

# Review of *The Passion of the Western Mind*

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*The Passion of the Western Mind: Understanding the Ideas That Have Shaped Our World View*, by Richard Tarnas (New York: Ballantine Books, 1991) 544 pages, notes, bibliography, index.

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We are perhaps not a little amazed that a book which explores the main philosophical and intellectual currents of Western man could not only be published but could even become a major best-seller. We were certainly surprised at the remarkable success of Allen Bloom's *The Closing of The American Mind*. After all, who today would have any interest in reading about Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas, Descartes, Kant, and so on? Professors in academies, maybe, but not the reading public.

Richard Tarnas, however, has not only produced a work which covers the principal thinkers and the effects of their ideas throughout Western history, but has done so with smashing success. For anyone who would be interested in what has gone on in Western history and who wishes to know something of what men in the past thought about themselves or their world and the way they have influenced the development of our civilization, Tarnas's accomplishment is bound to excite more than a little curiosity. Why should another book which discusses the role of Greek philosophers, medieval theologians, modern scientific pioneers, and, finally, contemporary existential and deconstructionist critical theorists awaken such widespread attention?

The reason is that Tarnas's book is *not* just another boring treatise on the who's who of our historical past, nor one more dry and stale dialogue on what *they* believed and why we either pay them no mind or present them as dead curiosities for the sake of minimal academic necessity. On the contrary, Tarnas writes with brilliance and style. He is a man whose mission is to help us see what accounted for the rise of Western civilization. That civilization is our civilization, and what earlier men believed has profoundly shaped our own thoughts and attitudes. More importantly, our civilization is, in Tarnas's view, in a deep crisis of confidence—indeed, our “postmodern” twentieth century may be witnessing the end of Western civilization. However, he wants us to understand that this is not the result of some outside influence, but is due to the “evolution” of the Western Mind itself. A crisis occurs because the Western mind has evolved to the point where it

views its own origins and development with utter contempt. Yet, the growth of that “mind” was inevitable given the starting point and assumptions upon which it was conceived. Hence, learning from the past does not mean a return to the past.

Tarnas hopes, however, to retrace our intellectual and philosophical heritage from the beginning so that he can explain why the Western Mind was bound to derail and end in the present crisis. At the same time he intends to demonstrate that new areas of development—feminism, environmentalism, native people primitivism, mother earth worship, and non-intellectualism—are providing new avenues for synthesis and reintegration and thus germinating the roots of a fruitful, coherent, and universal culture for all mankind.

Tarnas's book reads like a fascinating novel that builds to a powerful climax. Indeed, it is at the end that the issue of the work becomes plain. However, in typically modern secular fashion, it sees the Western mind as bound by an evolutionary process which must be followed from the start if one expects to understand the end result.

## **1. Greeks Bearing Gifts**

Everything in Western culture begins with the Greeks, of course. This has been the standard humanist interpretation since at least the time of the early nineteenth century Romantics. Both the Middle and Modern Ages were essentially built upon the Greek way of thinking and reflecting about the nature of reality. Greek philosophy, more than anything, has influenced Western ideas and inspired man in his search for truth, justice, the meaning of life and the nature of the cosmos. What gave the Greeks their preeminence at the dawn of Western history was their “sustained, highly diversified tendency to interpret the world in terms of archetypal principles”. At the core of their outlook “was a view of the cosmos as an ordered expression of certain primordial essences or transcendent first principles, variously conceived as Forms, Ideas, universals, changeless absolutes, immortal deities, divine *archai*, and archetypes.” (p. 3)

The Greeks, it is claimed and Tarnas avers, were the first to open the door of the mind or reason and thereby to lead man out of his primitive and superstitious dependence upon unknown and unknowable “gods” who seemed to provide the only explanation for the order men experienced despite the chaos that continually threatened them. In some ways this “dependence” provided a sense of relief given the brutal nature of life with its impermanence and constantly unpredictable variation—especially considering that death, warfare, disease, famine, and so forth, were ever present realities.

