

***The Cartesian Chasm:
Karl Stern's Understanding of the Roots of our Cultural Pathology***

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As environmentalist Bill McKibben (2015) pointed out in a recent review of the papal encyclical, “Instead of a narrow, and focused contribution to the climate debate,” *Laudato Si*’ is “no less than a sweeping, radical, and highly persuasive critique of how we inhabit this planet—an ecological critique, yes, but also a moral, social, economic, and spiritual commentary.” According to His Holiness, Pope Francis (and I will quote extensively here from *Laudato Si*’), “A certain way of understanding human life and activity has gone awry, to the serious detriment of the world around us” (LS 101). The basic problem lies deeper than technology *per se*:

... it is the way that humanity has taken up technology and its development *according to an undifferentiated and one-dimensional paradigm*. This paradigm exalts the concept of a subject who, using logical and rational procedures, progressively approaches and gains control over an external object. This subject makes every effort to establish the scientific and experimental method, which in itself is already a technique of possession, mastery and transformation. It is as if the subject were to find itself in the presence of something formless, completely open to manipulation. Men and women have constantly intervened in nature, but for a long time this meant being in tune with and respecting the possibilities offered by the things themselves. It was a matter of receiving what nature itself allowed, as if from its own hand. Now, by contrast, we are the ones to lay our hands on things, attempting to extract everything possible from them while frequently ignoring or forgetting the reality in front of us. Human beings and material objects no longer extend a friendly hand to one another; the relationship has become confrontational (LS 106).

In Francis’s view, “... many problems of today’s world stem from the tendency, at times unconscious, to make the method and aims of science and technology an epistemological paradigm which shapes the lives of individuals and the workings of society. The effects of imposing this model on reality as a whole, human and social, are seen in the deterioration of the environment, but this is just one sign of a reductionism which affects every aspect of human and social life” (LS 107).

In finding the roots of the ecological crisis in an objectifying epistemological paradigm, Francis is in fundamental agreement with the thought of Karl Stern who, over half a

century ago, arrived at the same diagnosis, locating the origins of the malaise of modernity in what he saw as the ever-widening “Cartesian chasm” (Stern, 1975, p. 171) between *res cogitans* and *res extensa*, subject and object, reason and nature. Like Francis, Stern in no way devalues science and technology *per se*: “If ... one regards the split as the basic premise for all scientific investigation, it is quite legitimate [I]t was only by this radical severance between observing subject and observable object that the exact sciences could be developed” (p. 76). But when “methods become mentalities” (p. 77), when a heuristic division is reified and extended beyond its proper domain, what results is a “disastrous fallacy” (p. 76) leading to a “fearful estrangement” in which subjects reduced to their cognitive functions confront and seek to observe, manipulate and control phenomena reduced to the status of material or biological objects. Stern (1975) writes, “A theory, to remain strictly scientific, has to treat the world around us ... as some huge, monstrous *res extensa* that I can analyze experimentally and mathematically but into which I cannot enter intuitively. If I insist on treating the universe around me as such a scientific object, I have to assume a strange attitude: I have to cease to belong to the universe I am studying” (p. 166).

Distinct from such objectifying knowledge, Jacques Maritain (1940), following St. Thomas and Dionysius the Areopagite, recognized knowledge through “connaturality.” Through *Einfühlung* (empathy) we can *identify* with people and animals on the basis of our common creatureliness, and even with all material things (for, like them, we *are*). This type of identification or imaginative union is capable of yielding a sense that, in Stern’s (1975) words, “This is a universe to which I belong” (p.169). In *The Third Revolution*, Stern (1955) made the case that psychoanalysis, despite its manifest materialism and biological reductionism, represents a profound challenge to both subject-object and mind-body dualism and the deepening sense of estrangement to which they give rise by objectifying the other and reducing the subject to a disembodied and disaffected observer. In an essay on “Psychoanalysis and Philosophy” he writes that it was the psychiatrist and philosopher Karl Jaspers who was the first to point out that “the discovery [psychoanalysis] was not made by scientific methods, if by science we mean the experimental and the quantifiable. It was made by a stroke of empathic genius, and only dressed up in the semantics of the experimental-quantifiable sciences” (Stern, 1975, p. 131).

