing, cannot be a mere *part* of the universe – not if this 'view' is wholly immediate. Conversely, anything you can view from the outside can *only* be a part of the

universe, whether the thing has its own unity or not, simply because some *other* part of the universe is not included in it. Its very identity is determined by its 'relations of action and reaction with other things,' and its observer must also be among the others.

Peirce's 'viewing' is not merely visual, or even perceptual, nor do his 'inside' and 'outside' refer to relative placement in physical space. A system or thing 'contains' its inside not as a cup contains coffee, but as a whole contains its own parts. A part cannot view the whole from the outside, and any view it can have of the whole from inside can only be partial. Anything 'viewed' in its 'immediate character as feeling' cannot appear as a part, or as apart, and thus must be wholly one with the 'viewer.' Immediate *presence* is the heart from which the primal person speaks. Our ways of hearing and understanding primal speech might be called *intimologies*, if we may lift a term from the primal sleeptalking of *Finnegans Wake*:

Now listen to one aneather and liss them down and  
smoothen out your leaves of rose. The war is o'er.  
Wimwim wimwim! Was it Unity Moore or Estella  
Swifte or Varina Fay or Quarta Quaedam? Toemaas,  
mark oom for yor ounckel! Pigeys, hold op med yer leg!  
Who, but who (for second time of asking) was then the  
scourge of the parts about folkrich Lucalizod, it was  
wont to be asked, as, in ages behind of the Homo  
Capite Erectus, what price Peabody's money, or, to put  
it bluntly, whence is the herringtons' white cravat, as,  
in epochs more cainozoic, who struck Buckley, though  
nowadays as thentimes every schoolfilly of sevenscore  
moons or more who knows her intimologies and every  
colleen bawl aroof and every redflammelwaving  
warwife and widowpeace upon Dublin Wall for ever  
knows as yayas is yayas how it was Buckleyself (we  
need no bleeding paper to tell it neither) who struck  
and the Russian generals (da! da!) instead of Buckley  
who was caddishly struck by him when by herselfes.

— FW2, 80

Some would say that primal speech is incomprehensible, which may be true in a sense, or in a nonsense. Intimologies then are

ways of turning signs outside in.

## Wholes in our logic

The *immediate* character or Firstness of your consciousness, grounding as it does your entire experience of the world, must logically extend to the whole universe insofar as you could ever know it. The universes of discourse and of reality can only be *wholly* thus. Heraclitus put it this way:

οὐκ ἔμοῦ ἀλλὰ τοῦ λόγου ἀκούσαντας ὁμολογεῖν  
σοφὸν ἐστὶν ἔν πάντα εἶναι.

Listening not to me but to the *logos*, it is wise to agree  
that all things are one.

We might say that the universe is necessarily a whole because the wholeness of immediacy, or presence itself, precedes the ‘thinginess’ of any parts distinguishable within it. The presence being one, intimologies are homologies. What I am calling ‘one presence,’ Peirce called ‘the phenomenon’ at first, but then became dissatisfied with that term and created a new word for it, *phaneron*:

The word φανερόν is next to the simplest expression in Greek for *manifest*.... There can be no question that φανερός means primarily *brought to light, open to public expression throughout*.... I desire to have the privilege of creating an English word, *phaneron*, to denote whatever is throughout its entirety open to assured observation.

MS 337:4-5, 7, 1904 (De Tienne 1993, 280)

The *phaneron* includes everything we can talk about, and Peirce called the practice of inclusively talking about it *phaneroscopy*, defined in a 1905 lecture as follows:

Phaneroscopy is the description of the *phaneron*; and by the *phaneron* I mean the collective total of all that is in any way or in any sense present to the mind, quite

regardless of whether it corresponds to any real thing or not. If you ask present *when*, and to *whose* mind, I reply that I leave these questions unanswered, never having entertained a doubt that those features of the phaneron that I have found in my mind are present at all times and to all minds.

— CP 1.284

This is about as far as you can get from any specialist discourse. Peirce's point is not to deny that your experience may differ from his in some respects. The 'features' of which he speaks here are *generic*, and thus belong to any and every experience. In his *Minute Logic* of 1902, he proposed a triad of suggestive names for these generic 'features' or 'categories':

*Originality* is being such as that being is, regardless of aught else.

*Obsistence* (suggesting *obviate*, *object*, *obstinate*, *obstacle*, *insistence*, *resistance*, etc.) is that wherein secondness differs from firstness; or, is that element which taken in connection with Originality, makes one thing such as another compels it to be.

*Transuasion* (suggesting *translation*, *transaction*, *transfusion*, *transcendental*, etc.) is mediation, or the modification of firstness and secondness by thirdness, taken apart from the secondness and firstness; or, is being in creating Obsistence.

CP 2.89

But whatever we call them, we cannot doubt that *some* generic features are ever-present to every mind, because such a doubt would cut the common ground from under our feet. If you and I see things differently, the *logos* itself compels our belief that it's because we are looking at the same things from different angles, as it were.