Ultimately, however, man's experience must be something more than complete flux and constant mutation. There must be something permanent behind it all, something in the nature of immutable essences that would give to man the basis of order and durability. Moreover, there is something too noble about man that must lead him to rise above all irrationality and chance. If there are gods, then in some sense they must be like man,

which means that man must be like them. He, too, has a “divine” quality, a means within himself to create order and stability and thereby to check the impulses of chaos and irrationality. He need not live in passive “dependence” upon the “gods”, for he is himself godlike—particularly in his mind or intellect. With this tool he can apprehend the permanent things—the archetypes—and thus construct a civilization to counteract the dark forces in nature that endanger his existence.

Now this “perspective's preeminent theoretician and apologist, whose thought would become the single most important foundation for the evolution of the Western mind” was Plato. Plato gave us the world of *transcendent Forms* and said that knowledge must consist of these “ideas” if it is to be true knowledge, eternal and beyond the shifting confusion of matter and the world of our immediate sense experience. The Forms provided the true reality behind appearances or the phenomena which were subject to change and transformation. The Forms were *being* while the things apprehended by the senses mere *becoming!* In the realm of ideas nothing changes, but all is changeless and eternal. They are the basis of all that exists, nature's formative causes and regulators. The gods are no longer needed, or rather the Forms themselves are divine.

The knowledge of this world of transcendent ideas is obtained by the mind abstracting from all that is material and sensual. The outcome implies that “reason” in man becomes an autonomous judge of what true reality is. The key factor in this Platonic conception, then, becomes the role of the intellect and the belief that reason is the ultimate source of truth and order. The further implication is that man possesses the equipment (in his mind) to create an ordered cultural existence and thus “save” himself from the tyranny of chaos and flux. For Plato, as for every Western humanist since, man's essential problem has been viewed as *epistemological*; i.e., as a problem of the “mind” in its relation to that about which the mind thinks. Knowledge, or rather the lack of it, leaves man at the mercy of unpredictable natural forces. Absolute knowledge means absolute certainty and mastery of man's world. The mind is the means to the empowerment of man.

Tarnas, who shares this basic humanist explanation, nevertheless sees this emphasis in Plato as the origin of a dualism that will plague, and eventually threaten, the very existence of Western civilization. By setting the mind in opposition to an objective reality and making the latter dependent upon an absolute comprehension and explanation by the former, Plato opened a chasm that would only grow wider throughout the course of Western history. Tarnas thinks that the West nurtured a monster in its bosom when it accorded such powers to “reason” as it stood opposite to inert and mute reality. Indeed, reason became the only reality. Man lost the sense of mystery and the feeling of oneness that ancient man experienced with the cosmos around him. However, while this story takes its beginnings with the Greeks, the worst was still to come.

## **2. In Touch With The Beyond**

There is more to Tarnas's depiction of the importance of the Greeks than just Plato.

Tarnas explains further how Aristotle made Plato's essential philosophy even more rationally respectable by removing the "Forms" from the entirely transcendent and immaterial realm and making them to be identifiable with, or immanent in, perceptible concrete objects. In this shift, Aristotle gave to physical nature an "indwelling impulse". Nature was a self-moving process of substance striving "to realize its inherent form". (p. 58) With Aristotle change was basic to reality, not an aberration. At the same time, Aristotle believed that change took place according to a built-in teleology of nature so that change was towards a goal or Form thus retaining permanence and order. Furthermore, no explanation was required for this movement of things other than this "indwelling impulse". With utter assurance Aristotle believed that, with the Forms now immanent within nature, they would be readily recognizable to the human intellect, that nature would be "intrinsically open to rational description" by which it could then be "cognitively organized". (p. 59)

Perhaps the most significant aspect of Aristotle's modification of Plato was his strong insistence that, since the Forms are immanent within nature, knowledge can only be achieved by beginning with *sense perception*. He then believed it would be possible for the mind to perceive the "formal patterns in the sensible world". (p. 59) Through the use of logical abstraction from sense perception such "patterns" would unfailingly show themselves to the mind of man. No knowledge was available, however, apart from first perceiving the object with the senses. Things that were not sensible in nature were outside cognition. Anything uncognizable was not real, did not have real existence.

