

REALITY, CONSCIOUSNESS, AND ART

by

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ABSTRACT

From childhood I have believed that reality is greater than the world we experience through our five senses – that our universe is bordered by unseen dimensions in which other forms of consciousness exist. When I was in my early twenties, I began a decades-long quest to understand human reality: Who are we, where do we fit in the scheme of things, why do we exist? In my thesis, I approach what I have learned from three directions: quantum physics, religion, and psychology. I show how these interconnected bodies of knowledge have inspired and guided my artwork, and how my quest to understand reality has drawn me to the work of visionary, surrealist, and symbolist artists. Finally, I describe the unconscious processes I use to design artworks.

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THE JOURNEY HERE

For as long as I can remember, I have felt the presence of divine beings – angels. As a child I saw them as tiny points of brilliant light in the air above me. I felt their enfolding love. I sensed the rightness and perfection of their reality. Even though my parents were nonbelievers, I have always known that God exists.



Figures 1 and 2. Two paintings by Robert Venosa (American, 1936–2011), one of the visionary artists whose works have served as background music for my life. Left: *Angel Head II* (18 x 28 cm), 1986. Right: *Parasamgate* (55 x 75 cm), 1975. Both are from Venosa’s book *Noospheres*.¹

¹ Robert Venosa, *Noospheres: The Paintings of Robert Venosa* (Petaluma, CA: Pomegranate Artbooks, 1991). According to Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, who is quoted on the dustjacket, a noosphere is “a layer of thought that hovers above nature and acts as a universal consciousness.” To create his luminous portraits of light beings, Venosa applied thin oil glazes over a detailed casein underpainting. The technique is a variation of the van Eyck brothers’ *Mischtechnik*, which uses egg tempera for the underpainting. Mati Klarwein (page 25) used the same technique.

For as long as I can remember, I have had the ability to call into my mind things that are hidden. I don't think of it as a psychic ability. If I can ask the right question, if I'm willing to accept, or at least consider, whatever answer may come, something meaningful, profound, and amazing will make itself known to me: Ask and it will be answered, seek and you will find. When I was in my twenties and thirties I used this method to unravel the meaning and purpose of life. Today, it's how I approach painting.

Several decades ago, during a long thought experiment in which I tried to discover the mechanisms by which consciousness evolves, I had an epiphany: *Everything* is consciousness, even inanimate objects like rocks. I saw that, beneath all matter, there is mind – a generative matrix of thought energy that is itself part of an interconnected, multilayered, infinitely creative, conscious Whole. It seemed like a crazy idea at the time. Today, it's cutting-edge science.



Figure 3. Bill Martin (American, 1943–2008), *Rock* (oil on canvas, 24 in diameter), 1972. This image is in *Visions*,² the book that introduced me to visionary art.

² Walter Hopps (Introduction), *Visions* (Corte Madera, CA: Pomegranate Publications, 1977).

THE NATURE OF MATTER

For physicists, the wild ride to the theory that all matter is a projection of consciousness began in the 1920s, when the modern version of the double-slit experiment³ was first performed. In this experiment, a beam of electrons is fired at a metal or crystal plate with two vertical slits. By opening and closing the slits, the experimenter decides whether the electrons will pass through one or both narrow openings before hitting a screen. When one slit is open, the fired electrons create the scatter pattern of bombarding particles (*of matter*) on the screen. When both slits are open, the electrons do not create two scatter patterns, as one would expect, but rather a pattern that is only produced when the peaks and troughs of waves (*of energy*) interfere with one another. Weirder still, if just one electron is shot through a slit, and both slits are open, the wave pattern will appear – even though that pattern requires two interacting sources of energy to create. As physicist and science writer Brian Greene explains, “Regardless of which slit it passes through, each individual electron somehow ‘knows’ about both.”⁴

The probability that a given electron will appear on the screen at position X or Y or Z “collapses” to a single location when, and only when, the experimenter observes or measures it.⁵ Until then, the electron’s position can only be described in terms of probabilities⁶ – it is not anywhere. Werner Heisenberg, a Nobel-Prize-winning quantum physicist, explained the double-

³ The double-slit experiment is described in greater detail in Joseph Selbie, *The Physics of God: Unifying Quantum Physics, Consciousness, M-Theory, Heaven, Neuroscience and Transcendence* (Wayne, NJ: Career Press, 2018), 24-29.

⁴ Brian Greene, *The Hidden Reality: Parallel Universes and the Deep Laws of the Cosmos* (New York: Vintage Books, 2011), 223.

⁵ This is called “the observer effect.”

⁶ The distribution of probabilities that describe a particle’s possible locations is known as a “wave function.”

slit results like this: “[A]toms or elementary particles themselves are not real; they form a world of potentialities or possibilities rather than one of things or facts.” Eugene Wigner, also a Nobel-Prize-winning physicist, concluded that “It was not possible to formulate the laws of quantum mechanics in a fully consistent way without reference to the consciousness.” As cosmologist Martin Rees put it, “The universe exists because we are aware of it.” Albert Einstein was never able to accept quantum physics, saying “I like to think the moon is there even if I am not looking at it.”⁷ The double-slit experiment has been performed countless times and always with the same result. The implications were mind-bending.

