

Chartres Course Day 1

The Lunar Era:

Original Participation

Before I begin, I would like to thank Andrew Harvey, for without his support, I would not be here and I would like to thank Jim Garrison for responding to his suggestion to invite me to teach at this gathering and to use my book as the focus of my Course.

In Claudia's communication in February, she said, "Many of us have been called to Chartres in July. It is not only the teachings or the teachers themselves that have called us — it is above all the mystery of what we will create by being together. Those of us so called will have the possibility of forming an organ of cognition for spiritual worlds and beings. This is the new art of community — the creation of something new through coming together. Whenever "soul finds soul" and weaves a vessel into which something of the future can stream in and find its place in the present, something new is created. Through our working together, something entirely new will enter our midst; and this is what is truly calling us. ...We are to hear the unspoken, see the unveiled, and do what has never before been done. This is how change happens."

And we are here, as Karen said in the May transmission, to come together as friends, to articulate a new vision, to enter this precious time of Dialectica with the conscious intention of holding the awareness that we seek truth and divine inspiration from the Cosmos.

1. The Dream of the Cosmos

We exist on a tiny planet in the midst of a cosmos of mind-blowing immensity and extraordinary beauty. What might be its Dream? I mean 'Dream' in the sense of 'Hope'. Through the infinitesimal spark of cosmic light that is our human consciousness, the universe is revealing the complexity and splendour of its evolutionary journey, telling us its story. We are now aware of our evolutionary history and our origins in the Cosmos. But are we aware that the universe has an inner life as well as a material form and that this inner life or Soul is the eternal ground of our own consciousness?

This Course is about reconnecting with this eternal ground, discovering a new image of ourselves, no longer as a fallen species in need of redemption by a saviour, but an awakened species, aware of a new and conscious role as the servant of this planet and of the Cosmos. I hope that in the course of these 5 days together, we will be able to share a new vision, derive new hope and take away from this holy place an experience that will inspire and sustain us for the rest of our lives.

Roi René

It is also about a journey of the heart. In this beautiful night scene, painted by a

king of Provence in the fifteenth century, you will see the king asleep in his bed and his heart being taken from him by an angel and given to a knight who will take it on a journey of discovery into the undiscovered country of his soul. So I would invite you to come with me on a journey into that mysterious country.

Chartres day view of Cathedral

Chartres was built as the earthly temple of the Queen of Heaven. The whole cathedral with its three magnificent rose windows was a hymn to the Sacred Feminine, a hymn to the Virgin Mary as the Throne of Wisdom and Queen of Heaven. Through her association with the moon, the Constellation Virgo, the morning and evening star of the planet Venus and the Milky Way, she came to possess a cosmic significance, seen most clearly in her rose window in the Cathedral, as though she were the womb of the Cosmos holding on her lap Christ as the Solar Logos. In France, there are seven Gothic cathedrals dedicated to the Virgin and the lines of connection between them reflect the shape of the constellation Virgo. Heaven reflected on Earth; As Above, so Below.

Chartres West Façade

Chartres itself bears witness in stone to the harmony of the Cosmos. Its builders knew that the building they had constructed according to sacred geometric principles taught by Pythagoras, had the power to affect the souls of all who entered its precincts, to activate a dormant consciousness within the soul that would act as an inner guide to the experience of the divine Presence infusing all creation. They were able to create such a stupendous masterpiece because their religion, their art, their philosophy, their science and technology were all in harmony. How were the enlightened individuals brought together and the skills developed that could design the form, carve, lift and arrange such enormous amounts of stone in such exquisite harmony and proportion and create stained glass windows that reflected the jewelled walls of the heavenly Jerusalem?

Through their mastery of sacred geometry these men who called themselves Masters of the Compasses, gave twelfth century France and Europe a new image of Man as radiant with divinity, the more so as he was able to bring such marvels into being. In exalting the image of the Virgin and making her the focus of their creation, they rescued the Feminine from the contempt into which it had fallen and they redeemed nature from its association with sin, releasing it into a glorious affirmation of its beauty in fruit, flower and foliage, presided over by the Green Man. Chartres is a phenomenal testament to the creative power of the human imagination when it is directed towards bringing something into being that connects this time-bound world with the eternal one.