With the *phaneron* or some part of it already 'present to the mind,' we can open up the question 'of whether it corresponds to any real thing or not.' Here begins the path of inquiry; and just as we are (doubtless) talking about the same *phaneron*, we all believe in a (single) reality quite beyond what anyone thinks of it. We also



believe that some of our statements can be *true*, regardless of whether we know or believe them to be true or not. As Peirce put it, 'Every man is fully satisfied that there is such a thing as truth, or he would not ask any question' (EP2:240). The fact that we have embarked on an inquiry demonstrates our belief in a reality beyond us, about which we may yet come to know something: all our statements about it 'have one Subject in common which we call the *Truth*' (EP2:173).

What is common to all who engage in genuine dialog is a triad of universes: what appears to us 'in here' (the *phaneron*) is one; reality 'out there' is one; and the *logos* mediating between them is a semiotic *universe*. If you *actually* 'entertain a doubt' of this universality – a real doubt, not a 'paper doubt' (as Peirce called it) – then lacking any logical standard or common system of reference, you can't believe that any of us knows what we are talking about. Now that would put a damper on the dialogue, wouldn't it?

And that's why, listening not to me or Peirce or Heraclitus but to the *logos*, it is wise to agree that all things are one. Though 'the many live as though they had a private understanding,' the primal person has no such illusion, and neither does the logician. As primal person, the *phaneron* is your 'original face' (to use a Buddhist term), and is neither here nor there.

Thus when Peirce speaks of 'viewing a thing from *the* inside,' he is not speaking of a view from inside the thing, or even from inside an individual person, for the latter indeed is 'only a negation':

The individual man, since his separate existence is  
manifested only by ignorance and error, so far as he is  
anything apart from his fellows, and from what he and  
they are to be, is only a negation. This is man,

proud man,  
Most ignorant of what he's most assured,  
His glassy essence.

— Peirce (EP1:55)

We live and move and have our being only in dialogue, in semiosis; that's what we view things from *the inside* of. On the other side of

the glass, looking at anything from the outside entails not being part of it, and that in turn entails mediation. Since nobody gets outside of semiosis to see what it looks like as a whole, we make a model of it, in the hope that it will guide us well enough to make it better. But now we're getting a few chapters ahead of the story, and we ought to finish this one first ...

Neuropsychology tells us that a human brain constantly monitors its body, or certain aspects of its functioning, and *some* aspects of the body-map thus generated are accessible to consciousness, letting us know what it feels like to be that body. This *phenomenal self-model*, as Thomas Metzinger (2003) calls it, is quite different from the 'immediate character' which 'appears as consciousness' in Peirce's 'view from within' as described above. The *PSM* is thus called because it appears to you as your *self*, while a third-person (theoretical) view would see it as an internal *model* of your own body. This "self," being a function of your brain, is physically located inside your body; but unlike your view of the external world (which is also a brain function), it also *feels* like the inside of your body. And that's not all: since your brain can monitor some of its own activity, you can even feel your *selfhood* from the inside, not just as a living body but also as a subject perceiving some object or other. Following the tradition which refers to the subject-object relation as 'intentionality,' Metzinger calls this a *phenomenal model of the intentionality relation*, or PMIR for short (2003, 411). This enables you to be conscious of yourself as conscious, thus taking a 'first-person perspective.' But this 'first person' is only one face, and not the 'original face,' of the *primal* person.

Humans, then, practice a special kind of self-observation – but a truly external observer, viewing this whole process from the outside, would distinguish between the observing self (which is the whole system) and the 'self' observed (which is a model within the system, a subprocess whose function is to appear as a phenomenon within the phenomenal world). It seems likely that this rare ability could only evolve in social animals. Conscious subjectivity almost certainly develops in tandem with second-person intersubjectivity: the possibility of 'having' a conscious self arises with recognition of others as subjects of experience (i.e. with implicit modeling of others as selves). This is the developmental aspect of logic being

‘rooted in the social principle,’ as Peirce put it (recall Chapter 2). Since all of this applies as well to language, the grammatical ‘first person’ would seem inseparable from the cognitive first-person perspective. If so, then the system’s ‘view’ of itself ‘from the inside’ does not really appear to the system *as consciousness* until it has incorporated enough of the ‘view from outside’ to distinguish between the world and its consciousness *of* the world, and thus to include self-consciousness within phenomenal consciousness (i.e. within the presence of the *phaneron*).

On the other hand, you might well ask how a body can recognize others as other *selves* (and thus have a social life) without first recognizing *oneself* as a self ... and round we go again.

If all this appears needlessly complex, that’s because it’s an attempt to explain in logical and scientific terms why the deceptively simple language of the primal person – of scripture and revelation, or *turning words* – must often appear obscure to common sense: because the first-, second- and third-person perspectives are *all* extraneous to the primal person’s point of view, which only dons the mask of personality in order to furnish that primal point with a tongue.

Most ignorant of what we’re most assured, we collide and collude with the limits of language at every turn. Every whole-body reading of the word or of the world, every act of cognition or perception, is a flash of light-and-darkness or birth-and-death. This was already intimated in Chapter 2 with a quotation from Dogen’s *Genjokoan*, and here it is again in an alternate translation:

When you see forms or hear sounds, fully engaging body-and-mind, you intuit dharma intimately. Unlike things and their reflections in the mirror, and unlike the moon and its reflection in the water, when one side is illumined, the other side is dark.

(Tanahashi 2010, 30)