

## Chapter 10

# Entering Paradise

*The Kingdom of Heaven is spread out upon the Earth, and people do not see it.*

Jesus of Nazareth  
*Gospel of Thomas*

Using Teilhard's four-stage model of evolution as a framework, outlined in Table 6.1 on page 524 in Chapter 6, 'A Holistic Theory of Evolution', this chapter looks in more detail at the transition period between the biological and the noological stages of evolution. It was during this period that the myths of a Paradise on Earth arose, such as Shambhala in Tibetan Buddhism and the Garden of Eden in Judaic-Christian tradition. These visions of a place of unsurpassed peace and beauty can be seen both symbolically and actually, to which we can return as both individuals and as a society. Indeed, although archaeologists have found no physical trace of such a Paradise, if we look deeply inside ourselves into how evolution has brought us to where we are today, we can see that such places of peace, tranquillity, and happiness could well have existed before the egoic, analytical mind came to dominate the psyche about 5,000 years ago.

For, as individuals, we began our journeys in life in Paradise in our mother's womb after conception, which corresponds to the early stages of human development after we were given the great gift of self-reflective Intelligence some 25,000 years ago. In other words, if we start afresh at the very beginning, as described in Chapter 1, 'Starting Afresh at the Very Beginning' on page 35, our ontogeny can recapitulate the whole of human phylogeny from Alpha to Omega. To all intents and purposes, this paradisiacal state was the Alpha point of evolution, the point at which evolution began its cognitive journey to its Omega point.

To see how our forebears entered Paradise, we first need to look at the final stages of the evolution of *Homo sapiens* as a biological species and how this led to the emergence of a psychospiritual species, which we can simply call *Homo divinus*, beings who are both human and divine, with no separation between form and Formlessness.

## Human biogenesis

With these taxonomic considerations as background, we now need to look at the evolutionary processes that led humanity into Paradise many thousands of years ago. We do not need to go back further than order Primates, which is a clade formed some 65 million years ago after the cataclysm that led the dinosaurs to become extinct. I am assuming here that the evidence on which this statement is based is consistent with the Unified Relationships Theory, remembering that the URT is all-inclusive, embracing both true and false theories, whatever we might mean by these terms.

Using both genotypical and phenotypical defining attributes in IRL, biologists have made estimates of the last common ancestor (LCA) at each level of taxonomy. A comprehensive synthesis of all this information is provided by Richard Dawkins, assisted by Yan Wong, in *The Ancestor's Tale: A Pilgrimage to the Dawn of Life*. The book is so named because it is “cast in the form of an epic pilgrimage from the present to the past” inspired by Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*.<sup>32</sup> As we are human beings, the book emphasizes our human ancestors, the number of pilgrims being swelled at each step in the journey backwards in time. Thirty-nine LCAs are identified, described in fifty-nine pilgrims’ tales going back some four billion years to the earliest single-cell organisms. But, of course, this does not take us to the dawn of Life, for Life is ever-present in the Eternal Now.

Nevertheless, such scientific studies help us understand where we have come from in the horizontal dimension of time, even though we should not forget, with the mystics, that everything in the relativistic world of form, including time, is merely an appearance in Consciousness, not real in an absolute sense. As with all things, we can use both the tabular and graphical forms of IRL to display information about our immediate specific ancestors. As we can see, each higher level of conceptual abstraction corresponds to an LCA backwards in time. Going back further on this line, the last universal ancestor (LCU) is ‘self-reproducing form of life’, a very abstract concept, but falling far short of the superclass of **Being** in IRL, the most

abstract concept that we can form because it is all-inclusive and therefore all-powerful. *Mya* in the last column is millions of years ago.

Taxon rank	Taxon name	Name	Split from LCA	Taxon name	Mya
Order	Primates				
Suborder	Haplorrhini		Lemurs & bush babies	Strepsirrhini	63
Infraorder	Simiiformes	Simian	Tarsiers	Tarsiiformes	58
Parvorder	Catarrhini		New world monkeys	Platyrrhini	40
Superfamily	Hominoidea	Hominoid or ape	Old world monkeys	Cercopithecoidea	25
Family	Hominidae	Hominid or great ape	Gibbons	Hylobatidae (lesser ape)	18
Subfamily	Homininae	Hominine	Orangutans	Ponginae	14
Tribe	Hominini	Hominin	Gorillas	Gorillini	7
Genus	Homo	Human	Chimpanzees & bonobos	Pan	5–7

Table 10.1: *The subclasses of Primates order to Homo genus*

In Linnaeus' original analysis of the primates, he separated the genus *Homo* from *Simia* (from Greek *simos* 'snub-nosed, flat-nosed'), a miscellaneous grouping including primates other than humans and lemurs. He classified them that way primarily to avoid conflict with religious authorities.<sup>1</sup> Although *Simia* has been dropped as a taxon today, we can use *simian* as a generic term for the higher primates—the apes and monkeys—reminding ourselves that monkeys are not apes, as the above table illustrates. (Amazingly, Swedish, the mother tongue of Linnaeus, is unable to distinguish monkeys and apes, *apa* being used for all species within the parvorder Catarrhini.)

However, there is no convenient term for the lower primates, called prosimians, from Greek *pro* 'before'; there is no monophyletic clade that includes just the prosimians, which are the only primates living on Madagascar. From a paraphyletic perspective, the prosimians consist of order Primates minus infraorder Simiiformes. Polyphyletically, the prosimians are suborder Strepsirrhini plus infraorder Tarsiiformes.<sup>2</sup> Other terms used to classify the simians in whole or in part are *anthropoid* and *humanoid*. But it seems that the scope of these words varies considerably; even scientists do not use these terms in a rigorous, scientific manner.

We can also display this tabular information in tree form, but it would be a very big tree with millions of branches. Figure 10.1 illustrates just a small part of this tree showing that *Homo sapiens*, as a biological species, is just a twig on the end of one branch of this vast tree of all forms of life,<sup>3</sup> quite insignificant.

Another tree we can draw is that for the apes, the superfamily to which we belong. *Encyclopædia Britannica* says, “All nonhuman apes have been classified as endangered species,”<sup>4</sup> that is “any species of plant or animal that is threatened with extinction.”<sup>5</sup> Actually, all species are threatened with extinction because no species is immortal; only Consciousness, the Ground of Being we all share, is immortal. But it would be truly wonderful if we human beings could collectively return Home to Paradise before we too become extinct. Sadly, however, because of our obsession for money, this looks most unlikely today.