In Tarnas's view this further development was necessary in order to discover how nature works, but, at the same time, drove a still wider wedge between the mind that thinks and the sensible world which has become merely an "object" of rational penetration leaving man with nothing but abstractions and dead realities. To approach nature purely for the sake of "logical" control has left man feeling empty and without a deeper sense of the mystery of all things.

Tarnas sees later Greek philosophy as in some ways an attempt to correct this one-sided development. In particular, in Neoplatonism "Greek rational philosophy reached its end point and passed over into another, more thoroughly religious spirit, a suprarational mysticism." (p. 84) Tarnas sees this trend in late Hellenistic thought as stemming from the interjection of a much needed corrective in the form of Oriental influences with their mystery religions which subordinated the human to "the overwhelming powers of the super-natural." (p. 87) It is here that Tarnas introduces the rise of Christianity and explains the impact of its outgrowth on the West. Christianity was essentially a Hellenistic mystery religion which became the preeminent religion of Western man in the Middle Ages largely because it provided a balance to the rationalistic impulse of Greek thought.

Tarnas views the rise of Christianity through the lenses of contemporary liberal theology. It was created by a small group of men centered around an ex-Jewish Pharisee named Paul who was greatly inspired by the moral teachings and the message of love of a certain

Jewish rabbi named Jesus. This Jesus, about whom we know nothing other than what the early Church conjured up concerning him, was in all likelihood a man who found the conviction to resist the dry orthodoxy and the external moralism that had all but taken over the Jewish culture of his day. The latter reduced religion to a formal set of prescriptions and requirements that did not grip the heart with the sense of the divine nor rise to *union* with the power of eternal love. The divine-in-man was thereby smothered in its search for a higher and permanent reality by the reduction of all of life to a casuistic performance. The early Church would break from its Jewish cocoon to present its “gospel” of “redemption” from the world “that was passing away” to a Greco-Latin world waiting to hear its simple message. At the same time, her message fostered a certain moral transformation that greatly influenced the formation of a specific type of community which banded together to encourage the members to withdraw from the world of transient things. Christianity looked for the permanent things—the archetypes—in the spiritual realm nearly to the entire exclusion of the material realm.

What Christianity brought to the West was not merely a reality for mental contemplation, but a new experience of God's love. The God of Christianity was not merely the end product of an intellectual process, but a personal Deity who had a direct interest in human affairs and a vital concern for each individual human soul. Christianity thereby encouraged an altruistic attitude, a self-denial for the sake of a greater good for humanity. Christian love was “epitomized in Christ, that expressed itself through sacrifice, suffering, and universal compassion”. (p. 117) The character of Western civilization was decisively shaped by these traits.

But Christianity had a dark side, one that derived from its Jewish background, namely, an emphasis on man as pervasively evil and that a deep alienation exists between man and God. God, here, is seen as a stern God of justice who ruthlessly punishes evil doers and damns the disobedient to endless pain and torment. This conception of Christianity influenced the formation of the Church as an instrument of Divine wrath and vengeance against heretics and unbelievers, who goaded the authorities to use sword and fire against all who refused submission to God's sacred institutional order. In the West, according to Tarnas (“a la liberalism”), “the Hellenic-inspired mystical philosophical union with the divine Logos, receded as explicit religious goals in favor of the more Judaic concept of strict obedience to the will of God—and, by extrapolation, obedience to the decisions of the Church hierarchy” gained ground as the basic ideal of Christian orthodoxy.

Still, Christianity had opened up new dimensions for human history by recognizing the possibilities of “human deification” (p. 129) through ascension to and participation in the Logos of God through the experience of transcending love. Tarnas sees Christianity for the importance it has for man, because it places a high value on humanity and exalts the personality of man as more than an instrument of reason for observing, analyzing and understanding the natural world. It saw man as more than a mere intellectual animal, but as a “spiritual” being capable of a higher experience with the transcendent.