For physicists who refuse to believe that the universe is a projection of their own consciousnesses, or, worse still, that it is the ongoing creation of a cosmic consciousness (i.e., God), a favored explanation has been the Many Worlds Interpretation.⁸ It posits that every quantum-level event causes the universe to split into two or more universes, one for each of the event’s possible outcomes.⁹ The duplications give rise to an unimaginably large and exponentially expanding number of parallel universes. This is the popularized scenario in which every binary decision you make gives rise to two yous in two universes, one in which you have selected option A and the other in which you have gone with option B. The Many Worlds Interpretation allows consciousness to create a universe that has no significance or purpose. That it is a ridiculous proposition on its face shows, I think, the lengths to which some physicists will go to preserve their faith in the randomness and meaninglessness of reality.

⁷ These quotes are from the Quantum Enigma webpage, “Notable Quotes on Quantum Physics” (<https://quantumenigma.com/nutshell/notable-quotes-on-quantum-physics/>).

⁸ Jude Currivan, *The Cosmic Hologram: In-formation at the Center of Creation* (Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions, 2017), 16.

⁹ For a fuller description of the Many Worlds Interpretation, see Greene, *The Hidden Reality*, 240-271.



Figures 4 and 5. Two works on the theme of creating your own reality. Left: Pamela Brooks, *Dani creating her own reality at Falling Spring* (oil on panel, 26 x 21¼ in), 2020. Right: Pamela Brooks, *Magician* (bitmap), 2020.

It has been shown, mathematically and experimentally, that quantum particles exist outside of space and time. This attribute, known as “nonlocality,” is demonstrated when two particles that share a quantum state¹⁰ behave as if they are one entity: When one particle changes, the other instantaneously changes as well, regardless of the distance between them.¹¹ In the physical universe, nothing can travel faster than the speed of light, yet the information that the “entangled” particles share does.

Unavoidable conclusion: At the quantum level, everything that is made of matter, including our brains, is also made of energy waves that are unconstrained by the laws that govern

¹⁰ “Quantum state” refers to the probability distributions of a particle’s measurable properties.

¹¹ Currivan, *The Cosmic Hologram*, 52.

space and time.¹² To conclude, then, that paranormal phenomena – telepathy, precognition, mediumism, divination, revelation, et cetera – can’t be real is to ignore science. In fact, quantum mechanics makes the acquisition of information by paranormal means entirely plausible.



Figure 6. Salvador Dalí (Spanish, 1904–1989), *Soft Watch Exploding in 888 Particles after 20 Years of Total Immobility* (oil on canvas, 20.5 x 25.7 cm), c. 1954. Dalí expanded my understanding of what art can convey.

About time: At the quantum level, information travels instantaneously because time doesn’t exist without matter. Time is a consequence of entropy – the inexorable decay, deterioration, and disorganization of material things, including our bodies, buildings and machines, along with mountains, stars, and galaxies.¹³ Because matter can only evolve in one direction – toward ever-more disordered states – entropy has been called “the arrow of time.

¹² Obviously, quantum mechanics is at odds with Einstein’s theory of general relativity. As theoretical physicist David Bohm explained, “relativity requires strict continuity, strict causality and strict locality in the order of the movements of particles and fields. And . . . quantum mechanics implies the opposite.” D. Bohm and B. J. Hiley, *The Undivided Universe: An Ontological Interpretation of Quantum Theory* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), 351.

¹³ The second law of thermodynamics describes entropy in terms of heat transfer and loss of energy. Applied to information transmission, the wave-function equivalent of heat transfer,



Figures 7 and 8. Two versions of *Event horizon*. Left: Pamela Brooks, *Event horizon* (acrylic on panel, 30 x 24 in), 2020. Right: Pamela Brooks, *Event horizon* (digitally colored bitmap), 2019. People who have had near-death experiences report moving at tremendous speed through a tunnel toward a brilliant and loving light. Is this analogous to what happens in a black hole? Does the physical universe have entry and exit points?

In a black hole, particles become unimaginably compressed as they “plummet” toward the hole’s singularity, a point in space-time where the laws of classical physics break down. At this point, according to general relativity, matter’s density and gravity reach infinity. But not everything that enters a black hole is squeezed into unbounded eternity. Working independently, physicists Stephen Hawking and Jacob Bekenstein showed that the quantum states of the matter

entropy decrees that information can only increase in complexity. The mathematics of the entropy of information could turn out to be the key to reconciling quantum mechanics with general relativity. See Currivan, *The Cosmic Hologram*, 37. Brian Greene’s book, *Until the End of Time: Mind, Matter, and Our Search for Meaning in an Evolving Universe* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2020) considers how entropy in the sense of ever-increasing disorder will help to decide our universe’s fate.

“sucked into” a black hole remain fully encoded, not inside the event horizon, but on its surface. The finding suggests that the universe may be a hologram – a flat “film” that encodes our three-dimensional universe and from which everything our five senses can detect of it is projected.¹⁴



Figure 9. A digital work examining the relationship between consciousness and the universe by an unknown artist.¹⁵ Today, some of the most exciting visionary art is digital and being shared online by people around the world.

¹⁴ For more information on a theory of reality that’s receiving increasing attention and support – and one that’s consistent with my own view of reality – see Jacob D. Bekenstein, “Information in the Holographic Universe,” *Scientific American* 289, no. 2 (August 2003): 58-65.

¹⁵ This image is posted at <https://co.pinterest.com/pin/67976275596150241/> as well as on many other Internet sites. I downloaded it on February 20, 2021.

