

## **The Cortesian Bond: Part III: Reverencing the Soul**

by  
Christopher Forrest McDowell, Ph.D.

The oldest known document depicting an individual whose conscience is in a state of conflict with collective beliefs is an Egyptian papyrus known as "The Dialogue of a World-Wearied Man With His Ba." The papyrus dates from the period around 2200 B.C. The world-weary man apparently has too much insight into the collective injustices of his time. He suffers from this and feels alienated, because he is too conscious for his contemporaries and sees too much. He wishes to commit suicide and turns to his "Ba" soul, a representation of his personal conscience, for advice. I open with this auspicious bit of history because it appeared to depict the very state I found myself in approximately ten years ago. A state of mind which seemed very much preoccupied with death, but on closer examination a death revealed only as a pivotal transformation of consciousness from an old worldview belief system to that of a somewhat nebulous new one. I felt destined to live with my meager bit of palliation, but it was a statement by the editor of **The Sun** magazine, a small but powerfully inspirational literary journal, which finally affirmed my new worldview search. Sy Safransky talked about how his ability to take notes and ask the right questions evaporated on a sunny beach in Spain, when "I suddenly became aware that the whole world was alive . . . I saw the earth breathe, I felt its rhythms, and I discovered a missing part of myself." Finally! I could see myself in the space of discovery of someone else, but it was his final comment that suddenly led me on a long journey into my own "Ba" soul. For Sy concluded: "I began the long, slow drift away from the radical mainstream towards shores for which I've yet to find a name."

In the previous two parts of this series, I have attempted to lay a foundation on which to name our new Earth Lifeview as **Cortesia**. As suggested in Part 1, **Cortesia** may be seen as a sacred perennial chalice from which we sip with our soul and from which we pour forth our essential need to serve life with restored dignity, honor, trust, courtesy, and sincere devotion. This ancient French word, meaning deep noble respect or courtesy, symbolizes what is perhaps the greatest need among Earth's inhabitants: the need to bond in reciprocal relationships bound by the substance of reverence. Bonded relationships, based upon **Cortesian** respect, courtesy, and reverence, are worthy matrices which exist as potential sources of possibility for life to emerge and evolve, sources of psychic/social/physical/biological/spiritual energy, and safe places/ideals within which to experience life, death, and re-birth. In Part 2, we saw how four bonding principles and seven **Cortesian** attunements help to empower the heart and mind in reverentially conscious behaviors or considerations, in a process which Rudolf Steiner has called "heart thinking." In this essay I want to further explore the concept of reverencing and how it deepens the **Cortesian Self**.

## The Ensouled Eye

Humanity's evolving consciousness seems to parallel the basic teachings of St. Bonaventure, the great Doctor Seraphicus of the Church and a favorite philosopher of Western mystics. St. Bonaventure taught that individuals attain knowledge through the successive awakening (illumination) of the soul's "three eyes": the ***eye of flesh*** (body/matter), the ***eye of reason*** (mind), and the ***eye of contemplation*** (spirit). The beauty behind this conceptual framework on which to view evolution is that it not only speaks to the human, but it also provides a succinct model from which to view the parallel evolution of humanity with nature, an idea St. Bonaventure had not explored.

For purely illustrative purposes, we might say the evolutionary nature of human consciousness is like a swinging pendulum. On one end of humanity's swing through history, man and woman experienced a Consciousness of Identification with the wild innocence of their inward nature and their intuitive relationship with a wild yet nurturing Earth/Nature without (what came to be symbolized as Mother Earth or Mother Nature). This tribal human, or what I call the Innocent Savage, was bonded to this primarily physical/organic/intuitive relationship by the eye of flesh. This particular eye of knowledge called forth archetypal codes that sealed this bond intuitively through the power of myth, magic, ritual, ceremony, and sacrifice/surrender. Historically, the bonding matrix was spiritually perceived to be a maternal, feminine, Goddess power manifest in nature forms that were appealed to for survival purposes. For man and woman as hunter/gatherer, this has been called a time of enfoldment or enchantment with Nature. I believe it was absolutely necessary for humanity, just as it is necessary for the newborn child, to experience this maternal matrix first, for it has given us a lap of nurturance, heart-emotion, intuition, trust, creative power, obedience, among other receptive qualities, to return to with reverence and respect from the wild lands of our mental-symbolic civilizations.

But when a pendulum swings, it must move to the other side of power and pause there as well. At this point in humanity's swing through evolutionary consciousness, we have experienced a Consciousness of Inflation of personal eminence (ego-self) through a mind that separates and places the human in mastery over Earth/Nature and the Mother thereof (not to mention other humans and cultures). As the infamous Noble Savage, we have been bonded to a primarily mental relationship with life through our soul's eye of reason, and we have called forth archetypal codes which have sealed this bond through the seeking of reason, logic, law, power, science, and religious ideology, as promoted through symbols, language, and orientation to time. Historically, this bonding matrix has been spiritually conceived to be a patriarchal/androcratic male-God power manifest in "man's" creations. For the human being as farmer-technician and builder of culture, this can be called a time of self-unfoldment, enchantment with the mind, and

disenchantment with Nature. Yet I also believe it has been absolutely necessary for both individual and humanity to experience this matrix of consciousness, for it gives us insights into autonomy (self-power), control, freedom, independence, assertion of will, and logic-intellect, although often displayed through insensitivity and exploitation devoid of respect toward others.