However, the essential culture remained Greek and soon reasserted its claims with the

awakening of Scholasticism. Scholasticism was the attempt to combine the Christian emphasis upon spiritual union with the Logos with the Greek ideal of the primacy of the intellect. It accomplished this by distinguishing between things which pertained to "faith" and things which pertained to "knowledge". Aquinas, in particular, taught that man ought to achieve "knowledge" of created things because it is God-like to possess such a comprehension of the natural order, but one should also bring that "knowledge" to completion in the spiritual realm because man is more than a "natural" being, he is created to be like God who is pure spirit. Aquinas endeavored to maintain unity between both sides of man's nature. He sought to explain the order of reality as the expression of a hierarchy, starting from the highest spiritual entity God down to mere matter—and, as there was a continuous relationship from one end to the other in the realm of being so, too, in the realm of knowing. At the very least, Scholasticism re-awakened and greatly stimulated the long dormant interest of the Western mind in its insuppressible need to know and master the order of reality.

### **3. Degringolade**

With the arrival of the "Renaissance" the course of the Western mind seemed firmly set in its adherence to the Greek spirit of total rational mastery of the known world. After the long Middle Ages with its predominant monastic sense of withdrawal from this world and preoccupation with the next, the Renaissance shifted history's direction towards a new confidence in man and his god-like freedom, along with the belief in his inherent "genius" and creative powers, to comprehend the mysteries of nature. "Compared with his medieval predecessors, Renaissance man appeared to have suddenly vaulted into virtually superhuman status. Man was now capable of penetrating and reflecting nature's secrets, in art as well as science, with unparalleled mathematical sophistication, empirical precision, and numinous aesthetic power." (p. 224) Men defied all traditional authorities associated with Christianity and the Church and based truth and knowledge on the independent judgment of reason. (Tarnas does not see that the men of the Renaissance simply traded one form of religion for another. They rejected any authority that hinted of Christianity, but touted to the sky the "authority" of the Greeks and Romans. They were no more independent in their thinking than the medieval thinkers they claimed failed to be.) The great transformation contributed by the Renaissance was its new concept of man. He was not essentially evil, but good, and altogether capable of "creating" a world in which man could live in harmony with himself and nature.

To Tarnas the significance of the Renaissance is the stimulus it provided for the rise of modern science and how it shaped man's outlook on life. "The Scientific Revolution was both the final expression of the Renaissance and its definitive contribution to the modern world view." (p. 248) In turn this Scientific Revolution provoked a Philosophical Revolution which fatally affected the West and has led to the present crisis. In particular, it was Copernicus who, despite having succeeded in solving the ages long problem of the planets, most deserves to be credited with bringing this first "revolution" to its culmination. Based on the methods used by Copernicus Descartes will hypothesize a new

concept of reality along with a new idea of the self in its encounter with this reality. Many other actors will pass across the stage of this twofold drama, some even having more than minor parts to play, but these two will perform the leading roles.

Copernicus, while studying intensely the problem of the planets, radically altered man's perception of himself and his world in the total scheme of things. By hypothesizing a Sun-centered universe (Solar system as later revised) Copernicus not only was able to solve the problem but, at the same time, he dethroned the centrality of the earth (and man) in the purpose of the cosmos. The Christian idea of the creation of the earth and man, and their central importance in God's order suddenly looked like just one more myth. The universe did not revolve around the earth, rather the earth and other celestial bodies revolve around the Sun. The earth was not stationary, but it moved, and "if the earth truly moved, then no longer could it be the fixed center of God's Creation and his plan of salvation. Nor could man be the central focus of the cosmos." (p. 253) More importantly, Copernicus had discovered this new astronomical truth by means of mathematical deductions and empirical observations. "Revelation" from God was now not only not needed, but as in this case proved to lead only to myth and error. Man believed in the power of his own mind to comprehend *absolutely* all that previously was mysterious about the cosmos. He also conceived that the same powers were capable of discovering the true nature of all earthly reality as well, including how to create the best polity for man. The modern secular age had, after a long gestation period, finally arrived.