THE SEARCH FOR THE UNIVERSAL MIND

The spiritual implications of the laws that govern subatomic particles were not lost on the physicists who discovered them. Max Planck, the originator of quantum theory, concluded that “a conscious and intelligent mind . . . is the matrix of all matter.”¹⁶ Niels Bohr and Erwin Schrödinger, the founders of quantum physics, both read the Vedas.¹⁷ Bohr, who discovered the structure of atoms, turned to these ancient Hindu texts when he sought answers to questions. Schrödinger, who formulated the equation for the wave function (the evolving “cloud” of probabilities that describe an electron’s location), believed that “all things are Maya” (illusion), a basic concept in Hindu philosophy. In the 1970s, a group of young physicists met regularly in the Berkeley, California hills to study the spiritual implications of quantum physics.¹⁸ One of them, Fritjof Capra, recorded this presumably drug-induced vision of the quantum universe: “I ‘saw’ cascades of energy coming down from outer space, in which particles were created and destroyed in rhythmic pulses; I ‘saw’ the atoms of the elements and those of my body participating in this cosmic dance of energy; I felt its rhythm and I ‘heard’ its sound, and at that moment I *knew* that this was the Dance of Shiva, the Lord of Dancers worshipped by Hindus.”¹⁹

¹⁶ The quote is from a speech that Max Planck gave in 1944 in Florence, Italy entitled “Das Wesen der Materie” (The Nature of Matter). Archiv zur Geschichte der Max-Planck-Gesellschaft, Abt. Va, Rep. 11 Planck, Nr. 1797.

¹⁷ Viraj Kulkarni, “What Erwin Schrödinger Said About the Upanishads,” *The Wire Science* (May 9, 2020), <https://science.thewire.in/the-sciences/erwin-schrodinger-quantum-mechanics-philosophy-of-physics-upanishads/>. The Vedas originated in the Indus Valley in the late Bronze Age and early Iron Age.

¹⁸ David Kaiser, “How the Hippies Saved Physics: Curious Contributions to Quantum Theory,” NPR, June 30, 2011, <https://www.npr.org/sections/13.7/2011/06/30/137378233/how-the-hippies-saved-physics-curious-contributions-to-quantum-theory>.

¹⁹ Fritjof Capra, *The Tao of Physics: An Exploration of the Parallels Between Modern Physics and Eastern Mysticism* (Boulder, CO: Shambhala Publications, Inc., 2010), 11.



Figure 10. Pamela Brooks, *Sun* (colored inks screen-printed on paper, 26 x 18 in), 2019. Shapes that exhibit the golden ratio, like this golden spiral, are associated with the divine.

The quest to perceive the unseen forces that create, surround, and control us spans the whole of human history. Quantum physics and the Vedas are just two of the paths to hidden truths that human beings have taken. Many millennia before, when our ancestors acquired language and began to think abstractly, they also posed the eternal questions – who are we, how did we come to be, what is our place in the scheme of things? The questions are implied in what they left behind, especially their art. Recently, I have been deeply curious about how these long-dead people, whose DNA is in my cells, conceived of reality. I inherited their intellectual

capacity and their ability to seek and find answers within myself, so I'm willing to consider their viewpoint.

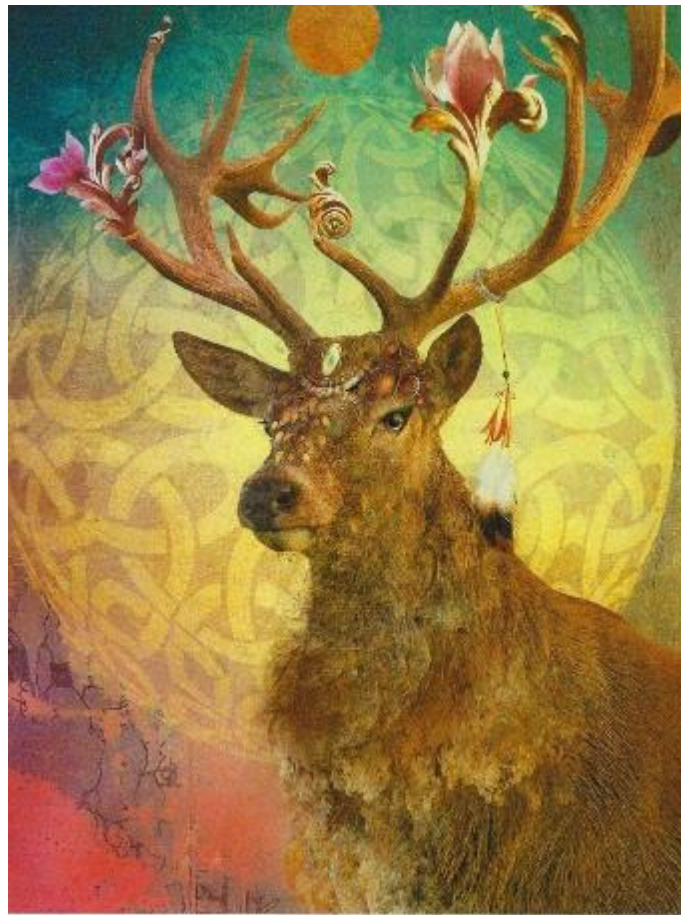


Figure 11. *Magnificent Stag* birthday card (7¼ x 5½ in.) by digital artist Jena DellaGrottaglia. Her New Age subjects range from spirit animals and shamans to goddesses and crystals. Art that envisages the beliefs of shamanistic societies is popular today.