Rose window of the Virgin

One of the greatest features of Chartres are its rose windows. The origins of the sacredness of the rose may be traced ultimately to the beautiful eight-year orbital

pattern traced by the planet Venus. The rose was associated with many of the Great Goddesses of the ancient world — with Isis, Aphrodite, Cybele, Venus and, finally, the Virgin Mary who is a goddess in all but name. Mary herself was known in the Middle Ages – at the time of the building of Chartres – as the *Rosa Mystica*. To find the shape of the rose so emphasized in the three great rose windows of Chartres and other Gothic cathedrals suggests that the symbolism of the rose held supreme significance for its builders. The rose is one of the oldest symbols of the Wisdom Tradition and of Divine Wisdom radiating love to our world from the eternal ground. Like the thousand-petalled lotus or the jewel in the heart of the lotus of the Eastern traditions, the rose came to symbolize the awakened soul, united with the divine ground. Notice the four doves of the Holy Spirit above her head.

Starry Cosmos

There are three great mysteries:

- the mystery of starry space;
- the mystery of Nature
- the mystery of our consciousness and its connection with the eternal ground.

Today we will explore the image of the Great Mother and the kind of consciousness that existed in the cultures over which she presided. But first I would like to give you an overview of the principle stages of the last 50,000 years and the principal changes in the archetypal image of deity.

Our Evolutionary Journey

Our physical body – the vehicle for cosmic consciousness – has evolved out of the life of this planet over some four billion years. It has evolved...

- Out of the depths of the Cosmos
- Out of the Life of the planet
- Out of our long experience as humans on this planet

We now have sufficient consciousness to be able to listen to the Cosmos telling us its story. But what evolutionary intention has programmed our emergence from cosmic and planetary life? How can we tune our consciousness to the harmony of the Cosmos to discover our role in this evolutionary process?

The Great Epochs in the Evolution of Consciousness and our Emergence from Nature (Duane Elgin *The Living Universe*)

1. 2 million? to 10,000 BC. The Hunter-Gatherer Stage. 50,000 BC thought to be the date of the emergence of *Homo sapiens sapiens*
2. 10,000 BC The Agrarian Stage – beginning of settled communities, domestication of plants and animals, growth of population.
3. from 2,500 BC., The rise of the Warrior Civilizations: expansion, conquest, exploration and discovery. Formation of huge empires; movement to cities.

Worship of goddesses and gods; followed by the Great Father God of the three Patriarchal Religions.

4. from 1700 AD, The rise of Science, Technology and the Industrial Era – movement to cities. Increase in speed of communication.

5. The Electronic Era and the digital revolution. huge cities and mass communications. Accelerating industrial and population expansion; domination of the Earth.

Notice that each of these epochs as it comes nearer to our time is shorter and shorter.

The Four Main Phases of Belief

1. The Lunar Era: The Great Mother of the Palaeolithic and Neolithic Eras. Spirit is both transcendent and immanent in the phenomenal world. The visible and invisible worlds are connected as they still are in shamanic societies today.

2. The Bronze Age and later: the worship of many goddesses and gods who personified the archetypal powers of the invisible world and who are worshipped in India to this day.

3. The Solar Era and the Iron Age: from 2500 BC. The Great Father God of the three Patriarchal Religions and the Separation of Spirit and Nature, Creator and Creation. The loss of divine immanence and the emphasis on collective belief.

4. The present Secular Age of Scientific Rationalism: Spirit does not exist; there is no transcendent dimension of reality. Nature serves man. Life is a competitive struggle for survival.