Descartes drew the natural inference from reflecting upon the relationship between the selfhood of man (in which resides the mind) and the objectivity of the world beyond. If the knowledge of the cosmos is made possible by the mind itself, by the application of the principles of deductive logic and not simply received in mere passive fashion, then how can we be certain that what the mind deduces about reality is anything more than chimerical? Maybe the mind does not truly know anything beyond its own thoughts! But Descartes was satisfied that he could prove that the mind could at least know itself without a doubt. That much was certain. About the objective world—well, Descartes simply believed that some deity must insure that it and the self would truly make contact if we were not to become totally disillusioned with the pursuit of knowledge. But the deity for Descartes was human reason itself, and this deity was truly infallible and incapable of deceiving man. Descartes made this "deity" the central starting-point for all knowledge and the central authority for human judgment on everything about which the mind could possibly think.

What both these men encouraged was a fundamental change in the concept of reality as well as what was knowable and how. From their starting-point men resolved that the "universe itself was not endowed with conscious intelligence or purpose; only man possessed such qualities. The rationally empowered capacity to manipulate impersonal forces and material objects in nature became the paradigm of the human relationship to the world." (p. 287) That transcendent dimension contributed so wonderfully by Christianity, which brought to fruition what was unique in the Hellenistic mystery religions, was jettisoned. Science replaced religion at the center of man's conscious

endeavors. (Here again, “science” was simply a “religious” substitute for Christianity) “The domains of religion and metaphysics became gradually compartmentalized, regarded as personal, subjective, speculative, and fundamentally distinct from public objective knowledge of the empirical world.” (p. 286) Man was left alone in a material universe which possessed no intrinsic meaning. It was not made for man and man could only feel at home if he rationally controlled nature around him. For some time man felt confident of himself and his ability to shape his world to his satisfaction. He expected that, as reason progressed, man would advance towards utopia. Man could “plan” history to suit his aspirations.

But the new vision of the universe as machine-like, “a self-contained mechanism of force and matter, devoid of goals or purpose, bereft of intelligence or consciousness”, soon gave rise to a new sense of alienation. Man, instead of being God's noble creation with a divine destiny, was nothing more than an animal, nature's experiment. Having lost any spiritual nobility, men came to feel impoverished and strangers in the cosmos. (pp. 326 & 327) The modern world began by attributing “divinity” to man, but ended up emptying him of all that was previously regarded as “human”. “The more modern man strove to control nature by understanding its principles, to free himself from nature's power, to separate himself from nature's necessity and rise above it, the more completely his science metaphysically submerged man into nature...into its mechanistic and impersonal character as well.” (p. 332) The crisis had arrived in full force—what Tarnas, mistakenly, defines as the “crisis of science”.

#### **4. Magical Mystery Tour**

The modern Enlightenment brought the crisis to a head. The “mind” which had become the sole arbiter of reality was left in epistemological difficulties. Because all was made to depend upon the mind's “perception” of the reality beyond itself, one could no longer be certain that the order which obtained in the mind was objectively inherent in nature. Moreover, the mind had no contact with any reality apart from sensory experience which by itself could not tell the mind if the reality beyond itself was truly there and intrinsically coherent or simply a jumble of chaotic impressions.

Kant, the last of the Enlightenment thinkers and first of the Romantics, came forward with his “Copernican” solution to this dilemma. Kant ended once and for all the notion that the mind in any sense was passive in the process of knowing. Rather, no “world”, no order exists unless first structured by the mind. What “science” knows is what the mind has made available from its own resources. The world outside corresponds not to sense data, but to principles within the mind itself. The mind does not conform to reality; reality conforms to the mind. (p. 346) Now this basic transformation in epistemology has become the cardinal truth of the modern age.

But Kant made this possible at a heavy price. He must forever detach the mind from anything other than what “appears” to the mind. If any intrinsic reality existed beyond the

mind, it was entirely unknown and unknowable. Kant set the mind of man once again at the center of the “cognitive universe”, while he denied the mind's contact with any “real” order.

The importance of this however, according to Tarnas, is that Kant established that science, or the rational dimension of things, was implicitly limited only to knowledge of appearances. Science, the approach to truth and knowledge initiated by the Greeks, “could no longer arrogantly claim knowledge over all reality, and precisely this allowed Kant to reconcile scientific determinism with religious belief and morality.” (p. 349) Romanticism would seize upon this Kantian conception as the basis of the liberation of man from the tyranny of the mind.