When Cro-Magnon people entered Europe some 40,000 or 45,000 years ago, they began to create art – figurines and other sculpted objects and paintings on cave walls and rock outcrops. The art reveals a practice of entering an unseen dimension by inducing an altered state of consciousness.²⁰ The art also identifies the dimension's location relative to the earth plane as well as its inhabitants. Consider the evidence:

²⁰ For millennia people have used drumming, chanting, the acoustical properties of chambers and stones, dancing, sensory deprivation, and hallucinogenic substances to achieve trance states.



Figures 12 and 13. Cro-Magnon representations of lions. Left: *Lion Man*, mammoth ivory, 31.1 cm high, c. 38,000 BC, Ulmer Museum. Right: *Panel of the Lions* (detail), Chauvet Cave, France, c. 36,000 BC. Cro-Magnon artists painted a variety of large and mainly dangerous animals on cave walls – primarily bison, horses, aurochs (an extinct cattle species), deer, and cave lions. Mammoths, wholly rhinos, ibex, musk oxen, and reindeer appear less frequently.

Exhibit 1. *Lion Man*, an ivory figurine that was found at the back of a cave in Germany. It has been radiocarbon dated to 40,000 years ago and is the oldest known Cro-Magnon artwork. With the body of a man and the head of a lion, it appears to portray a shaman who has induced a trance state and taken on the spirit of a cave lion. Perhaps *Lion Man's* possessor believed that the spirit world in the cave was dangerous, at least for humans, and that he needed the protection of a powerful spirit animal.²¹

²¹ Some archeologists believe that ancient shamans may have used statuettes like *Lion Man* to protect them from the dangers associated with entering a trance state. David Lewis-Williams, *The Mind in the Cave: Consciousness and the Origins of Art* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2002), 202.

Exhibit 2. Pitch-black caves full of superimposed images of large, active Ice Age mammals. To the people who entered, the caves would have seemed like more than a metaphor for a spirit underworld of animal energies. There are no human faces or figures with human heads – the caves were not human territory. People would have entered this frightening lower realm only to affect the behavior of the animals they killed.²²

Do animal spirits inhabit a lower-frequency energy dimension?²³ Maybe.



Figure 14. Pamela Brooks, *Liminal crow* (oil on linen, 36 x 21 in), 2018. A young woman is connecting with her nonmaterial self in a bird's eye. Liminal refers to the boundary between sleeping and waking.

²² The failure to perform rituals to appease or restore the spirits of hunted animals may have been viewed as inviting starvation or animal attack.

²³ Cro-Magnon people may have thought of the cave wall as a membrane between the human realm and a lower realm of animal spirits. The paintings overlay and incorporate natural features in the rock that could have suggested an animal's presence. Ibid, 210, 211, 217, 220, 253.

The idea that reality consists of levels of seen and unseen dimensions is ancient and widespread. The Indo-European peoples who began migrating into western Europe about 4,500 years ago from the Russian steppes, and who replaced the hunter-gatherers, believed in a three-tiered cosmos – sky (the home of the gods), earth (our world), and a subterranean or underwater region (the abode of dead ancestors and evil spirits). The Celts, an Indo-European group that moved into Italy, France, and Britain, changed this model: The underworld became the Otherworld, a place of incredible beauty inhabited by immortal beings, including “fairies.”²⁴



Figure 15. Pamela Brooks, *Otherworld encounter* (oil on canvas, 30 x 25 in), 2018.

²⁴ Besides “fairies,” a few gods and other types of invisible beings, some evil, were thought to live in the Otherworld. The heavens remained the abode of gods who did not involve themselves in the lives of people. W. Y. Evans-Wentz, *The Fairy-Faith in Celtic Countries* (Pantianos Classics, 1911), 124. Also see Sharon Paice MacLeod, *Celtic Cosmology and the Otherworld: Mythic Origins, Sovereignty and Liminality* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2018), 31.

For the Celts, the world was a liminal place, full of unseen entities and supernatural forces – the spirits of animals, trees, springs, rivers, rocks, and mountains, as well as shape-shifting immortals who could bestow gifts on human beings, sicken or destroy them, and even draw them into their domain for marriage or sexual relations.²⁵ The thin boundary between the visible and the invisible could be breached in “edgy” places – marshes, islands, caves, lakes and rivers, rapids, and when the seasons changed and sacrifices were made.²⁶



Figures 16 and 17. Parts of two Iron Age Celtic shields. Left: The Wandsworth shield boss (copper alloy with repoussé decoration in the form of stylized bird-heads, 32.8 to 33.3 cm diameter), 350 – 150 BC, British Museum. Right: Battersea shield detail (bronze with repoussé and red glass decoration suggesting a bird’s head), c. 350 – 50 BC, British Museum. The design on the Wandsworth shield boss alternates between plant and animal forms. In the Battersea shield, pareidolia (the phenomenon of seeing faces in objects) makes the bird’s head emerge from the curving repoussé lines and circles of red glass. The shifts and ambiguities of Celtic design reflect, I think, the Celt’s view of reality. Both shields were found in the River Thames, which indicates that they were offerings to the underwater realm (i.e., the Otherworld).²⁷

²⁵ Edward Anwyl, *Celtic Religion in Pre Christian Times*, ed. Carl Marwick (2017), 24, 44.

²⁶ Miranda and Stephen Aldhouse-Green, *The Quest for the Shaman: Shape-Shifters, Sorcerers and Spirit-Healers of Ancient Europe* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2005), 14.

²⁷ MacCleod, *Celtic Cosmology and the Otherworld*, 15.