Nevertheless, we can still live in hope. So to help this awakening process, Figure 10.2 shows a tree diagram of the apes clade, called a cladogram.<sup>6</sup> You can see from this that each split along the human line is a binary one. But this is not always the case. For instance, the gibbons in this diagram are classified in four different genera. Similarly, order Primates in Table 10.1 is one of four orders in an unranked clade, leading back to the class Mammalia, which was comprehensively reclassified in 1996 by Malcolm C. McKenna and Susan K. Bell using a combination of clades and grades as taxa.<sup>7</sup>

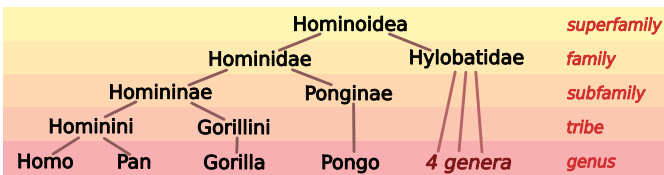


Figure 10.2: Cladistic taxonomy of the apes

ing interpreted. While the details of this picture are rapidly changing as new discoveries are made, the general pattern of events is reasonably clear. This is probably as much as we can ever hope for because hominin fossils can only be found in areas that are conducive to their formation and preservation. For instance, the Rift Valley in East Africa lies on a crack in the Earth’s crust, enabling the Earth’s molten core to escape as volcanic ash rich in potassium and argon, which is not only conducive to the formation of fossils, but can also be used to date deposits through potassium-argon or argon-argon dating.<sup>8</sup>

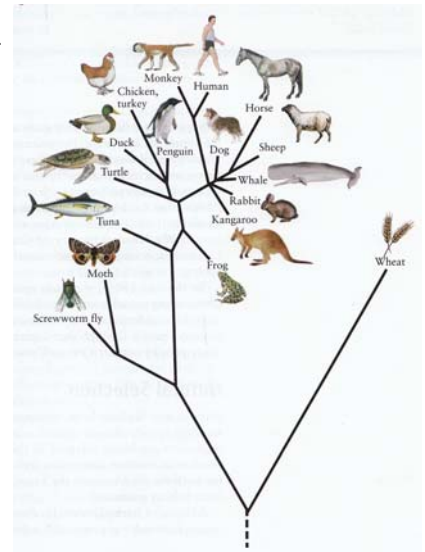


Figure 10.1: Tree of life

With this brief view of the evolution of the primates as background, we now need to look at the evidence we have for the way that tribe Hominini split into subtribes Hominina and Panina and how this evidence is being

So it is not surprising that much of the evidence that we have found for hominins who have evolved from the common ancestor that we share with the chimpanzees and bonobos has been found in the Rift Valley. Yet, while many specimens have been found for the various species and genera classified in subtribe Hominina, “not a single fossil has been found which can definitely be regarded as along the chimpanzee line of descent.”<sup>9</sup> Table 10.2 contains a summary of the information available today, abstracted from Wikipedia, *Anthropology* by Barbara D. Miller and Bernard Wood, and other sources.

We do not need to spend much more time looking at what the palaeoanthropologists call human evolution, for human evolution is primarily noological not biological. Besides, “multiple examples of a proposed species must be studied for unifying characters before it can be regarded as a species. Extinct species known only from fossils are generally difficult to give precise taxonomic rankings to.”<sup>10</sup> And while there is voluminous evidence for some of the categories above, some classifications seem to have been made on the flimsiest of evidence.

Another reason why the details of this table are not particularly important is that we can best understand this biogenetic process by comparing it with a noogenetic one. When we learn, we form concepts from previously formed concepts through a process of analysis and synthesis, divergence and convergence. But ideas rarely form in the mind instantly. As Thomas Edison famously said, “Genius is one percent inspiration and ninety-nine percent perspiration”. So more often, ideas go through a long process of development like the development of an old-fashioned chemical photograph. So just as it takes time for fuzzy ideas to mature into full clarity, it took some five to seven million years of fuzzy species to develop before *Homo sapiens* could emerge. It is not entirely clear from the literature why *Homo sapiens sapiens* was identified as a subspecies of *Homo sapiens* before the discovery of *Homo sapiens idaltu*. Maybe this was because some of the earlier fuzzy species, such as *Homo neanderthalensis* were originally identified as a subspecies of *Homo sapiens*: *Homo sapiens neanderthalensis*.

## The origin of the myths

We now come to the transition period between the second and third stages of Teilhard’s four-stage model of evolution. While many books have been written by anthropologists, archaeologists, mythologists, and philosophers about this seminal period in human history, all these studies do not form a coherent whole in the context of the Unified Relationships Theory. It is the purpose of this section to provide a synthesis of all these research activities into the origins of the human mind, for this understanding could help us understand what is happening to the human race today.

For we are currently facing a severe crisis of the mind, the subject of Chapter 12, ‘The Crisis of the Mind’ on page 989, which has been building up for many thousands of years, because the divergent powers of evolution have been stronger than the convergent ones leading