Sigmund Freud came of age in the era of ideological Darwinism. He was born only three years prior to the publication in 1859 of *The Origin of Species*. His subsequent training in the 19th century Helmholtz school of physicalistic physiology meant that his conception of science was thoroughly positivist and reductionist. He was later to complain that his scientific reports read like short stories and he felt compelled to supplement his humanistic clinical theory—which, like both great and not-so-great literature, is about people, their motives, conflicts and suffering—with an abstract second level of theory, the so-called metapsychology, developed in the depersonalized materialistic and biologicistic language of forces, energies, instincts and mechanisms grounded in a conception of the human mind as something like a machine (a steam engine perhaps) and a reductionist concept of man as an animal. While certainly recognizing our animality, even such later Darwinists as Sir Julian Huxley (1947) transcended the reductionism of

Darwin's champion, Julian's grandfather, Thomas Henry Huxley, by recognizing "the uniqueness of man." Whenever I use that phrase, in order to defend against the assumption that I am embracing some form of vainglorious species-ism, I am compelled to point out that critics of humanity's unique destructiveness are, like Sir Julian, acknowledging our uniqueness, freed as we are from the instinctual restraints built-in to other species. Stern (1975) writes "Freud deceived himself into thinking that he had created something resembling the natural sciences while all his genuine discoveries were based on empathy" (p. 236). In its abstract metapsychology, psychoanalysis displays what Jürgen Habermas (1971) refers to as its "scientific self-misunderstanding." In reality, psychoanalysis is a *verstehende* discipline, employing what the psychoanalyst Heinz Kohut (1959) called "the empathic-introspective method," yielding knowledge less by observation than by connaturality.

Stern explains how psychoanalysis undermines the dualism of mind *versus* body through its insights into the unconscious dynamics underlying psychosomatic illness, mind and body being revealed as far more intimately interconnected than any Cartesian dualism would allow. (In this connection I recall the man who came to me covered in an inflamed and oozing rash that a multiplicity of medical and alternative therapies had failed to heal. It quickly began to disappear as, through psychoanalysis, he became aware of how his hitherto unconscious hatred of his parents and siblings made him feel condemned to "burn in hell.") In eroding defenses against feelings employed, not just by schizoid intellectuals but by all those who attempt to live primarily in their heads, psychoanalysis promotes the development of emotional in addition to cognitive intelligence. Beyond this, the empathic method of psychoanalysis overcomes the strict division between subject and object through an imaginative union whereby the self puts itself in the place of the other and the other in the place of the self. Freud, Melanie Klein and Wilfred Bion describe processes of projection and introjection whereby I unconsciously attribute elements of myself to another and elements of another to myself. Sometimes the other induces his or her feelings in me, or I induce mine in him or her. Sometimes we even come unconsciously to *enact* induced traits and play a part in another's drama or get them to play a part in ours. Such unconscious processes expose the often blurry distinction between inner and outer, self and other. Over the years in my work with couples I have usually found that a good deal of what he complains of in her is rather similar to what she complains about in him—and that I end up complaining (to myself) about both of them! Not that such insight is entirely new. Long ago, the greatest therapist of all time asked: "And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?" (*Matt.7:3 KJV*). Stern provides clinical illustrations of how insight into a patient's unconscious subjectivity facilitates treating him or her as a *Thou* rather than an *It* (Buber, 1937), a humane alternative to the objectifying treatments so often provided by non-analytic psychiatry.

For Stern (1965), at the outset at least, "Cartesianism is *not* alienation pure and simple" (p. 124). The very structure of the *res extensa*, manifesting order rather than chaos, is the foundation of Descartes' idea of a *mathesis universalis*, a hypothetical universal science modeled on mathematics that would reveal the lawful structure of reality. Although he was a contemporary of Bishop Jansensus and may have had some contact with him,

Descartes' cleavage between spirit and nature had not yet devolved into the Manichaeism of the creation and the flesh characteristic of Jansenism and Calvinism. Blaise Pascal, who was influenced by Port-Royal, manifests more than a hint of this ("The silence of these infinite spaces terrifies me"). But such Manichaeism emerges *in plena vitiatam extreme* in Schopenhauer and Sartre. By the time we get to Schopenhauer, Stern writes, "Instead of *logos* versus *materia* it is more a question of *logos* versus *bios*. ... And while for the Frenchman the *res extensa*, the universe around us, could be elucidated as a crystalline pattern, to the Teutonic mind it became a huge, dark vortex of insatiable forces" and "sex is the evil lying at the very center of nature" (pp. 109-110). Finally, in the thinking of another Frenchman, Jean-Paul Sartre (a philosopher not at all averse to sex, the more perverse the better), the split between *res cogitans* and *res extensa* has deepened into that between *être pour soi* and *être en soi*, the estranged, one could well say schizoid, subject forever confronted with a persecutory world of sheer contingency in which, in Stern's words, "You are inextricably involved with matter (mother), and moreover it is [for Sartre] a sticky, messy, oozing business which makes you vomit" (p. 133).