Figures 18 and 19. Two nature spirits, one inspired by an uprooted tree and the other by a frozen waterfall.²⁸ Left: Pamela Brooks, *Dryad* (watercolor on paper, 20 x 14 in), 2020. Right: Pamela Brooks, *Frozen* (blue-black ink screen-printed on paper, 30 x 20 in), 2020.

According to Roman historians, the Celts believed in reincarnation – the passage of the soul from one body into another.²⁹ Celtic warriors, some of whom sacked Rome in the 4th century BC, were said to be willing to die in battle because they believed they would live again. The pre-Christian Celts themselves never committed their religious beliefs to writing, so we are left to infer them from the legends, sagas, and poems that were recorded in subsequent centuries

²⁸ I often see human or animal shapes when I look at a tree, stream, rocky cliff, or even a flower so intently that I lose myself. To me, these mental images suggest overlapping dimensions.

²⁹ Sharon Paice MacLeod, *Celtic Myth and Religion: A Study of Traditional Belief, with Newly Translated Prayers, Poems and Songs* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2012), 23. Also see Evans-Wentz, *The Fairy-Faith in Celtic Countries*, 135.

by Irish and Welsh monks. In a couple of these stories, a shape-shifting man lives as a series of animals and people, becoming extremely ancient in the process.³⁰ There are also stories of immortals who have descended to earth and lived as human beings on more than one occasion.³¹ In *Apple tree* and *Green Man*, below, I tried to look at cyclical death and rebirth through my Celtic ancestors' eyes.



Figure 20. Pamela Brooks, *Apple tree* (oil on linen, 36 x 30 in), 2019. In Celtic stories, apples or apple tree branches enabled a human being to enter the Otherworld without dying, or to exit it after death by being born again.³² The apple tree therefore symbolized youth, immortality, and rebirth.

³⁰ MacLeod, *Celtic Cosmology and the Otherworld*, 41-42.

³¹ Evans-Wentz, *The Fairy-Faith in Celtic Countries*, 135.

³² Ibid, 125. Also see MacLeod, *Celtic Cosmology and the Otherworld*, 30.



Figure 21. Pamela Brooks, *Green Man* (oil on linen, 40 x 40 in), 2020. Many cultures in the ancient world had vegetation deities. Carved on walls or portrayed in mosaics, Green Man is a face seen in, or surrounded by, foliage, sometimes with vines or branches emerging from his mouth or nostrils.³³ He is thought to symbolize the cyclical renewal of the earth in spring and, more generally, rebirth. In my portrayal, Green Man is an oak, a sacred tree in Celtic mythology associated with the druids, the Celt's shamanistic spiritual leaders. The Celt's veneration of trees may have originated with the World Tree, or Tree of Life. In Indo-European religions, the World Tree is the vertical center of the cosmos.³⁴

For me, and probably for most artists, the act of painting is a form of meditation. It differs from other types of meditation in that it produces visual feedback that affects focus: What I see on the canvas or paper shows me where my inner vision is unclear, and consequently where I need to look next. Painting subjects from Celtic mythology makes me feel as if I am

³³ The first known representation of Green Man is a sculpture on a mud-brick wall in Hatra, a city in present-day Iraq that dates to the 2nd century BC. In Celtic countries, Green Man sculptures decorate the facades of medieval churches.

³⁴ MacLeod, *Celtic Myth and Religion*, 66-67. Also see MacLeod, *Celtic Cosmology and the Otherworld*, 25.

bringing a hidden but strangely recognizable reality into the light, or at least giving viewers, of whom I am one, a glimpse of it.



Figure 22. Pamela Brooks, *Myth* (oil on panel, 20 x 20 in), 2020. The inference is that the moon, lilies, and vines have symbolic meanings that would, if penetrated, unlock a hidden truth about the nature of reality. Symbols are cultural; the truth about human reality – what we are and where we fit in the scheme of things – is universal and concealed.

Here is Carl Jung on the topic of myth:

[T]he primordial experience is . . . so dark and amorphous that it requires the related mythological imagery to give it form. In itself it is wordless and imageless, for it is a vision seen “as in a glass, darkly.” It is nothing but a tremendous intuition striving for expression. . . . Since the expression can never match the richness of the vision and can never exhaust its possibilities, the poet must have at this disposal a huge store of material if he is to communicate even a fraction of what he has glimpsed, and must make use of difficult and contradictory images in order to express the strange paradoxes of his vision.³⁵

Primitive man is not much interested in objective explanations of the obvious, but he has an imperative need – or, rather, his unconscious psyche has an irresistible urge – to assimilate all outer sense experiences to inner, psychic events.³⁶

³⁵ C. G. Jung, *Collected Works of C. G. Jung, Volume 15: Spirit in Man, Art, And Literature*, ed. Sir Herbert Read et al. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1971), 128, paragraph 151.

³⁶ C. G. Jung, *Collected Works of C. G. Jung, Volume 9, Part 1*, ed. Michael Fordham et al. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977), 23, paragraph 7.