As we are well aware, the individual and humanity's evolution of consciousness must experience another illumination of its soul's knowledge: the awakening and use of the eye of contemplation. Only through this eye can we hope to blend both the body and mind into a reverential wisdom of Earth/Nature and ourselves. The work of the eye of contemplation may very well be at the stillpoint of the turning, pendulum swinging, world. It is a work of gradual awakening into the subtle transforming powers of peace, love, harmony, and empowerment as each is enfolded in a vessel of intuitive-wisdom. For humans, such an awakening involves a focus on a higher level of global, not narrowly imperialistic or self-centered, consciousness and conscience. It represents what Riane Eisler has called a partnership of the female-male psyches in a gylanic linking. It transcends both the identification consciousness of the Innocent Savage and the blind, arrogant, inflated dominance of the Noble Savage's consciousness. In the wake is a vision of harmonic attunement --- a wise, reverential bonding between cultures, between cultures and nature, and with the perennial Creative Force of the whole cosmos. This is the soul vision of what I call the Noble Sage or Crone, who is empowered to serve life with a **Cortesian** consciousness of reverence, humility, nobleness, stewardship, courtesy, respect, divine ethics, and awe and wonder.

To reverence the soul, then, is to love and own its awakening vision. This love, or birth of Eros, can be thought of as the progeny of the strange union noted in Greek mythology between Iris and Zephyrus, between the eye and spirit. What we are talking about here is the substance of both sight and insight, of seeing and perceiving, of touching with the eye and touching with the spirit . . . of seeing and exploring the surface structures of life, or diving into its deeper realms. And of course, it is also about being seen, perceived, touched, and inspired, for the ensouled eye, like a window, allows one not only to see without, but to be seen within. Reverencing the human soul means loving oneself as a creation, as yet another creation on Earth. This love of human self must be seen to be solely (and "souly") self-owned, for this is the basis of personal dignity --- dignity of body, mind, and spirit. It is also the basis for our soul's integrity to revere and respect, with humility, the form, consciousness, and spirit of all other beings. For, once we are secure in reverencing our own spiritual creation and beingness, we can get on with our real work in the world: to be of compassionate service to others.

## **The Ensouled Voice**

Awakening is a powerful word. The fifteenth-century mystic, Kabir, alludes to this fact in the following verse:

Knowing nothing shuts the iron gates; the new love opens them.  
The sound of the gates opening wakes the beautiful woman asleep.  
Kabir says: Fantastic! Don't let a chance like this go by!

What is this new love awakening the soul? In many ways it is a love born out of our ensouled eyes: a love for the physical, a love for the ability of our mind to create and reason as if we were human gods. But such a physical-mental love has to be seen for what it really is, for men and women do more than just learn through their eyes; they *long* with them. As humans we wander endlessly, explore endlessly, because our eyes incessantly wander and explore the physical, cultural, and mental landscapes of life. And what do we long for? Is it the objects of comfort, status, and support of the physical world? Is it the feeling of control, power, freedom, or peace and harmony of the mental sphere? Or do we long to know that we can love, and are loved by, that we can respect and revere, and are respected and revered by, every being on this Earth as a symbol of our ultimate desire: to know and touch the naked God/dess of our creation?

Many of us who choose a path of consciousness are quite familiar with the process of awakening, for it evokes years of surrender, discipline, pain, and joy. Many methods have been developed over millenniums which help our soul to awaken physically, mentally, and spiritually, not only to our self but to that living organism we call Earth, or Gaia, and ultimately to the Cosmic Force behind all creation. But to read Kabir's verse is also to note that the awakening of one's beautiful soul qualities has as much to do with the stirring of an inwardly voice as it does with an inwardly vision. Accordingly, the **Cortesian Self** not only sees with reverence, it hears the voice of reverence rising up from within the soul. Let me briefly describe these voices as I know them.

**The Voice of Challenge.** Our body, mind, and spirit are incredibly powerful instruments, but we never apprentice our energy, as Masters-to-be, to fully tap our potential, except perhaps at moments of crisis. Similarly, our heart, like a vast bottomless chalice, has a tremendous capacity for compassion, but we treat it as if it were a shot glass. The soul's voice of challenge should be heard as one that inspires us to be trustees of ourselves and the Earth, to live to our full height of beingness, and to inspire that in other beings and species. To accept our soul's challenge, as George Bernard Shaw once said . . .

"This is the true joy in life: the being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one, the being thoroughly worn out before you're thrown on the scrap heap; the being a force of nature instead of a feverish little clod of ailments and grievances complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy."