From a psychoanalytic point of view, I find quite convincing Stern's tracing of the pathological forms of dualism characteristic of these thinkers to disturbances in their early relationships with the mother. The hatred of matter is, for Stern, ultimately the hatred of *mater*. Descartes' mother died when he was just over a year old; Schopenhauer's seems to have been a cold, castrating narcissist; Sartre, who lost his father at age two, was raised by his mother in her father's home; he seems to have regarded her more as a sister than a mother and unapologetically acknowledges his fondness for relationships tinged with an incestuous *frisson* (see Rowley. 2005; Carveth, 2007). In the Sartrean vision, given the "battle to the death of consciousnesses" in which "hell is other people" and "man is a useless passion," loving mutuality appears all but impossible. But Stern (1975) argues that psychoanalysis "lifts the curse of a Manichaeism" by exposing "the inner bond between instinctual drives and the loftiest strivings of man, between the undifferentiated *need* for love in the newborn and the *gift* of love by the mature" (p. 34). Psychoanalysis reveals that *chthonic* forces may over time be tamed and transformed through the processes of substitution that Hegel described as *Aufheben* or "sublation" and that Freud called "sublimation." Later psychoanalysts, such as Melanie Klein (1957) and Donald Winnicott (1963), describe the developmental progression from narcissistic self-encapsulation to the capacity for concern for the other, and from envy to gratitude.

In Western culture the valorization of scientific or analytic/objective over *verstehende*, aesthetic and intuitive ways of knowing became extreme. Stern (1975) writes, "The reason most of us hesitate to apply the word 'knowledge' to insight within the aesthetic continuum and want to reserve it strictly for scientific knowledge is that our minds have become so warped by the positivist bias that we cannot think straight any more" (p. 167). But to hold that a disturbed early relationship with the mother may predispose one to feel a pervasive alienation from feelings and from *being*, to privilege intellect over emotion, and prefer technical mastery *over* rather than a grateful, mutually sustaining relationship *with* nature, is not at all to equate, as Stern does, the objective/analytic, dominating and

activist orientation with masculinity and the empathic/intuitive, receptive and contemplative virtues with femininity. The mere fact that these equations long characterized our patriarchal culture is no valid reason for retaining them. In keeping with these outmoded associations, Stern (1965), like Freud, considers the aggressive, tyrannical, castrating type of woman he associates with “Hedda and Her Companions” (chapter 8) as “masculine” precisely because he idealizes woman. In reality, both men and women can sometimes be cold and destructive and sometimes warm and nurturing. In his book by that title Stern (1965) is not really writing about *Flight From Woman*, but about flight from the nurturing qualities, the wisdom and virtues traditionally associated with women but that are desperately needed by both sexes.

Stern (1965) opens *Flight From Woman* with a discussion of the problem of *activism*. “A lack of balance between action and contemplation ... is said to be characteristic of our time. The man of restless energy, the hustler and go-getter, is a figure familiar to the popular imagination; one associates this kind of life with ‘organization men,’ ‘managerial’ and ‘executive’ types” (p. 1). While Stern sees the hyper-rationalism and hyper-activism of our culture as reflecting “a maternal conflict and a rejection of the feminine,” five decades later, in a world in which hyper-active and hyper-rational female executives are not rare, we can see that the problem reflects not a rejection of the feminine but of values—such as receptivity, tenderness, nurturance, patience, feelings, the heart—traditionally associated with femininity. In his critique of our “frenzied activism,” “restlessness,” “endless drive and ambition,” “flight into work,” “denial of feelings, a shying away from tenderness, and a fear of dependence and passivity” (p. 3), Stern echoes the earlier work of the Scottish psychotherapist Ian Suttie (1935) who wrote of the “taboo on tenderness” characteristic of our culture.