THE EVOLUTION OF CONSCIOUSNESS

For me, a lifetime is, first and foremost, an opportunity for intellectual, emotional, and spiritual growth. That's why we are here – to become ever wiser, more loving and accomplished people, and, ultimately, to attain the next level of consciousness. Jung called this the individuation process, the ultimate goal of which is wholeness, which he defined as the integration of the conscious and unconscious parts of the psyche.³⁷ Jesus referred to the next level of consciousness as “the kingdom of heaven” and compared it to a “treasure hidden in a field” and “a pearl of great price.” In the Gospel of Thomas,³⁸ he tells us where to look for the kingdom of heaven:

If your leaders say to you, “Behold, the kingdom is in the sky,” then the birds in the sky will get there before you. If they say to you, “It is in the sea,” then the fish will get there before you. Rather, the kingdom is inside you and outside you. When you know yourselves, then you will be known, and will understand that you are children of the living Father. But if you do not know yourselves, then you live in poverty, and embody poverty. (Thomas 3)

If you bring forth what is within you, what you have will save you. If you do not have that within you, what you do not have within you will kill you. (Thomas 70)

The question is, what do we have inside of us that must be brought forth? The answer is given in the Parable of the Sower: A man throws seed on a path, on rocky ground, amongst thorns, and on good soil. Only the seed thrown on good soil grows to maturity. In the synoptic

³⁷ C. J. Jung, *Collected Works of C. G. Jung, Volume 8: Structure & Dynamics of the Psyche*, ed. Sir Herbert Read et al. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975), 399, paragraph 557.

³⁸ The Gospel of Thomas is a collection of sayings attributed to Jesus that is thought to predate at least three of the four Gospels of the New Testament. See, for example, John P. Meier, “The Parable of the Wheat and the Weeds (Matthew 13:24–30): Is Thomas’ Version (Logion 57) Independent?”, *Journal of Biblical Literature* 131, no. 4 (2012): 715-732. The verses quoted here are from *The Secret Teachings of Jesus: Four Gnostic Gospels*, trans. Marvin W. Meyer (New York: Vintage Books, 1986), 19 and 32.

Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke), Jesus tells the apostles that the seed represents his message about the kingdom of heaven and, more specifically, how people receive it in their hearts.³⁹ (The Gospel of Thomas also relates the Parable of the Sower, but without interpreting it.) Orthodox Christianity ties salvation to a belief in Jesus, the person who delivered the message. My own view, and probably the view of the early mystical Christians, is that the path to salvation is in the message itself – that we have within us the ability to seek, find, and know ourselves and, in the process, to discover our divine heritage. If we take that path, we will eventually attain spiritual (psychic) maturity and the next level of consciousness – i.e., the kingdom of heaven.



Figures 23 and 24. Left: Pamela Brooks, *Angel* (black and silver ink screen-printed on paper, 27 x 21 in), 2020. Right: Pamela Brooks, *Bifurcation* (black and silver ink screen-printed on paper, 26 x 20 in), 2020. I consider myself a Christian, albeit not an orthodox one. I do not believe that it is possible to achieve psychic maturity in one lifetime, or that non-believers are, by definition, lost and bound for hell.

³⁹ The Parable of the Sower is told in Matthew 13:1–23, Mark 4:1–20, and Luke 8:4–15.

As previously noted, the goal of the individuation process is the integration of the psyche, the conscious component of which is the ego, the part we refer to when we say “I.” In an adult, the unconscious components are (1) the shadow, which absorbs the thoughts and feelings that the ego has repressed; (2) the anima (in a man) or animus (in a woman), the personification of the qualities we associate with the opposite sex;⁴⁰ and (3) the Self, the psyche’s immortal nucleus.⁴¹



Figures 25 and 26. Two works that portray the relationship between the ego and her unconscious counterpart, the shadow. Left: Pamela Brooks, *Shadow sister* (oil on linen, 40 x 28 in), 2020. The shadow is the naked, unkempt figure in the hole. She is in this condition because her issues have been ignored. Right: Pamela Brooks, *Dual nature* (black and silver ink screen-printed on paper, 26 x 20½ in), 2020.

⁴⁰ The gender of the anima/animus may be determined by biology. Alexandre Beliaev, “Gay Men and the Anima Function,” last modified October 27, 2013, <https://www.cgjungpage.org/learn/articles/analytical-psychology/60-gay-men-and-the-anima-function>.

⁴¹ For Jung’s thoughts on the immortality of the Self, see C. G. Jung, *Collected Works, Volume 7: Two Essays on Analytical Psychology*, ed. Sir Herbert Read et al. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1972), 263, paragraph 303.

As the psyche's only conscious component,⁴² the ego has the task of functioning in the world. To do this, she (or he) needs a belief system that enables her make sense of her experiences. The shadow personality is the repository of the observations and reactions that the ego ignores, dismisses, or represses for the purpose of maintaining a useful (i.e., acceptably relevant and coherent) belief system.⁴³ Thus, the shadow's job is to balance the ego – by making her aware, through dreams and uneasy feelings, that the world is not entirely as she conceives it to be. When the ego-shadow relationship is healthy, the ego recognizes the shadow's perspective and adjusts her belief system to make it more reflective of reality.



Figures 27 and 28. My favorite symbolists. Left. Gustave Moreau, *The Apparition* (oil on canvas, 22 x 18.3 in), 1876-77, Fogg Art Museum. Moreau's signature subject was the anima – the feminine side of a man's psyche. Here, she is the lethal *femme fatale*, Salome. Right: Odilon Redon, *There Was Perhaps a First Vision Attempted in the Flower* (lithograph on light gray chine laid on white paper, 22.5 x 17.7 cm), 1883, Art Institute of Chicago. Redon often portrayed the Self as an eye. (Circles or spheres, as symbols of wholeness, represent the Self.)

⁴² The persona, the “mask” we show to the world, is a conscious personality that the ego manufactures and assumes.

⁴³ Jung did not describe the components of the psyche in terms of belief systems.