Genus	Species	Age (mya)	Discovered/Interpreted		
			When	Where	By
<i>Australanthropus</i>	<i>aethiopicus</i>	3-4 (Toumai)	2002	Central Africa	Michel Brunet
<i>Paranthropus</i>	<i>boisei</i>	1.2-2.6	1959	Rift Valley	Mary Leakey
<i>Australopithecus</i>	<i>afarensis</i>	3-4	1978	Rift Valley	Donald Johanson
	<i>ramidus</i>	4.4	1995	Rift Valley	Tim White
<i>Paranthropus</i>	<i>platyops</i>	3.5-3.2	2001	Rift Valley	Meave Leakey
<i>Stralopithecus</i>	<i>anamensis</i>	4.1-3.9	1995	Rift Valley	Allan Morton Meave Leakey Alan Walker
	<i>afarensis</i>	3.9-2.9, (3.2, Lucy)	1978	Rift Valley	Donald Johanson
	<i>bahrelghazali</i>	3.5-3.2	1995	Central Africa	Michel Brunet
	<i>africanus</i>	3-2	1925	Southern Africa	Raymond Dart
	<i>garhi</i>	3-2	1997	Rift Valley	Berhane Asfaw Tim White
<i>Paranthropus</i>	<i>aethiopicus</i>	2.7-2.5	1985	Rift Valley	Todd Olson
	<i>boisei</i>	2.6-1.2	1959	Rift Valley	Mary Leakey
	<i>robustus</i>	2.0-1.2	1938	Southern Africa	Robert Broom
<i>Homo</i>	<i>habilis</i>	2.2-1.6	1960	Africa	Louis Leakey
	<i>erectus</i>	2-0.03	1891	Africa, Java, China, Caucasus	Eugene Dubois Valerij Alekseev
	<i>rudolfensis</i>	1.9	1972	Kenya	Bernard Ngeneo
	<i>georgicus</i>	1.8	1999	Georgia	David Lordkipanidze
	<i>ergaster</i>	1.9-1.4	1975	East and South Africa	Bernard Ngeneo
	<i>antecessor</i>	1.2-0.8	1997	Spain, England	Eudald Carbonell Juan Louis Arsuaga
	<i>cepranensis</i>	0.9-0.8?	1994	Italy	Italo Biddittu
	<i>heidelbergensis</i>	0.6-0.25	1908	Europe, Africa, China	Otto Schoetensack
	<i>neanderthalensis</i>	0.35-0.03	1829	Europe, West Asia	Johann Carl Fuhlrott Hermann Schaaffhaus
	<i>rhodesiensis</i>	0.3-0.12	1921	Zambia	Arthur Smith Woodward
	<i>sapiens sapiens</i>	0.25-present		worldwide	ourselves
	<i>sapiens idaltu</i>	0.16-0.15	1997	Ethiopia	Tim White
	<i>floresiensis</i>	0.10-0.012	2003	Indonesia	Peter Brown Michael Morwood

Table 10.2: The genera and species in subtribe Hominina

to the fragmentation of the mind in religious demarcations, academic specialization, and the division of labour in the workplace. It is only when all the divergent streams of evolution con-

verge at its Omega point that we can see the whole of evolution from Alpha to Omega. This is quite the most exquisitely beautiful space imaginable, so superbly brilliant that it is actually far beyond the imagination.

This is Paradise, which we can look at from both an ontogenetic and phylogenetic perspective. From the individual point of view, we begin life in Paradise at conception. As Stanislov Grof says, these early experiences “have strong mystical overtones; they feel sacred or holy. ... In this state of cosmic unity, we feel that we have direct, immediate, and unlimited access to knowledge and wisdom of universal significance.”<sup>11</sup> This rapturous period in our lives, a reminder of “Gardens of Paradise in the mythologies of a variety of the world’s cultures”,<sup>12</sup> can be referred to as ‘oceanic ecstasy’, which is closely related to Abraham Maslow’s ‘peak experience’.<sup>13</sup>

Phylogenetically, our antecedents were living in Paradise when they were given the great gift of self-reflective Intelligence some 25,000 years ago. A Google search of billions of web pages for the phrase *self-reflective Intelligence* returns fewer than fifty hits, although there are over 5,000 hits for *self-reflective Consciousness*. It is most important that we make a distinction here between these two terms, for self-reflective Intelligence is the most significant characteristic that distinguishes human beings from the other animals and our machines, like computers, with their so-called artificial intelligence.

Consciousness is all there is, the brilliant, radiant light that enables us to see the Totality of Existence holographically, like a laser beam. But it is Intelligence that actually sees. While Consciousness is Cosmic, Intelligence, the eyesight of Consciousness, is Divine. Intelligence is thus what is sometimes called the Witness in spiritual circles, a word that originally meant ‘knowledge’ or ‘wisdom’, related to *wit*, which has a Proto-Indo-European root meaning ‘to see’. When we say, “Now I see what you mean,” when the penny drops, it means that by looking inwards with our inner eye we can understand what someone is saying to us.

Human beings are not the only animals to have a reflective ability. “Great apes, for example, are able to recognize themselves in mirrors (monkeys and other nonhumans cannot, with the exception of bottlenose dolphins).”<sup>14</sup> However, human beings are the only animals with self-reflective abilities. What this means is that we can see not only outwards, but also inwards into the depths of the Cosmic Psyche, which is 99% of the Universe and by far the most interesting and significant part. In particular, Intelligence can see itself seeing. In conformity with the Principle of Unity, there is no separation between the observer and observed, a notion that brought David Bohm and J. Krishnamurti together.<sup>15</sup>

While few students of the human phenomenon write about self-reflection as the key characteristic of *Homo sapiens*, one exception was Teilhard himself. In the chapter ‘The Birth of Thought’, reflection is central what he calls ‘hominization’, leading to the noosphere. As he says, “reflection, as the word itself indicates, is the power acquired by a consciousness of turn-

ing in on itself ... no longer to know something—but to know *itself*; no longer to know, but to know that it knows.”<sup>16</sup> He then goes on to say, “the birth of intelligence corresponds to a turning back on itself, not only of the nervous system, but of the entire being.”

The primary evidence for our self-reflective abilities comes not from studying the material remains of our antecedents, but from our own mystical experiences. For instance, Barry Long used his own inner wisdom to write *The Origins of Man & the Universe: The Myth that Came to Life*. Clive Tempest, his editor, said of Barry in the foreword to the second edition of this book, “Through his own gnosis, or direct knowledge of universal truth, he found he was accounting for the host of perennial questions that have teased philosophers since ancient times and still bemuse the leading physicists of our day. Not only that, but he was gathering all these insights together into one grand design, a mythic account of the work of consciousness on earth.”

Joseph Campbell took a similar approach in his extensive studies of human mythology. As he said in his televised conversations with Bill Moyers, we are no different from Cro-Magnon man 30,000 years ago and if we are to appreciate the artists who drew pictures on the walls of caves in south-west France, we can only do so by looking inward.<sup>17</sup> So Campbell speaks from his own direct, inner experience when he talks and writes about the myths that still fascinate in these sceptical times.

By looking deeply inside himself, Barry Long suggests that we human beings became self-reflective because a veil of opaqueness or psychic membrane disappeared from behind our animal eyes between 200,000 and 10,000 years ago, which led to the dawn of selfconsciousness.<sup>18</sup> Not everyone received this great gift at the same time, and even today some are still not fully self-reflective. “The autistic and those with Down’s syndrome are still trying,”<sup>19</sup> Barry suggests.