The Great Mother: Matrix and container

From as long ago as 40,000 BC, the Great Mother was an image that connected the tiny human self to the greater dimension in which it was embedded. The self was, so to speak, contained within the matrix of the cosmic and Earth Mother, like a child in the womb. (connect with experience of early years of life) The consciousness of this time was largely unconscious and instinctive — what the philosopher Owen Barfield called Original Participation. It was a totally different way of perceiving and relating to life than the one we have now. We lived within the life of the Great Mother who *was* the Earth and the Cosmos. There was no clear differentiation between ourselves and the ensouled life that surrounded us. Everything had meaning; everything was numinous and alive. This experience still survives in certain indigenous cultures today and to some extent in the rural areas of Southern India. It gave rise to the feeling of kinship with all creation.

Creation emerges from the Cosmic Womb of the Great Mother

Creation emerges from the Womb of the Great Mother, worshipped as the Ruler of the Sky, the Earth and the Underworld.

Life is an organic, living and sacred whole. All forms of life participate in the Web of Life that is the Life of the Great Mother

The Milky Way is the passageway by which souls enter and leave this world.

The shamanic journey into the Otherworld is the spiritual experience throughout this time.

The Moon (Chinese picture)

I am showing you this beautiful picture from China to show how numinous the moon was to these early people, how they were inspired to invent myths and stories about its different phases.

The moon was regarded as one of the supreme images of the Great Mother and the later Great Goddesses, the unifying power of the Mother of All. The moon governed the fecundity of woman, the waters of the sea and the phases of increase and decrease in the life of the crops. It was an enduring image both of renewal in time and of a timeless totality, because what was apparently lost with the waning and dark moon was restored with the waxing moon. Duality, imaged as the waxing and waning moon, was contained in her totality. So, following this train of thought, life and death were not perceived as opposites but were seen as phases succeeding each other in a rhythm that was endless.

Today, when we look up at the night sky, we are connected to the hundreds of generations of people who watched the circumpolar movement of the stars and the changing yet stable course of the luminous moon. Over thousands of years, they observed the connection between the cyclical rhythm of the four phases of the moon's life and the rhythm of the four seasons of the Earth.

People experienced the phases of their own lives—youth, maturity, old age, death as woven into the rhythm and fabric of that greater life. The constant return of the crescent moon after the three days of darkness laid the foundation for trust in the survival of the soul and hope in the renewal of life after apparent death, and may have been the original inspiration of the belief in reincarnation. This lunar pattern, constantly repeated through aeons of time spoke to our imagination, giving rise to myths which endured for thousands of years. We began to perceive birth and death as rites of passage for the soul as it journeyed between the visible and invisible dimensions of the Great Mother, a journey that followed a path through the Milky Way and the labyrinth of the stars. The ancestors were not lost to the living but were close by, available — through

shamanic mediation — to counsel and guide. In lunar culture there was no final demarcation line between life and death or between death and rebirth.

Photo of lunar Phases

The Mythic Theme of Lunar Culture is a cyclical process of Birth, Death and Regeneration. This arose from the age-old observation of the recurring phases of the moon: its birth as the crescent, its waxing to fullness, and its waning into the three days of darkness.

Over tens of thousands of years, shamanic rituals and myths kept alive the sense of connection between this world and the other invisible world whose symbol, initially, may have been the mysterious dark phase of the moon. Out of that darkness the crescent was continually reborn—symbolically associated with the regeneration of the Earth's life and, as in India, with cosmic cycles lasting hundreds of thousands of years.

The Moon was the inspiration for the greatest myths and rituals of ancient cultures:

Sumer: The Descent of Inanna

Egypt: Isis's search for Osiris

Babylonia: Ishtar's search for her son, Tammuz, asleep in the Underworld

Anatolia and Rome: Cybele's search for her son Attis

Greece: Demeter's search for her daughter Persephone

All these were in essence lunar myths, but they also celebrated the regeneration of the Earth in spring connected with the return of the young god or goddess.