In her most dangerous aspect, the anima can lure a man into erotic fantasies that can destroy his life. A negative anima can also make a man reckless, touchy, verbally venomous, overly sentimental, or subject to domination by women. The anima's proper role is soul guide – she is the unconscious personality that conveys the Self's messages to the ego. The Self is the generative core of the psyche that, in a healthy person, directs his or her development. Like a seed, the Self contains within it, at its inception, the genetic blueprint for a mature human being. As Jung put it, “The Self is our life's goal, for it is the completest expression of that fateful combination we call individuality.”⁴⁴ The Self appears in dreams at turning points in a person's life, where it can assume many forms.⁴⁵



Figure 29. Pamela Brooks, *Blue Eve* (oil on canvas, 18 x 36 in), 2020. This painting portrays the total psyche of a young woman, based on my recollection of myself as a young woman.

⁴⁴ C. G. Jung, *Collected Works, Volume 7: Two Essays on Analytical Psychology*, 238.

⁴⁵ The Self may appear in dreams as a wise older person; as a divinity or a divinity's representative; as a circle, mandala, spiral, or round object; or as a supernatural child or animal. M.-L. von Franz, “The Process of Individuation,” in *Man and His Symbols*, ed. C. G. Jung and M.-L. von Franz (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1964), 196.

The individuation process has been described as the unfolding of the Self.⁴⁶ It occurs naturally and involuntarily.⁴⁷ Even so, the ego’s participation is required – she (or he) must receive the Self’s messages and acquiesce to its directives. Individuation entails two opposing operations: differentiation (the development of the parts of the psyche into distinct, fully realized personalities) and integration (the unification, ultimately, of those parts into a harmonious, self-aware whole). Every human being is destined to become a unique individual, his or her own person.⁴⁸ There is no one path to wholeness.



Figures 30 and 31. Two paintings by the visionary artist Mati Klarwein. Left: *Grain of Sand* (oil and tempera on canvas, 200 x 200 cm), 1963-65. Right: *Blessing* (oil and tempera on canvas, 50 x 50 cm), 1965. The *Grain of Sand* mandala is a classic representation of the psyche. The center circle is the nucleus of the Self and the four divisions symbolize the conscious realization of the psyche’s wholeness.⁴⁹ According to Klarwein, *Blessing* uses multicultural symbols (a Chinese angel, African hands, and a Jewish blessing) to portray the gateway to heaven.

⁴⁶ David T. Johnston, *Individuation and the Evolution of Consciousness: At the Turning Point and Jung’s Challenge* (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2017), xi.

⁴⁷ von Franz, “The Process of Individuation,” 161.

⁴⁸ Ibid, 164.

⁴⁹ Ibid, 161.

Jung's work as a practicing psychiatrist eventually led him to conclude that the *unus mundus* is real⁵⁰ – that our reality is underlain by an infinite matrix of consciousness that generates everything we experience, including matter. He based his conclusion, not on quantum physics, but on two phenomena he had observed again and again: archetypes⁵¹ and synchronicity.⁵²

It is at this point that Jung and Jesus intersect: Consciousness, the origin of everything, generates the blueprint for a human being that, if the plan is followed, grows to psychic maturity and then returns, with increased consciousness, to Consciousness. In Jung's words, "Through uniting with the Self, we reach God."⁵³

As the painting *Shadow sister* (Figure 25) shows, I found myself in a pit of depression after an extraordinary excursion into my unconscious that I won't relate. Doubts and fears that I had been repressing had to be faced. I noticed a book in my bookcase that I had bought some time ago but hadn't read – Jung's *Man and His Symbols*. I started reading it and, for the next

⁵⁰ Johnston, *Individuation and the Evolution of Consciousness*, 143. The *unus mundus* ("one world") idea originated in the Middle Ages and was popularized in the twentieth century by Jung.

⁵¹ Archetypes are primordial or prototypal ideas that exist in all cultures and time periods, and which therefore transcend space and time. They are inexpressible except through symbols. The central archetype is the Self, symbolized by the mandala – classically, a circle that is subdivided into quadrants, with a smaller circle in the center (see Figure 30). In addition to the components of the psyche, the archetypes that Jung identified include the Great Mother, the Hero, and the creation story. *Ibid*, i, 196. Also see von Franz, "The Process of Individuation," 213-17.

⁵² Synchronicity is the juxtaposition of meaningfully related events that are otherwise unconnected – i.e., uncanny coincidences. To illustrate, Jung described a psychotherapy session in which a scarab-type beetle tapped on the window just as his client, a young woman, was describing a dream she had had about a golden scarab. (Jung, *Collected Works, Volume 8*, 843.) The purpose of such "coincidences" is to guide or support a person's psychic growth. Johnston, *Individuation and the Evolution of Consciousness*, iv, 130, 133. Also see von Franz, "The Process of Individuation," 211.

⁵³ C. G. Jung, *The Red Book: Liber Novus*, ed. Sonu Shamdasani, trans. Mark Kyburz et al. (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2009), 338.

year, I analyzed my dreams. I do not doubt the validity of Jung’s concept of the psyche. But, because of a previous investigation into the evolution of consciousness, my viewpoint is different: I see the personalities that arise from the Self, particularly the ego and shadow, as belief systems – self-learning computer programs that emerge, develop, and potentially close.⁵⁴ Belief systems are not conscious. They are data structures. Consciousness requires an energy source – call it spirit. To be perceived, information must be reacted to – it must spark a response. The reaction is never only physical (a tightness in the gut or a warmth around the heart, for example). It is first and foremost a vibration in the organism’s energy field, or energy body, which is nonlocal – outside of space and time.

information + reaction = perception

What Jesus called the kingdom of heaven, and what Jung called the incarnation of the Self,⁵⁵ is the transcendence from the human level of consciousness, and its energy frequencies, to the next level of consciousness, a zone of spirit that might be called the angelic level of consciousness.