In his essay on “Joseph Pieper,” Stern (1975) writes:

Like Faust, Western man since the Renaissance has been on a continuous, never-ending search for conquest and domination. Nature and the universe have become an *object* of ‘prying into’ and technical mastery. In rural civilizations man’s attitude toward nature contained a necessary element of patience and abandonment, an attitude of waiting (for things to grow) and trust (that the cycles of nature would fulfill themselves). ... Future ... is all that which I *let come* toward me, in an attitude of patience, passivity, suffering. In contrast to this, to the activist temper of our time, future is that which I am going to *shape* and to *master*.

In relation to the sociologist and psychoanalyst Erich Fromm’s (1942) distinction between “rational faith” and “irrational faith,” Stern (1965) writes that the former is for Fromm “linked with the experience of growth, it implies an *active* relation with man and nature and is therefore linked with *activity* ... and is typical of a tendency to establish the activist and rationalist mood of our time as the foundation of the human condition, and to make religious terms, hallowed by age, fit this current philosophy” (pp. 298-9). Here, Stern puts his finger on a major flaw in the thought of an otherwise admirable thinker. In my review of a recent book that forms part of the current and long overdue Fromm

revival (Durkin, 2014; Carveth, 2015b), I pointed out that, for Fromm, “passivity” is almost a dirty word. Following Marx, Fromm located human nature, our “species-being,” in *productive activity*. But it is unrestrained, Promethean activity, industry and “growth” in both capitalist and “socialist” forms, that has and is destroying our ecosystems and, hence, ourselves. Fromm (1947) defined what he saw as the mature and healthy approach to life as a *productive* orientation. This stress upon productivity, activity, powers, and achievement exists, to my mind, in tension with Fromm’s (1976) late groping toward the values of *being*. It is true that in his later years Fromm became interested in Buddhism, especially Zen, and began, as Gabriel Marcel (1965) had done earlier, to distinguish *being* from *having*—but notably not from *doing*. Given the centrality of productive activity in Fromm’s very definition of human nature and his devaluation of passivity, I was not surprised to learn from Lawrence Friedman’s (2013) recent biography of Fromm’s hyperactive personal style (hence Friedman’s title, not *The Life* but *The Lives of Erich Fromm*), or of the sequence of heart attacks that finally killed him. In my view a critique of humanism for what appears to be its intrinsic anthropocentrism—man, after all, being the measure of all things in its view—need not amount to “anti-humanism,” only perhaps to a chastened post-humanism. Fromm was a very caring man: I wish he had seen his way clear to defining maturity and health as a *caring* rather than a *productive* orientation to life.

Despite his famous disparagement of the Christian love-command (Freud, 1930, pp. 108-111), Freud (1914) viewed personal development as a progression from narcissism to object love, holding that “... in the last resort we must begin to love in order not to fall ill, and we are bound to fall ill if, in consequence of frustration, we are unable to love” (p. 84). Likewise, Karl Stern conceived maturation as proceeding from lower to higher levels of union, from infantile oneness with mother to, ideally, a fully mature capacity for self-dispossessing love of the other. “We have at the beginning of the scale,” he writes, “a being who is ‘all mouth,’ an undifferentiated libidinal gastrula highly vulnerable to any deprivation of love, and at the end of the scale a mature being capable of giving love without immediate return and capable of enduring rejection” (Stern, 1975, p. 38). Nowadays, of course, we understand the newborn as far more than “an undifferentiated libidinal gastrula,” but Stern’s vision of maturity and health as entailing a progression from an almost total need for love to the developed capacity to give it, *even with little prospect of a return*, might well be widely accepted today—except by those who, like Freud himself, conceive of love in essentially capitalistic terms viewing an investment with little prospect of a return as irrational and masochistic.

Personal growth, Stern emphasizes, “is not merely an unconscious unfolding like organic growth; here freedom and choice, failure and guilt are mysteriously added” (p. 88). Unlike Freud, who for the most part saw only one kind of guilt with which he associated the superego, namely aggression turned away from others and back against the self, Stern (1955, p. 63), like Melanie Klein, recognized two fundamentally distinct types of guilt: a guilt that cannot be appeased, that is accompanied by anxiety, and that often arises in response not just to deeds but even to wishes, an abnormal guilt inflicted by the superego; and a normal guilt that when there is true contrition can be appeased, a guilt that we can let go of and relegate to the past in the face of an honest resolution to do better. While