The later Christian myth of Christ's birth, death and resurrection took the myth of death and regeneration to a new level, signifying the birth of a new aeon. But it was no longer connected to the cycles of the Earth's life as the earlier myths were.

The Green Man

All over Europe, particularly in the great cathedrals, the image of the Green Man appears, in ceiling bosses, in choir stalls, in the carvings at the top of columns. All these images are the work of the master builders of the Middle Ages, many of whom were familiar with alchemy and its secrets. All these images proclaim: I am the *lumen naturae*, the light of nature. Spirit is here and present in all you see, touch and hear. The image of the Green Man goes back to Osiris, Attis and Tammuz, the dying and resurrected gods who personified the Earth's regeneration. This image embodies spirit through the hand of the master who sculpted it. The influence of the Green Man manifests later in the figure of Pan, the god of Nature, of greenness and regeneration.

The Unity of Life

Just as the stars emerged each night from the darkness of the night sky, so the visible universe was born from the dark mystery of the invisible.

Everything was infused with divinity because each and all were part of a living, breathing, connecting web of life animated by spirit. The air was sacred; the water was sacred; the rocks, plants and trees were sacred.

The hidden dimension of spirit was present in every atom of the manifest world.

People lived within a Sacred Order; the Order of the Great Mother

Cecil's Painting

I have put this painting here because it portrays everything I have just explained – how everything was connected and everything sacred, presided over by the image of the goddess or Great Mother.

The Flower of Life

I think that it is from this very ancient time that the image of the Flower of Life and the Net of Indra originate. The Flower of Life has been found in many places, but particularly in Egypt. The beautiful image of the Net of Indra comes from India and the awareness of its ancient sages that all things were connected, all things essentially a divine unity. Every individual and element of life was connected to every other through this cosmic Net and Flower of Life.

Bramabau

Certain features of the landscape were experienced as a portal or ladder to the invisible world. The invisible world could reveal itself in the strange shape of a rock, the flight of a bird, the stirring of the leaves of an oak tree, the ripples on a lake, the gushing of a spring from a fissure in a rock, as in this picture. In other words, nature was held to be conscious and able to communicate with man. Shamanic wisdom and ways of accessing the invisible dimension were passed orally from teacher to pupil for thousands of years.

Shamans and later poets, artists, philosophers and musicians, received their inspiration and their calling from the invisible world. The words spoken, the music heard, the dreams and visions seen came not from “inside” us, but from the soul of the cosmos, from daemonic beings and the spirits of animals, trees, mountains and rivers as well as from the ancestors who were never thought of as ‘dead’ but who formed a continuous line of connection with the living. At a heightened level of perception, the natural world was perceived as almost transparent to that other world—a theophany or showing forth of it. Everything was alive with spirit.

Fairy tales may be the residual fragments of that forgotten participatory experience where forests were inhabited by creatures who would help or hinder

us; where spirits of tree and mountain, stream and sacred spring could speak to us; where bears or frogs or swans might be daemonic beings in disguise; and where old women or old men living deep in the forest might offer us wise counsel, or birds bring us messages, warn us of dangers, comfort us in bereavement and act as guides.

Avebury

In the megalithic era around 2,500 BC great natural temples were built to connect the human community with the life of the cosmos. This extraordinary stone temple at Avebury in the form of a vast serpent with two “eggs” in its belly has only part of one of the central circles surviving to our day yet it is still numinous for the people who visit it. These great stone temples were the ancestors of a cathedral like Chartres which acts as a portal to another dimension of reality.

New Grange Temple

Around 2500 BC, we find this extraordinary temple of New Grange in Ireland that gleamed white in the moonlight. We know it would have been a temple of the Great Mother as her triple lunar spiral is found carved on a huge stone in front of its entrance. In the right hand picture, the opening above the doorway of the temple is where the first ray of the sun entering at dawn at the winter solstice streamed down a narrow passage, lighting up a stone at its far end. This magical dawn event signified the union of the sun with the earth and the renewal of the earth’s fertility. This ritual connected the community with the cosmos.