A note about the term, “evolution of consciousness.” I was surprised to learn while researching this paper that several books on the evolution of the brain that were written from a Darwinian perspective have “evolution of consciousness” in their titles.⁵⁶ Weirdly, proponents of the view that the brain is the seat of consciousness admit that neuroscientists have no idea how the brain produces it.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ A belief system closes when it becomes self-sustaining – when it can explain everything and thus becomes, from its own perspective, the absolute truth.

⁵⁵ Johnston, *Individuation and the Evolution of Consciousness*, 13-14.

⁵⁶ Psychologists Robert Ornstein and Euan Macphail have both written books on the evolution of the brain that have *Evolution of Consciousness* in their titles.

⁵⁷ See, for example, Lewis-Williams, *The Mind in the Cave*, 105.



Figure 32. Pamela Brooks, *Resurrection* (oil on linen, 42 x 36 in), 2020.

I paint for my own benefit – to work through my own thoughts and to understand my own emotions. What I hope other people will experience when they look at my work is what’s in their minds and hearts: I want the images to have meaning for them. If a viewer doesn’t connect with a painting, it’s all right with me – every person has his or her own path. And, in this materialistic culture, many people aren’t seeking enlightenment, or even to know themselves. I see my primary audience as seekers of a larger truth who are willing to think for themselves. I don’t paint for art connoisseurs. Even so, I do want my paintings to be technically competent and visually exciting.

MY PROCESS AND TECHNIQUE

I can't help wondering about things. When something I've observed seems both mysterious and important, I wonder about it. I don't need to understand right away. I know that, if I surrender my questions to my unconscious, understanding will eventually come, and that it will be worth the wait. Spontaneous visualizations, often from out of the blue, are how many of my paintings begin.



Figure 33. Pamela Books, *I dreamed a whale into being* (archival pigment print on fine art paper, 32 x 16 in), 2020. Art can result from the unconscious exploration of an idea.

Occasionally, a dream gives me an idea for a painting. Last year, I also began experimenting with doodling. *Warning* (Figure 34) was a doodle (Figure 35) that turned into a painting after I dreamed that my head was in a lion's mouth.



Figures 34 and 35. Left: Pamela Brooks, *Warning* (oil and silver leaf on panel, 48 x 32 in), 2020. Right: Pamela Brooks, *Warning* doodle (graphite on notepaper, 11 x 8 ½ in), 2019. In the doodle, I couldn't resolve the shapes above the lizard, so I let them remain ambiguous for the time being. (In my dreams, lizards represent doubts.) The dream that fleshed out the doodle was telling me that, if I acted on my desires (represented in the painting by the mice and the ram), it could prove disastrous.

As the *Warning* doodle shows, I may not know what a painting is about until the end of the design process. More often, though, I start with an idea and let the imagery work itself out over time, either unconsciously, through synchronic events, or in Photoshop. *I dreamed a whale into being* (Figure 33) is an example of the last approach. Rarely, I awaken with a mental image that

I don't necessarily understand but feel compelled to paint. The design process for *Liminal crow* (Figure 14) began when I woke up one morning "looking at" a bird's eye and thinking, "It's possible to contact another reality through a bird's eye." It made no sense, but I felt I had to turn the thought into a painting. (In dreams, verbal messages are often from the Self, so I tend to take them seriously.) Recently, it occurred to me that a high-flying bird can see what we on the earth do not: ourselves, as we appear from above. Is this painting about how we – how our thoughts, emotions, desires, and choices – might look to us if we were in a higher reality, a universe outside of space and time, at a higher level of consciousness?

Because of the way I work, coming up with an idea requires little conscious effort. On the other hand, coming up with a painting that I think is good can involve considerable work. The design must be refined. And it's important to me that some passages are drawn accurately – I want my images to seem like reality. While I paint, I'm focusing on the quality of the paint (its thickness and texture, the brushwork, the amount of blending, et cetera) and the aesthetics of the design (the lines, shapes, colors, and contrasts, and their relationships). The concept is usually in the background. My style has evolved out of my experiments with art materials, my aesthetic, and the guidance I have received from other artists, living and dead.



Figure 36. Marble sculptures designed by Phidias from the east pediment of the Parthenon, 5th century BC, British Museum. As a child, I spent many hours looking at Greek sculpture in the Book of Knowledge. It is the foundation of my aesthetic.



Figures 37 and 38. From a technical standpoint, the two painters who have influenced me the most are Rembrandt and John Singer Sargent. I copied these (and other) paintings to learn their techniques. Left: Rembrandt van Rijn, *Self-Portrait with Gorget* (oil on oak, 38.2 x 31 cm), c. 1629, Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg. Right: John Singer Sargent, *Lady Agnew of Lochnaw* (oil on canvas, 127 x 101 cm), 1892, Scottish National Gallery, Edinburgh.



Figures 39 and 40. I have studied the work of many living artists as well, particularly ones who have mastered the painterly style. The two who have influenced me the most are Richard Schmid (I have all his DVDs) and Jeremy Mann, whose experiments with paint application continue to inspire me. Left: Richard Schmid, *Nude* (oil on canvas, 18 x 24 in). Right: Jeremy Mann, *Violet Rosette* (oil on panel, 33 x 36 in), 2016.

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