But over the years, even those who lost the veil of opaqueness developed another thick veil obscuring the radiant light of Consciousness from shining brilliantly through them. An anonymous fourteenth-century English mystic called this thick veil ‘the cloud of unknowing’, which we need to disperse if we are to discover our True Nature. Such a liberating experience can be apocalyptic, for *apocalypse* derives from Greek *apokaluptein* ‘to uncover’ or ‘to reveal’ from the prefix *apo*, ‘from, away’ and *kaluptra*, ‘veil’. So *apocalypse* literally means ‘draw the veil away from’, indicating the disclosure of something hidden from the mass of humanity.

Perhaps it is not therefore surprising that throughout human history, there has been immense “human resistance to self-reflection”, as Socrates noted about the people who wished to put him to death: “Socrates tells the jurors that, as a result of his inquiries, he has learned a bitter lesson about his fellow citizens: not only do they fail to possess the knowledge they claim to have, but they resent having this fact pointed out to them, and they hate him for his insistence that his reflective way of life and his disavowal of knowledge make him superior to



them.”<sup>20</sup> It seems that most are afraid of discovering what it truly means to be a human being, not willing to follow the maxim inscribed on the temple of Apollo at Delphi: “Know thyself”, which Plato ascribes to the sayings of the Seven Wise Men in *Protagoras*.<sup>21</sup>

But we are getting ahead of ourselves. What this means is that if we want to understand the very earliest stages of human learning, we first look inwards, not outwards at the fossils and artefacts that our forebears left behind. From an individual perspective, we first return to Paradise, which we experienced after conception, recognizing that by the Principle of Unity there is no separation between today and the moment of our conception; these two points in time coexist in the Eternal Now.

Similarly, we can experience today what life must have been like for our ancestors when they were first given the great gift of self-reflective Intelligence, for, in Reality, there is no separation between any two points in time, or indeed, in space. By comparing our own ontogeny with human phylogeny from Alpha to Omega, we can then see that our forebears were originally like babies in adult bodies before the analytical mind began to take over human learning.

But how did our ancestors set out to understand themselves and the world we live in as innocent babies? Well, the Egyptologist Robert Bauval said, for instance, that before the Pharaohs appeared, “Men needed to understand their existence, needed to understand the Cosmos around them. But rather than be provided with the technology and science to do so, they used their genius and intelligence to search within. They employed another aspect of thinking that we ourselves have long forgotten. They employed the intuitive, inner, spiritual search,” called gnosis.<sup>22</sup>

While the way that our ancestors thought may have long ago been forgotten, it has not been completely lost. As the Principle of Unity is the fundamental design principle of the Universe, their thinking would have been just the same as everyone else’s; they would have formed concepts by carefully observing the differences and similarities in the data patterns of their experiences, both inner and outer. But then, as now, they would have had one central difficulty. When we turn meaningless data patterns into meaningful information and knowledge, we need a context within which to do so. But our forebears had no concept for the overall environment that embraces us all, a situation that tragically prevails today.

While most can agree on what a carrot, a horse, or a river is, there are as many conceptions of God as there are human beings, despite the fact that the Absolute is the Cosmic Context that we all share, grounded in Love, our shared Divine Essence. In recent centuries, the scientists have attempted to usurp the many masks of God, in Joseph Campbell’s words,<sup>23</sup> by suggesting that the physical universe is the overall context for all our lives. In so doing, they have created an impenetrable, black cloud, preventing us from understanding what is happening to the human race today. As neither the Christian concept of God nor the scientists’

concept of Universe provides us with a satisfactory context for our lives, the economists have made the global financial system the principal context for our business activities, with the disastrous consequences we are witnessing today.

As we showed in Parts I and II, we can resolve all these differences by recognizing that Consciousness is the Cosmic Context for all our lives. Indeed, the lack of recognition that Consciousness is all there is is the root cause of global warming and the economic meltdown that we are currently going through. Arthur Koestler suggested that the cause of “the streak of insanity running through human history”<sup>24</sup> could be what Paul MacLean called the triune brain consisting of a reptilian and lower and higher mammalian brains. As MacLean said, “When the psychiatrist bids the patient to lie on the couch, he is asking him to stretch alongside a horse and a crocodile.”<sup>25</sup> But to fully understand the human predicament, we need to recognize that human behaviour is determined primarily by and from our learning. As Erich Fromm said, “The emergence of man can be defined as occurring at the point in the process of evolution where instinctive adaptation has reached its minimum.”<sup>26</sup>

From the Space of Wholeness at the Omega point of evolution, we can now look at what life could have been like at the Alpha point of cognitive development. Self-reflective Intelligence would have made our ancestors aware of an all-powerful Presence that they could not see, hear, touch, taste, or smell. But they could not deny the existence of the Whole, as is so often done today. It was not until October 1983 in London that evolution showed a knowing being how to form the concept of the Absolute in exactly the same way as all other concepts of structures and relationships in the relativistic world of form. Drawing on pure mathematics, computer science, and information systems modelling methods in business, the Datum of the Universe emerged as the concept that we could all share prior to interpretation by our divisive minds, for *datum* means ‘that which is given’. The great gap between rationality and intuition was thus closed, as Chapter 4, ‘Transcending the Categories’ on page 243 explains. As explained in Chapter 1 on page 35, this happened by starting afresh at the very beginning, by breaking free of the divergent emphasis of evolution of the past few billion years, to focus attention on the convergence of everything.

It is just such a liberating experience, free of decades, centuries, and millennia of personal, cultural, and collective conditioning, that enables us to tune into our forebears’ consciousness. For without any conceptual past to cloud their vision, there was no separation between themselves and the Divine. They were both human and Divine, the first exemplars of *Homo divinus* at the Alpha point of evolution’s cognitive development, living in innate Wholeness and Oneness. It is out of such blissful experiences that the myths of Shambhala in Tibetan Buddhism and the Garden of Eden in Judaism and Christianity arose. The archaeologists have not found any physical evidence for the location of such societies of love, peace, and wisdom. Nevertheless, it is quite possible that they existed.