All these images tell us that at this time we were already aware of two dimensions of experience—this earthly one and another invisible one, to which we were connected as if by an umbilical cord. Myth came into being in order to connect this world with that other one and to create a sacred space where the connection with the eternal would be kept alive and honoured through ritual, story-telling and the cultivation of the mythopoeic imagination. All these connections and associations came into being through the ability of people to observe and to listen and to make connections between what they saw and what they intuitively understood.

Rituals like those of the later Orphic and Eleusinian Mysteries in Greece strengthened the sense of participation in an unseen reality and gave initiates an experience of the immortality of the soul. In a culture where visionary experience was validated, people spoke with goddesses and gods in dream and vision. Birds were recognised as messengers of the invisible, very possibly because people dreamed about them in this role or even heard them as a voice speaking inside them. Birds in later cultures are transformed into angels but in countless paintings of the Christian era we still have the image of the dove, bird of the Holy Spirit. Intuitive sensibility and the ability to communicate with the

spirits of plants taught people to gather, grind or distil certain herbs and plants for healing illness. Rites of incubation and healing were practised in many sanctuaries. We know from Greece that dreams and visions were of great importance in the diagnosis and healing of disease. Everything was connected, everything was sacred. The shaman-healers who guided these cultures were trained to enter a state of utter stillness and to listen and observe what they heard and saw in an altered state of consciousness.

We carry within us a very ancient kind of consciousness that I have named lunar consciousness and associated with the timeless wisdom of the soul. It is an instinctive, participatory, holistic, relational way of knowing, mediated through instinct, sensory observation, intuition, feeling (the heart) and is still found in Shamanic cultures today. Many of you may have been drawn towards recovering this lost intuitive and participating consciousness, bringing it to life again within you.

The Great Mother of the Palaeolithic

Now I would like to turn to specific images of the Great Mother associated with this ancient time and follow them through different cultures. Here are three images of her. The central one is the oldest and has been recently discovered in Germany and dated to around 40,000 BC. The others were found in the Dordogne area of France and date to around 25,000 BC. Note the left hand image and how her left hand rests on her belly and her right holds a bison's horn in the shape of the crescent moon, making the association between the waxing life in the heavens and the growing life in her womb.

The Cave

In Western Europe in the Palaeolithic era when the magnificent paintings we so admire were created, the cave was the most sacred place, the focus of the life of the tribe. Symbolically, it represented the womb of the Great Mother, the secret, hidden source of her regenerative power. It was from such mysterious places as the cave and the later megalithic temple-tomb and passage grave that she was believed to bring forth the living and receive the souls of the dead back into herself for regeneration and rebirth. The cave may always have been a place where those to be initiated were taken, where rites of incubation were practised and the shamanic experience of death and rebirth evoked. The cave still symbolizes, in vision, dream and mystical experience, the deep, instinctual psychic level which gives access to revelation and communion with levels of consciousness beyond our normal range. People still seek out caves and places held sacred for millennia to hold special rituals for healing and communion with an invisible world.

Even now, as one retraces their path into the far recesses of a cave, awed and silenced by the weight of the darkness, one can feel what the people of this ancient time felt—one is inside the womb of the Great Mother, in the utter

stillness, the mystery of darkness, at the very heart of life. In the furthest reach of the cave, in domed chambers, vast as a cathedral, but sometimes in narrow passages, people painted and carved the magnificent animals we can see today.

Bison from Chauvet Cave

The oldest cave system we know of in Europe is the Chauvet cave in the Rhone Valley which has been dated to 32,000 BC, 20,000 years older than the cave at Lascaux. The explorers who discovered this enormous cave said that they could feel the living presence and spirit of these artists and felt themselves to be intruders. They were utterly astounded by what they discovered.