Reverencing the soul is accepting the challenge to bond and attune to life in new ways, or at least to be open to new experiences. There is a challenge in sitting still, moving into the mind,

quieting its restless thoughts. There is a challenge in owning pain and woundedness, and more than that, loving them as necessary functions of our soul, for our greatest need as human beings is to relieve physical, mental, or spiritual suffering and discomfort. There is a challenge in learning to give grace, to love unconditionally, to say "I made a mistake, I am sorry." Challenge moves us into deeper realms of our will, courage, and hope. Otherwise, we learn complacency and bargain away our sovereignty and the sovereignty of others. We develop a willingness in challenge to see forgiveness as the highest form of service. We develop courage to hold out in our willpower as long as we can for our own good and the good of other beings. We finally develop in challenge a greater capacity for utilizing hope, faith, and trust in ourselves, others, and the great Friend/Guest residing within and guiding us all.

In short, I have come to believe that people without a sense of their soul's need for compassionate, rather than self-aggrandizing, challenge often do not have a vision of a life or world greater than themselves. Their life speaks of separateness, loneliness, fear, and often a perceived inability to change their conditions (admittedly, for many oppressed people this is the only reality they bear, and indeed their daily challenge is mere physical survival). And they incessantly wonder what important thing really was supposed to happen in their life but didn't.

**The Voice of Commitment/Devotion.** Our soul is strengthened by challenge. But the test of our ability to invoke and move through challenge is found in unwavering commitment and devotion. To sit in challenge of quieting our restless mind in meditation has deeper significance when the effort is one of daily commitment and devotion, no matter how good or bad our life is moving along. To stay committed to a task, person, relationship, conviction, a sense of place and rightness is to tap into heart-felt unconditionality and the soul's integrity for right effort. It is a statement of devotion to a legacy, however large or small, new or old, radical or archetypal in substance. Reverential commitment has at its core the desire to remake one's life, not as an expression of self-interest, but for the sake of the Earth, and the children and other Nature beings who will inherit it. The life we know and love is not different from the life others know and love.

Commitment/devotion to honor and respect life comes from the soul's voice, a voice which says, to quote Eknath Easwaran, "I give, therefore I am." I would add to this: Rather than living a life of quiet desperation, one should strive to live a life of quiet devotion. Only then will life cease to be a personal burden, but one of reverential service.

**The Voice of Celebration.** Who has not heard the voice of their soul crying out to celebrate life? Celebration, as much as compassionate challenge and commitment, bonds us to archetypal expressions of ceremony, play, ritual, magic, myth, novelty, innocence, and laughter.

Celebration allows us to dance with life --- its challenges to us, our commitment to it. Celebration allows us to honor life as a great spiritual play in which we are both appreciative audience and dancing participants. A bonding heart is a celebrating soul. A celebrating soul is the countenance of a child. Celebration allows us to become like children again, full of awe and wonder for the entertaining Friend/Guest. But celebration also allows us to become like noble sages/crones within our life's work, for to feel fully free within our service to life, we must believe and feel that our daily work consists of sincere and playful effort. Herein lies the inexhaustible source and well of all our life-affirming energies. For, we are no nearer to God than when we are at celebration in a work and play that is reverential.

**The Voice of Contemplation.** Perhaps more than anything else, calm, receptive, and curious contemplative silence remakes and re-awakens our soul's urge in life. When we sit in quiet reflection and meditation, we are not just remaking and re-awakening ourselves, we are remaking and re-awakening our reverential bond to family, community, culture, and Earth/Nature. Within contemplation lays the jewel of reverence, for in our stillness lies the power and insight to align and re-align ourselves with any of life's matrices, as well as to perceive the Ultimate Truth underlying them. Only in the steady alert-relaxed state of meditative consciousness can we begin to understand the many "dyings" of the day, the passing of pregnant moments, and the birthing of new ones. Contemplation allows us to see anew into the mind of reason, the mind of Nature, and the Master Mind of all that is. Contemplation allows us as humans to put a face on Nature and to give Her a voice. It allows us to step outside of time and space, to commune with the future generations of children and natural species in light of our present reverential efforts. It allows us to personalize our relationship with the common spirit of all life, to talk with that spirit. Contemplation allows us to practice the presence of God/dess, Nature, and instrumentally so, to practice the thought and feeling of reverence.

Perhaps in the ultimate sense, the need to bond, the need to see, hear, and touch the awakening Self, is very deeply a need to love. And this is the "something tremendous" people are waiting for to happen in their lives. People want to love something about life, to eat from the plate of significance, not out of a beggar's bowl of mediocrity and indignity. But the record of history shows that, whether one is reverencing their own soul or the soul of a tree, child, rock, plant, or animal, one aspect of life we cannot seem to escape is some degree of suffering. We seem to suffer without bonding and love, and we seem to suffer in the process of discovering our need to bond and love. Indeed, the lesson in life seems to be not one of how much we can expect to love, but how much suffering we can expect to endure in order to love more purely. As Rilke has stated: "Our own heart always exceeds us." As **Cortesian** visionaries, may our

"thinking heart" always lead us with the lamplight of our soul's reverential wisdom. In Part IV we will explore the **Cortesian** concept of *reverencing the Earth*.

Copyright © 2007 by Christopher Forrest McDowell, Ph.D.  
Excerpted from a work-in-progress.

Correspondence: [www.onesanctuary.com](http://www.onesanctuary.com) ([peace@onesanctuary.com](mailto:peace@onesanctuary.com))