One reason for people's scepticism about the possible location for Shambhala, a physical Paradise, is the great difficulty in returning Home to mystical Paradise given where evolution has carried us all today. We have so lost touch with our True Nature, far removed from Reality, that returning Home to Wholeness seems an impossible dream, as Ken Wilber says in *A Theory of Everything*.<sup>27</sup> Yet as Joseph Campbell tells us, such a return is the goal of the hero's journey in the myths and fairy tales in all cultures and times. Distinguishing these two journeys, Campbell says, "The hero of the fairy tale achieves a domestic, microcosmic triumph, and the hero of myth a world-historical, macrocosmic triumph."<sup>28</sup> So not only is it the purpose of life to come back into union with the Divine, but having done so, it is essential for the hero to return to society with the wonders she or he has uncovered by looking deeply within: "A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man."<sup>29</sup>

One region on Earth where there is an abundance of stories about Shambhala is Central Asia north of Tibet, illustrated in Figure 10.3.<sup>30</sup> In every part of Central Asia "Shambhala ... exerts a very real influence that transcends all differences of place, race, and religion."<sup>31</sup> This is particularly true of the Altai Mountains, depicted in Figure 10.4,<sup>32</sup> the original home of the shamans, where Shambhala is called Belovodia, 'the land of white water', "a kingdom of Pure Spirit".<sup>33</sup>

This entire region north of Tibet is one of the least explored areas on Earth, with steep mountains hiding deep inaccessible valleys. Such valleys are womblike, embracing one within the towering mountains that surround them, very much like the Paradise we experienced in our mother's womb.<sup>34</sup> So such locations, isolated from the mass of humanity, could well have been home to enlightened



Figure 10.4: Valley in Altai Mountains

societies, described in the myths. As Chögyam Trungpa said, "According to the legends, [Shambhala] was a place of peace and prosperity, governed by wise and compassionate rulers. The citizens were equally kind and learned, so that, in general, the kingdom was a model society".<sup>35</sup>

However, as with so much on the spiritual journey, it is perhaps best to think of Shambhala as a metaphor for our inner being. As Trungpa said, it is possible to see the kingdom of Shambhala as "the expression of a deeply rooted and very real human desire for a good and



Figure 10.3: *Possible locations for Shambhala*

fulfilling life.”<sup>36</sup> With “The world in absolute turmoil,” he then went on to say, “The Shambhala teachings are founded on the premise that there *is* basic human wisdom that can help to solve the world’s problems.”<sup>37</sup> It is not only the mountains that can reflect this deep peace within us. As the landscape architect Clare Cooper Marcus says, “We create gardens because, at some barely discernable level of consciousness, it is one way to reconnect with that mythical Garden of Eden or oasis of Shambhala.”<sup>38</sup>

Not that everything was a bed of roses as our ancestors entered the Garden of Eden, naked but not ashamed<sup>39</sup> by the egoic mind, which was still in utero. One of the first things they discovered with their self-reflective Intelligence is that every body dies after what the psalmist called ‘threescore years and ten’.<sup>40</sup> We hominins were the first animals to become conscious of our own demise as biophysical beings, a situation that has preoccupied human affairs ever since the dawn of self-reflective Intelligence. “Neanderthals were probably the first hominins to bury their dead regularly,” the first burials that have been found occurring about 90,000 years ago.<sup>41</sup> Maybe this was originally done for hygienic reasons. But over the years, a host of rituals arose around death, because we lost touch with our immortal Ground of Being. As Barry Long says, “Death, once the most natural event, was now the most terrifying. [Man] became obsessed with the fear of dying and losing his body, the last apparent formal link with where he had come from.”<sup>42</sup>

However, not everybody lost touch with Reality as the mind began to evolve and develop. As Barry Long says, the myths of immortal gods and goddesses in many cultures indicate that such beings actually existed at the dawn of self-reflective Intelligence. “They only had to meditate, to withdraw from external attachments and their physical senses, and they were back in the feeling, inner world where all men were one.”<sup>43</sup> But “For a long, long time, these first physically conscious men were a very rare phenomenon in the small communities of unself-conscious men who lived together in various parts of the globe.”<sup>44</sup> To the general populace, these gods and goddesses “literally were beings from outer space or another world”.<sup>45</sup> And it was they who handed down the myths we know today.<sup>46</sup> This dichotomy has prevailed throughout human history. As Ken Wilber points out, people we call prophets, saints, sages, and shamans discovered higher levels of being, a more advanced level of consciousness than the average level of the masses.<sup>47</sup>

It is important to remember here that we are talking about a period of time of over 20,000 years before these myths began to be written down. A very great deal happened during this transitional process between biogenesis and noogenesis, which we can regard as the first period of human development, focused more on the intuitive feminine than the rational masculine.

This is generally regarded as the time of the Great Mother Goddess. For from about 20 to 25,000 years ago, “the image of a goddess appeared across a vast expanse of land stretching from the Pyrenees to Lake Baikal in Siberia.”<sup>48</sup> For instance, Figure 10.5 shows a limestone figurine of a fertility goddess that was found in Willendorf in Austria, estimated to be between 18 and 20,000 years old.<sup>49</sup>

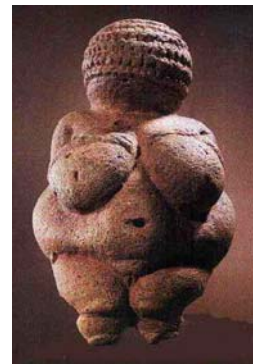


Figure 10.5: *Fertility goddess figurine*



Figure 10.6: *Evolution of stone tools*

Such Venus figurines were originally produced with stone tools, which hominins had been making with other tools for over two million years. Here is a sample of such tools, showing their evolution over time. They are a stone chopper, axe, scraper, and knife, created by *Homo habilis*, *Homo erectus*, *Homo neanderthalensis*, and *Homo sapiens*, respectively.<sup>50</sup> In this way, our forebears began a process of using tools

to create tools that can extend our rather limited *physical* abilities, which we are continuing even to this day, with such inventions as trains, washing machines, and televisions. These tools were not just utilitarian. As Joseph Campbell points out, at the time of *Homo erectus*, our forebears were producing tools that were not only practical but also of “divinely superfluous beauty”, the beginnings of art as well as ritual.<sup>51</sup>

But in the middle of the twentieth century, we invented a universal tool, in the stored-program computer, which can extend our *mental* abilities. It is our inability to understand what it means to be a human being in relationship to God and the Universe, and hence what we have invented, that is a major cause of the great global crisis we are facing today, as this book is endeavouring to show. In particular, as Chapter 8, ‘Limits of Technology’ on page 619 shows with utmost clarity, it is not possible for a computer program to create other computer programs without human, that is divine, intervention. So technology cannot possibly resolve today’s crisis; only Love and Intelligence, acting through human beings can do so.