The animals, like the people who painted them, were one form of the teeming life of the Great Mother upon which human life depended. The breaking of the divine order by the slaying of an animal required a ritual honouring of the animal's spirit in order to ensure that it would consent to return to be hunted again and therefore ensure the survival of the tribe or clan. This necessitated a journey to the realm of spirit to request the return of the animal. The painted images of these caves are so remarkable because they suggest a well-developed community surviving over tens of thousands of years, with a continuity of mythological beliefs, images and rituals, and advanced imaginative and technical skills to express them.

Shaman from Lascaux

This shaman from Lascaux shows him lying prone on the floor, penis erect, flying like the bird perched on his staff to the invisible world. Shamans mediated between two worlds of human experience, and their flight into darkness took place, necessarily, in the most secret part of the cave where ordinary vision could be more readily transcended.... The artist and the shaman were probably one and the same. Through their magical power to recreate the animals on the walls of the temple caves, they connected the tribe with the source of life that animated both human and animal, becoming themselves vehicles of that source, creators of the living form like the source itself.

Bird Goddess Palaeolithic

The first image is the earliest known one of the bird form of the Great Mother. Note the stylised wings and the marks suggesting a necklace. The second image is from northern Greece in the Neolithic era and the third is from the area of the Dardanelles. The fourth is Aphrodite standing on her sacred bird, the goose or swan. The bird later became the messenger of the goddess. In Chartres, we find the dove, messenger of the Holy Spirit, surrounding the figure of the Virgin in her Rose Window. I have included a crop circle of swallows because the bird as messenger of the invisible world still holds great significance. I know some of you have had a bird such as an owl or a raven coming to warn you of the passing of someone close to you or have had a bird or birds acting as an escort for the

soul as it transitions to the other world. This numinous event and the connection between the bird and the Great Mother would have been noted for millennia in earlier cultures.

Map of Old Europe

An archaeologist called Marija Gimbutas excavated goddess figures over a large area of Europe and discovered an unknown civilisation that she called the Civilisation of Old Europe and dated from 7,000 to 3,500 BC. This map shows part of that civilisation that from modern Romania in the East, to Malta in the south and Italy in the west. She realised that the many different images she found represented the three dimensions of the Great Mother as the sky with her life-giving waters, the earth with her life-giving crops and her waters beneath the earth essential for the survival of animals, crops and people. Gimbutas wrote a wonderful book called *The Language of the Goddess* containing hundreds of beautiful images. There is no evidence of war in this extraordinary civilisation which vanished abruptly, possibly because it was destroyed by invaders coming into it from the area of the Black Sea. I would like to show you some images from this unknown early civilisation.

Neolithic goddess with labyrinth and door

These are two of the most remarkable images from the Danube Valley. The labyrinth and the spiral were at this early time, symbols of the connecting pathway between this world and the unseen cosmic dimension of the Great Mother's womb. If you look at the right-hand figure you will find traces of the bird-shaped head of older images. I would like briefly to show a few other images from this civilisation. Tiny female figures and exquisite and very large decorated pottery vessels were shown in a wonderful exhibition a few years ago in New York and Oxford called *The Civilization of Old Europe*.

Old Europe Circle of enthroned goddess figures

Old Europe figure of woman back and front

Old Europe pottery vessels

Priestess from Hypogeum

Malta has some of the oldest surviving Neolithic temples whose shape follows the contours of a womb, or the shape of the Great Mother. Some temples have been discovered submerged beneath the coastal waters suggesting that Malta was once much bigger than it is today. This sleeping woman found in an extraordinary underground temple in Malta called the Hypogeum. She may be a priestess engaged in a rite of incubation or possibly oracular dreaming.

Inanna-Ishtar

Three images above all are associated with the goddess in early cultures: the bird, the lion and the serpent, each representing one of her three domains of the sky, the earth and the waters beneath the earth. This is an image of Inanna/Ishtar from about 2,000 BC. Notice her bird wings, her serpent head-dress, her large bird talons and the owls and lions at her feet.