As the nineteenth century progressed new additions to post-Kantian Romantic ideology gained widespread appeal. Although science continued on its merry way to greater sophistication and technical expertise a counter movement was underway especially in psychology where Freud had endeavored to redefine man in terms of a new post-Darwinian non-rationality. Man was not primarily a “cognitive” being, but there lurked below the threshold of thought the region of the *Id*, dark and mysterious and the source of behavior. From the impulses of this irrational dimension there flowed the sub-rational creative powers of man, powers which could not be analyzed or explained on the basis of traditional Western views of man. If a world of meaning was possible for man in an impersonal universe it would be found in the imaginative depths where his hidden instincts for beauty, order, sacredness, and existence would spontaneously invent whatever reality was conjured up by the artistic sensibilities.

The Romantic temperament “perceived the world as a unitary organism rather than an atomistic machine, exalted the ineffability of inspiration rather than the enlightenment of reason, and affirmed the inexhaustible drama of human life rather than the calm predictability of static abstractions.” (p. 367) Once again a new vision for unification with the transcendent emerged on the scene to ennoble man and to provide him with a deeper contact with the true ground of being. “To explore the mysteries of interiority, of moods and motives, love and desire, fear and angst, inner conflicts and contradictions, memories and dreams, to experience extreme and incommunicable states of consciousness, to be inwardly grasped in epiphanic ecstasy, to plumb the depths of the human soul, to bring the unconscious into consciousness, to know the infinite”—constituted the agenda of Romanticism. Life was to be an act of heroic affirmation and triumphal fulfillment. Man could “will” a “redemptive order on the chaos of a meaningless universe without God”. (p. 371)

It was out of Romanticism that men began to question the assumptions of Western civilization. For Romanticism relativized all value systems and claimed only special importance for the unique and the bizarre. All human experience was equal in truth and an impetus to freedom of expression. Romanticism fostered the anti-hero, the individual who dared to withstand or oppose the conventional attitudes and mores. He was his own authority, his own morality, not bound to respect an established order of man. (What

Tarnas does not understand is that Romanticism's development was only made possible in the West where the moral authority of Christianity had earlier taken hold. Romanticism exists primarily as an attack on that authority.)

Romanticism formed a culture of its own. While science continued to dominate the "outer" culture of the West, Romanticism had taken control of his "inner" culture. (p. 375) And the two cultures were deeply at odds with one another. Modern man was divided, torn between two world views. Science provided man with a "stupendous quantity of information...about all aspects of life", but it could not provide any ordering vision of life. "The quality of modern life seemed ever equivocal. Spectacular empowerment was countered by a widespread sense of anxious helplessness." (p. 388) The West had produced a "spiritual wasteland". Romantic idealism seemed headed in the direction of "despair or self-annihilating defiance". (p. 390) Its inner world was fast becoming trite and inauthentic, fascinating for a brief moment, then vanishing into oblivion.

The "postmodern" situation had arrived on our doorstep. We have also at last come to see what has animated Tarnas to write his book. He wants to offer a solution to our dilemma. He has a "gospel" to proclaim.

The postmodern world is the necessary outcome of the long philosophical evolution of the Western mind. It is not, however, an outcome in continuity with that mind, but deeply at variance with it. Or, rather, it is the spurned illegitimate offspring which finds that acceptance is only possible by radically destroying all legitimacy. In the postmodern era the Western intellectual heritage is "condemned as inherently alienating and oppressively hierarchical—an intellectually imperious procedure that has produced an existential and cultural impoverishment, and that has led ultimately to the technocratic domination of nature and the social-political domination of others." (p. 400) For the postmodern mind nothing exists in the way of "fixed abstract principles". From its perspective everything is indeterminate, constantly changing without any substantial goal or purpose. What man knows in a context in which mere "existence" is the only reality is simply that which man brings into being through his "interpretation." And no objective reality predetermines how the mind should interpret. In the end, what you have is a culture, if such it can be called, that is characterized by "dogmatic relativism", "fragmenting skepticism", and "cynical detachment". (p. 402) Indeed, as a culture we are on the brink of disaster "with the future of the human spirit, and the future of the planet, hanging in the balance." (p. 413)