When our forebears painted animal figures in caves and made the first goddess figurines, they were still hunter gatherers, living in what archaeologists and anthropologists call the Upper Palaeolithic period, from Greek *palaaios* ‘old, ancient’ and *lithos* ‘stone’, which began some 40 to 50,000 years ago. The entire Palaeolithic period began with *Homo habilis*, about 2.5 million years ago.

The hominins needed to adapt to a changing environment during this period, as the Earth went through vast changes in temperature in what geologists call the Late Pleistocene epoch, from Greek *pleistos* ‘most’ and *kainos* ‘new, recent’. The Pleistocene epoch, as a whole, began about 1.6 to 1.8 million years ago and is known informally as the ‘Great Ice Age’, with many glacial and interglacial periods, as Figure 10.7 shows,<sup>52</sup> although there were periods of glaciation before this time.<sup>53</sup> We are still in this ice age, for ice sheets still cover Greenland and Antarctica, in an interglacial period between glaciations.

The Last Glacial Maximum (LGM) was reached about 20 to 22,000 BAP (before accumulation point), when where I live in western Sweden was covered in several kilometres of ice. Figure 10.8 shows how temperatures have changed since then, recorded by measuring the relative deviations from a laboratory standard ( $\delta^{18}\text{O}$ ‰) in the ratio between two isotopes of oxygen ( $^{16}\text{O}$  and  $^{18}\text{O}$ ).<sup>54</sup>

At the time of the LGM, sea levels were much lower than they are today. For instance, the North Sea was either covered in ice or it was dry land. So it was possible to walk from East Anglia in England to Jutland in Denmark, just beyond the southern most reaches of the glacier.<sup>55</sup> Similarly, the islands of Japan and New Zealand were one island and Tasmania and New Guinea were joined to Australia.<sup>56</sup> As Figure 10.8 shows, the last glaciation, which ac-

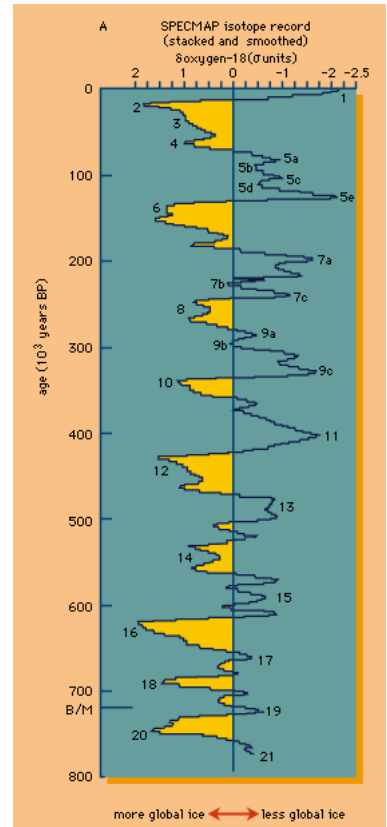


Figure 10.7: Recent glaciations

tually lasted about 100,000 years, had a very strange ending. Around 15,000 BAP, the temperature sharply increased in just a decade or so,<sup>57</sup> with wide variations for the next 2,000 years.

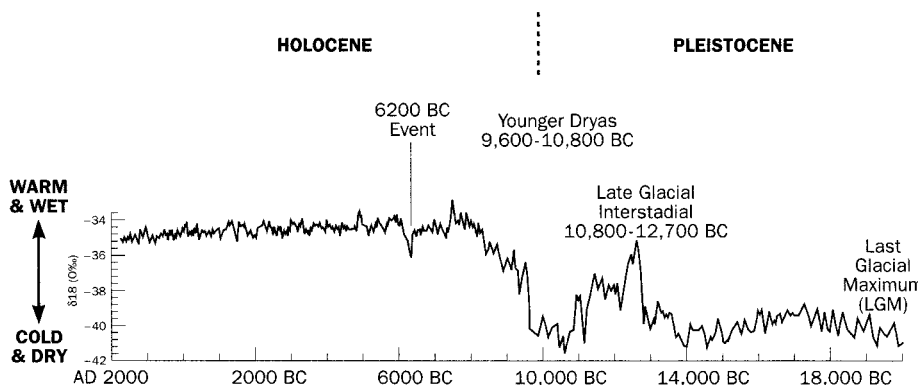


Figure 10.8: *Changes in average temperature since the last glacial maximum*

This Late Glacial Interstadial, known as the Bølling/Allerød oscillation from two sites in Denmark where pollen counts were made, naturally had a profound effect on the lives of *Homo sapiens* as our ancestors sought to come to terms with rapidly changing temperature and sea levels. At the beginning of this period, sea levels rose more than 100 metres in just a few years.<sup>58</sup> As melting ice uncovered large parts of northern Europe, the land became covered in forests, the home to many animals, such as reindeer, antelope, and woollen mammoth, which humans hunted intensively, sometimes to extinction.<sup>59</sup>

Then for 1,200 to 1,300 years, the ‘Big Freeze’ returned in what is called the Younger Dryas, after an alpine/tundra wildflower that can survive at low temperatures.<sup>60</sup> (The Older Dryas had been a 300-year stadial in the middle of the Bølling/Allerød oscillation.)<sup>61</sup> Once again, the lives of our ancestors would have been profoundly affected, as they sought to adapt to what must have been a pretty uncomfortable environment.

## The birth of agriculture

Then about 11,500 years ago, temperatures once again rose sharply in just a decade or two, to bring the most recent glacial period to an abrupt end, temperatures reaching roughly today’s levels about 10,000 years ago, which could well have given rise to the myths of prehistoric cataclysmic floods in many cultures. The Pleistocene epoch then gave way to the Holocene epoch, meaning ‘entirely recent’, seen from humanity’s perspective today. However, there is no reason to suppose that this epoch has any special significance in geological terms, viewing the some ten billion years of the life and death of Earth as a whole. We could quite well be in the middle of an interglacial period in the middle of the current ice age that is set to last for another million years or more. Who knows?