Tree of Life Egypt

But there is one other very important image – the Tree of Life. We find it in Sumerian and Babylonian mythology but its most beautiful expression is from Egypt. In all the temples of the goddess in the Middle East and in Egypt and Greece there was a sacred tree – usually a sycamore because of its milk sap but also an olive.

Hathor (note uraeus on forehead)

Egypt has bequeathed to us one of the clearest images of this ancient worldview. The mythological imagery associated with two goddesses, Hathor and Isis is of paramount significance for understanding the concept of the cosmos as a living maternal entity: These goddesses were interchangeable with each other. Both were imagined as the nurturing Mother of the universe and as the creative impulse which flowed from the cosmic immensity of their being. It was they who endowed Pharaoh with the divine fiery power to rule Egypt represented by the uraeus that both wore on their head-dress. More specifically, Hathor was imagined as the Milky Way, whose milk nourished all life, yet she was also immanent within the forms of life, immanent in the statues that stood in her temples and in the beautiful blue lotus that was daily laid at her feet. As Divine Mother, Hathor received the souls of the dead at the entrance to her sacred mountain, thought to be located behind the magnificent temple at Deir-el-Bahri that Queen Hatshepsut (1505-1484 BC) built to honor and house the goddess. Goddesses and gods were, at that time, believed to inhabit their temples. The Milky Way itself, in Egyptian as well as many other ancient cultures was looked upon not only as the great stellar causeway that souls took as they entered and left this world but as the Great Mother, Source of All. This is why, both in Egypt and Mesopotamia, as well as India, the goddess was worshipped as a Cow whose milk nourished all life.

Hathor with Pharaoh

I am showing you this beautiful picture because it reflects the very close relationship between the Goddess and Pharaoh.

Sekhmet

Sekhmet, the lion-headed goddess, personifies the dark aspect of the Great Mother who could bring famine, drought and pestilence.

Winged Isis as Bird Goddess

This beautiful image of Isis carries forward the legacy of the Bird Goddess of the Neolithic era.

The Dwat within Nut as overarching sky with stars

The goddess Nut was the night sky, whose vast cosmic body was home to all the stars. This picture shows the invisible world carried within her body and known as the *Dwat*. When the Egyptians looked up at the night sky, they saw the body of this goddess, sparkling with the light of the stars. The sun god “died” into her body on his nightly descent into the underworld and was reborn from her at the dawn of a new day. Nut’s image was painted on the inside of coffin lids and sometimes on the base as well, as if to enfold the soul entrusted to her care in her cosmic embrace. There is a moving inscription to her on a fragment of stone in the Louvre. I will read it to you because it evokes her Presence and you can hear the legacy of the earlier Great Mother:

O my mother Nut, stretch your wings over me;
Let me become like the imperishable stars,
like the indefatigable stars.
O Great Being who is in the world of the Dead,
At whose feet is Eternity, in whose hand is the Always,
O Great Divine Beloved Soul
Who is in the mysterious abyss, come to me.

Artemis of Ephesus

Artemis was the Great Goddess of Anatolia whose original name there was Cybele. Once her statue stood in her magnificent temple at Ephesus that was destroyed in 356 BC. Resting on her many breasts is the great lunar crescent identifying her as a Moon Goddess. Beneath it is a circle of tiny acorns. On her body are sculpted different animals including lions, bulls, stags and bees as well as plants, angelic beings and priestesses of her temple. Her breasts signify boundless nourishment. In Greece, however, there is a darker aspect of Artemis as goddess of the Wilderness and the Animals. Hecatombs of animals were annually sacrificed to her and Iphigenia, daughter of Agamemnon, was sacrificed to her in order to secure a favourable wind for Troy.

Cretan priestess with serpents

I am showing you this image of the Cretan goddess of priestess because it shows the continuity of the serpent power of the Great Mother – the power both to destroy and regenerate life. On her head is a leopard. The figure on the right is a priestess wearing the great knot of her sacred role.

Athena and serpent

And here is the serpent again in this wonderful sculpture of Athena from the oldest temple on the Acropolis.