Despite the foreboding, however, Tarnas sees all this as reason to be optimistic. To him it represents a new force for change, but now not just change for its own sake but change for the better! He sees the possibility of a new "synthesis". Men, and women, are discovering new spiritual resources to confront the radical de-humanization of life. They are finding new avenues to re-integrate "humankind" into its environment, spiritually as well as naturally. One method is that of radical feminism which is showing how our Western tradition has been one-sidedly oppressed by "patriarchal conceptions of nature" and "male" rationality. This male rational approach, which began with the Greeks, has

distorted reality by viewing nature as “a mindless, passive feminine object, to be penetrated, controlled, dominated, and exploited”. (p. 407) Others warn us that our rational “passion” is threatening all life on planet earth, that science can no longer be counted on to provide the answers. Indeed, the scientific mind-set is part of the problem, not the solution. Furthermore, the scientific method, because it requires predictive certainty, mechanistic precision, and structural impersonalism in order for it to understand the phenomena of nature, has driven all other qualities of living existence out of the universe. And, yet, basic to Tarnas's own faith is precisely what lies at the root of science, namely, the philosophical-epistemological assumptions about the mind and its knowledge of the world. “The pivot of the modern predicament is epistemological, and it is here that we should look for an opening.” (p. 422)

Tarnas proposes to offer as the solution for the great loss of the meaning of human significance in Western culture a new epistemology. Since the problem is for him the "dualism" that has come to separate the human subject from the objective world, then he must provide a way to reconnect the two. It entails a new Nature mysticism. Perhaps, it would be more accurate to say that he simply revives the “old” Nature mysticism which held to the notion that “mind” and “world” were fundamentally aspects of one another and that Mind was the World in its “self-revelation” or “self-objectification”. In this scheme, the human mind can be proudly referred to as the “organ of the world's own process of self-revelation”. (p. 434) He who hold this view can cleverly say, then, that Nature is not some independent reality over against the mind of man, but is the reality which the mind of man produces in its act of cognition. Voila! Man has regained the center; life has meaning; nothing is alien to man!

Tarnas has written a fascinating book, but nevertheless has not gotten to the root of the matter so far as it concerns the Western Mind. Since he shares the assumptions of those who have preceded him in the diagnosis of the so-called “epistemological” problem he cannot understand that the real issue has merely been disguised by this elaborate philosophical charade. The true problem of man has been his insatiable desire to replace God as The Creator and therefore Interpreter of his existence and all things else. When the Greeks first articulated the problem of “archetypes”, the underlying “religious” intention was to define the nature of reality in such manner that man's mind would be its sole architect. The long history of Western thought has been the attempt to improve on this impulse. However, since man wanted no explanations but what he himself conceived, he must be sure that it covered everything and left nothing unexplained; that is, he deemed it necessary to have “comprehensive” knowledge. But Western thought also demonstrates that that ambition could not be realized. New facts and interpretations kept leading thought off into strange ally ways. While men went on assuming that a total “scientific” explanation was not only possible but absolutely necessary, something in the nature of man kept rebelling against the tyranny of the rational. The “gods” could not agree. And, then, when the world seemed to split from the mind's knowledge of the world and to become an object of mere critical contemplation it never occurred to anyone that man was never meant to erect “knowledge” into an idol and to strive to achieve a comprehension only God alone could possibly ever have. If man seemed to reach an

“epistemological” dead-end it was only because he refused to submit himself, along with his “knowledge”, to God's will and lordship over his life.

Still, Tarnas's book is a useful insight into the Western “secular” mind and how it views problems. It should remind us that Christians cannot play along with the secular world in its explanations of things if they do not want to be deceived with wrong-headed explanations. Tarnas thinks that feminism, environmentalism, and the like are the wave of the future. He thinks the nature of man's problem is such that no other solutions are available. Men and women are digging deep into their psyches and finding a new “wholeness” between subject and object, one that is no longer driven by rationality and domination. In reality, Tarnas is one more humanist who believes unquestioningly in man, the thinker, the philosopher, who stands at the center of the universe and God-like reveals its meaning and its purpose.