Be that as it may, temperatures have been remarkably constant during the Holocene epoch, as Figure 10.8 well illustrates, which has led humanity into a state of complacency and hubris, assuming that such conditions can last indefinitely. But from a holistic, cosmic perspective, we could well be looking at a tiny window, about one millionth of the lifespan of Earth, when conditions are amenable to supporting the complexities of human societies. If there had been a sharp rise or fall in temperature in the first millennium, such as occurred in the Bølling/Allerød oscillation and in the Younger Dryas stadial, Western civilization simply would have been unable to evolve. Indeed, atmospheric chemist Paul Crutzen has coined the word *Anthropocene* to denote a post Holocene geological era because of the influence of human behaviour on the Earth in recent centuries.<sup>62</sup> Most of us living in towns and cities suffer from light pollution today,<sup>63</sup> preventing us from seeing the night sky in its pristine glory, as our ancestors once did and those living in or visiting the wilderness still can.

The birth of agriculture and settled village communities no doubt came about through both external changes in the environment and internal changes taking place within human consciousness. First, as Lewis R. Binford suggested, rising sea levels would have put pressure on coastal resources and forced people to move inland, into a zone of wild grasses. “Forced by necessity to find alternative sources of food, people concentrated on a few highly productive plants,” such as rye, wheat, and barley.<sup>64</sup> Secondly, the emerging mind would have been essential in determining which experiments worked and which did not.

This radical change in human affairs not only brought the Pleistocene epoch to an end; it also led to the end of the much longer Palaeolithic period, as our ancestors were led to develop quite new tools to adapt to their changing situation. Depending on which region the archaeologists look at, they have generally classified the period between end of the last glaciation, which is sometimes confusingly called the end of the ice age, and the birth of agriculture the Mesolithic period, leading to the great Neolithic revolution, a term coined by V. Gordon Childe in 1934 to mark the emergence and spread of farming in the old world (Africa and Eurasia).<sup>65</sup>

Of course, our ancestors who first settled in village communities did not know that they were living in the Mesolithic period, for they were still in the infantile phase of human phylogeny. The division of time into successive stages of technological development did not begin until the 1820s, when the Danish archaeologist Christian Thomsen at the National Museum of Denmark noticed that his extensive collection of artefacts could be organized on the basis that human technology had evolved from stone to bronze to iron. Then, in the nature of things, these periods were further refined into Palaeolithic ‘Old Stone’, Mesolithic ‘Middle Stone’, Neolithic ‘New Stone’,<sup>66</sup> Chalcolithic<sup>67</sup> ‘Copper and Stone’, Bronze, and Iron ages, although this classification is appropriate only for Europe, the Middle East, and Egypt.<sup>68</sup> Even in Europe, these periods were not all contemporaneous. Figure 10.9 outlines

technological development from 10,000 BAP for three broad European regions during the holocene epoch.<sup>69</sup>

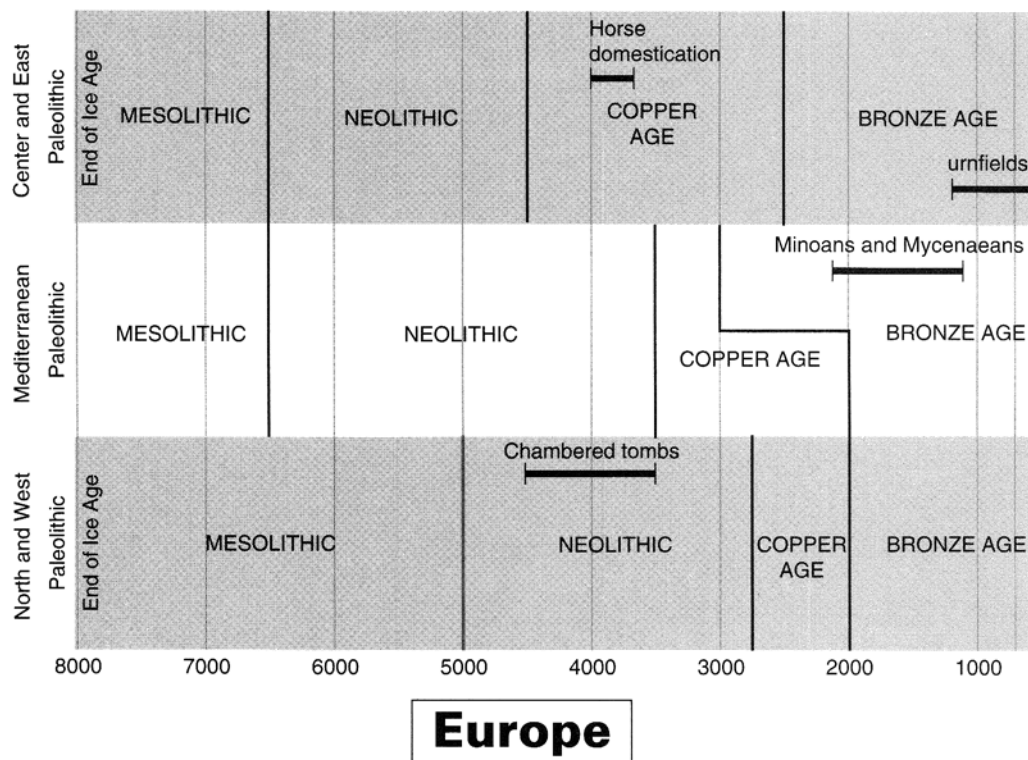


Figure 10.9: *European technological development during the holocene epoch*

As a result of the introduction of agriculture, the work that people did in their daily lives made one of its most significant changes in human history. When our ancestors were hunter-gatherers, they would have had a lot of time on their hands, for like lions and other similar hunters, the hunting necessary for basic survival would have been very concentrated in short periods each day. But with the birth of the domestication of plants and animals, our ancestors would have been preoccupied for much longer periods each day, an agricultural way of life that predominated our business affairs until just a couple of hundred years ago.

This would also have made people much more dependent on the vicissitudes of the weather. During periods of drought, they would no doubt have struggled to survive, as stories in the Bible suggest. As the mind was still in an infantile state, people did not need to believe or disbelieve in the existence of an immense power within and around them that they could not see, hear, touch, taste, or smell, as intellectuals have been doing for hundreds and thousands of years. This all-powerful Divine Presence must have felt very real to them, as it does to mystics today.