Cybele in chariot drawn by lions (Roman)

With the Anatolian goddess Cybele who also was worshipped in Rome, we find the image of the lion. This sculpture of the goddess in a chariot drawn by lions is, of all places, in one of the main squares in Madrid.

Persephone

Parmenides, living in southern Italy in the fifth century BC, describes his shamanic journey into the Underworld, driving in a chariot drawn by mares and steered by young women. There the Goddess Persephone takes his right hand in hers, telling him to transmit her teaching to the world of mortals. Parmenides had a great influence on his contemporaries and a long line of shaman teachers whose names are recorded on stone in the town of Velia south of Naples is now known to have descended from him. This shamanic view of reality and the practice of incubation was most highly developed in Egypt and Western Anatolia, from whence it was transmitted to the Greek philosophers.

To sum up the essence of this long lunar era, if we listen to Pre-Socratic philosophers of the sixth century BC, we find that they carry forward the legacy of the participatory experience. Heraclitus suggests that the soul is of unfathomable depth. Thales of Miletus speaks of the “All” as being alive and full of daemons who are the agents of the one soul-substance. Another says that humanity and nature are fundamentally inseparable because both participate in the same underlying “substance” which he calls soul. Pythagoras spent forty years with the astronomer-priests of Egypt and Babylon before he defined the mathematical laws which to him, embodied the intelligence, wisdom and mathematical harmony of the cosmos – laws which eventually reached the builders of Chartres. He left these words to encourage us: “Take heart, for the human race is divine.” Finally, Plato (429-347 BC), in his *Timaeus*, was the first to give a name to the image of an all-embracing cosmic entity which he describes as a “single Living Creature that encompasses all the living creatures that are within it.” He called it *psuche tou cosmou* or the Soul of the Cosmos. It is the Platonic understanding that the Cosmos has a soul and that this Cosmic Soul is the origin or ground of our own individual soul, our own consciousness that we need to recover. But with Plato we lose the ancient connection of the Cosmos with the image of the Great Mother.

Black Madonna of Chartres

So we come to Chartres whose Black Madonna, like all the other Black Madonnas, carries the imagery of the Great Mother of an earlier age and is the

descendent of Artemis, Isis and Cybele – all of whom were sometimes imaged as black because of their ancient connection with the moon. I have not shown the Black Madonna of the Piller because she has recently been cleaned and now looked like a china doll. The Black Madonna stands for the wisdom and the power of the Great Mother as the great web of life and as the power both to create and destroy but also to regenerate. If we are to reconnect with the Feminine we need to remember Jung's words: "Nothing to which the psyche belongs or which is part of the psyche is ever lost. To live fully, we have to reach down and bring back to life the deepest levels of the psyche from which our present consciousness has evolved."

Images of the Archetypal Feminine

So, coming near the end, here are some of the principle images of the archetypal feminine:

The moon, the Mother, the Sea, water, the serpent

The Cosmos, the Soul, the Earth, Nature

The Heart

The Grail

The Rose, the Lily, the Dove

The Triple Spiral, the Circle, the Labyrinth & the Vase or Vessel

Crop circle of Milk Hill – the new Flower of Life

This beautiful image which appeared in 2001 in a place in England called Milk Hill in Wiltshire. It has been called "The New Flower of Life". Created in the space of a single night, it is 900 feet across and has 409 individual circles, ranging from 4' to 70'. It has six "arms" each with 12 large circles. We could see it as a template for a new creation, a new phase of our evolutionary journey.

Crop circle enlarged

What I hope I have conveyed to you in this first talk is the continuity of the images of the Feminine through a vast expanse of time in many different cultures. These images kept alive the sense that everything was connected and everything was sacred because it was the life of the Great Mother or the Great Goddess. The principle feature of this time was a sense of kinship with all creation. Today in the phenomenon of crop circles, it seems as if we are being asked to reconnect with the Earth and the Cosmos, to see the Earth once again as sacred and part of a cosmic whole.