But how could they conceptualize the Absolute? Yes, as precursors of those beings we call gnostics and jnanis today, they would have had a deep inner knowing of the all-pervasive Consciousness that embraces and underlies all our lives. For as some spiritual seekers know today, God is within and without everything. But most of our ancestors were primarily focused on survival, the most basic of Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs, depicted in Figure 10.10.<sup>70</sup> As they were not conscious of the concept of concept, or of how concepts emerge in the mind, they would have been intuitively focused on the concepts that most concerned them in their daily lives. The situation some ten to twelve thousand years ago is thus not very different from that which prevails today, for the most part.

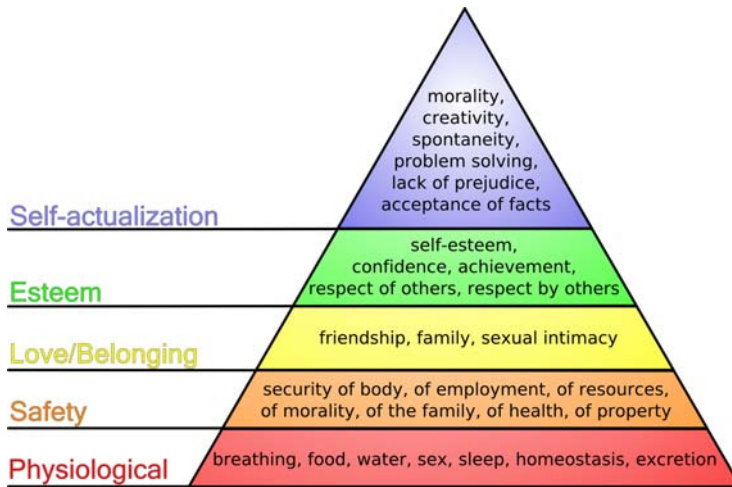


Figure 10.10: *Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs*

Although we have no direct evidence of what was going through our ancestors' minds at the time, for it was not until just two or three thousand years ago that the myths that went back thousands of years were written down, what our forebears seemed to have done is project their innermost feelings into the external world, with which they were more familiar. So, for instance, they created solar and lunar deities as representatives of their divine penetrative, masculine and receptive, feminine energies, respectively.

In turn, this led our ancestors to create a host of acts, rites, and ceremonies, worshipping the supernatural beings or powers they created in their external worlds, not realizing that they were actually honouring or revering their own divine powers. *Worship* derives from an Old English word *weorthscipe*, from *weorth* 'worth' and *-scipe* 'state or condition'. By extension, people today worship any beings who seem worthy to them, who have skills, personalities, or charisma out of the ordinary, such as actors and pop stars. The celebrity business is huge, no matter whether the celebrity is Jesus or the Pope. Even leading politicians of towns in England have the honorific 'his or her worship the mayor'.

This early struggle to understand what it meant to be a human being also led to the development of fertility rites, sometimes involving animal and human sacrifice,<sup>71</sup> which today we find repulsive. And, of course, our ancestors had to deal with death with what was still a very primitive level of consciousness. From a very early time, skeletons have been found buried with grave goods, suggesting the belief in an afterlife.<sup>72</sup> These birth and death issues would have had their parallels with the cycles of the seasons, moons, and women's menstrual periods, which led to a cyclic view of time and the belief in reincarnation, which, even today, many believe in.

However, from all accounts, this period in human history was comparatively peaceful, more matrifocal than matriarchal, in Ken Wilber's words. As he said, "*Matriarchy* strictly means mother-ruled or mother-dominant, and there have never been any strictly matriarchal societies."<sup>73</sup>

The standard work on these matrifocal societies during the Neolithic and Chalcolithic periods, in Europe at least, appears to be *The Goddesses and Gods of Old Europe* by Marija Gimbutas. Just as Arthur Evans said at the beginning of the twentieth century that Greek civilization cannot be fully understood without a study of the Minoan and Mycenaean worlds that preceded it, Gimbutas said that to understand the Minoan civilization, it is necessary to study the culture that preceded that.<sup>74</sup> Ultimately, of course, to fully understand what is happening to the human race today, we need to return to the Alpha point of evolution, which does not actually exist in horizontal, linear time; it is the Divine Source of all that is.

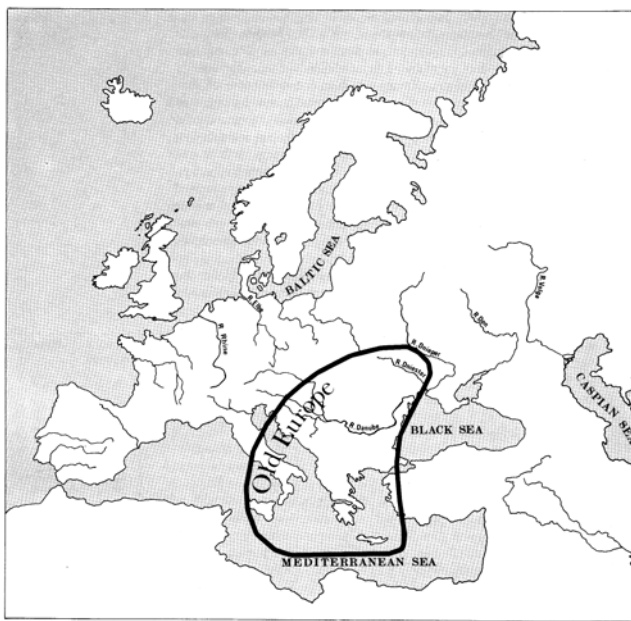


Figure 10.11: *Old Europe*

Gimbutas applied the term *Old Europe*, depicted in Figure 10.11,<sup>75</sup> "to a pre-Indo-European culture of Europe, a culture matrifocal and probably matrilinear, agricultural and sedentary, egalitarian and peaceful. It contrasted sharply with the ensuing Proto-Indo-European culture, which was patriarchal, stratified, pastoral, mobile, and war-oriented,"<sup>76</sup> which we look at in the next chapter.

There is, of course, much more to say about the fascinating Great Mother Epoch. But the great psychological, ecological, and economic crisis facing humanity is deepening with every day that passes. So regrettably we must move on with the utmost urgency.