psychoanalysts have traditionally associated the former with an archaic superego and the latter with a mature one, I have recently made a case (Carveth, 2013) for confining superego to the persecutory guilt that is aggression against the self, reserving conscience for the reparative guilt mediated by love that constructively seeks the healing of both the other and the self. In its preoccupation with the persecutory guilt generated by the superego (the law of the father) that, according to Freud, forms near the end of the oedipal phase at around five or six years of age, psychoanalysis has been relatively blind to the roots of conscience in the early mother-infant relationship, in identification with the nurturer, not least because of Freud's patriarchal devaluation of women in general and minimization of the importance of the so-called "pre-oedipal" phase of mother-child symbiosis before the almighty father appears on the psychic scene. So far, I regret to report that my colleagues have not been overwhelmed by my proposal of a new psychoanalytic testament that posits conscience as a fourth element of the structural theory of the mind. (Going to the New York Psychoanalytic to argue that conscience needs to be added to id, ego and superego as a fourth structure is, I think, a bit like going to Rome to argue that, wonderful as it is, the Trinity needs to be expanded into a Quaternity!) But I have grounds for believing Karl Stern (1955) would have sympathized with my project. He wrote that "currents emanating from the primitive superego have much in common with our instinctual drives"—that obsessions, compulsions, scrupulosity, etc., "all have the earmarks of blind force and of cruelty" (p. 172). He refers approvingly to the diagram of psychoanalyst Henri Ey in which "the superego and the id are on the same level." He even goes so far as to state (music to my ears) that: "All this points in favor of those who draw a clear line between conscience on one hand and the primitive superego on the other" (p. 174).

On the other hand, arguing that "Conscience has all the characteristics of human reason" (p. 174), Stern appears to join those psychoanalytic colleagues, such as Franz Alexander (1925), Sandor Ferenczi (1928 [1927]), and Freud (1940) himself, who call for the disempowerment of the hostile superego in favor of the rational ego. As White (2015) points out, ancient and pre-scientific teleological conceptions of reason had not yet reduced it to logical ratiocination, nor as yet opened up the chasm between facts and values. But whatever Stern may have had in mind, Freud, Alexander and Ferenczi were operating with a modern conception of rational ego function which, in my view, can never hope to serve as a conscience and tell us right from wrong. At the risk of adhering to an aspect of an otherwise criticized positivism, in a modern as distinct from a pre-modern concept of reason one cannot deduce an *ought* from an *is*; science is *descriptive* not *prescriptive*, its competence being limited to the field of facts not of values. It is true that knowing that smoking can cause cancer is relevant to the decision whether or not to smoke, but science cannot determine that health is better than illness, nor life worth living. These are value choices, beyond reason, grounded in love or the lack thereof. Stern is closer to the truth when he writes that "conscience contains something which transcends our psychological data" (p. 174)—that something being, in my view, the heart that, as Pascal (1669) famously pointed out, "has reasons reason cannot know" and that generates in us, as Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1774) understood, the "pity" or "fellow-feeling" in which values and acts of conscience are grounded.

Emancipation from the hostile superego requires reconciling with conscience. But in order to face, work through and make reparation for the guilt for which we *are* responsible we must first emancipate ourselves from the guilt and shame for which we are *not* responsible—guilt and feelings of inferiority that were projected by and incorporated from those unwilling to carry them themselves and who did their best to induce them in a scapegoat. Think only of the children who blame themselves instead of their deficient or abusive care-takers, or the generations of those we treated and induced to think of themselves as sub-human—as James Baldwin (Baldwin & Gregory, 1969) once put it, as mules, when they never really were mules and we knew it. In order to facilitate recovery from such moral poisoning it is crucial that, as therapists, we establish a non-judgmental atmosphere. As Stern (1975) pointed out, this constitutes “one of the oldest traditions in medicine, even outside psychiatry, and even before Christianity. In ancient Chinese and Greek medicine, one of the natural rights of the patient was not to be morally judged by the physician” (p. 71). Beyond such medical and professional requirements, a range of religious traditions provide different versions of the command to “*Judge not.*” Experienced therapists know that if the patient encounters moral judgment on the part of the therapist the therapy will fail, either because the outraged client will leave or because he or she will derive masochistic gratification in submitting to judgment and punishment by an external superego in the form of the therapist.

But does establishing such a non-judgmental atmosphere mean one necessarily becomes blind, deaf and dumb when it comes to moral issues—that like the three wise monkeys one “sees no evil, hears no evil and speaks no evil”? Does good therapeutic technique involve “turning a blind eye” to the ethical dimensions of the patient’s behavior and problems? On the contrary, as Stern (1975) has argued, the most effective therapeutic situation is one where patients have “a complete sense of non-condemnation” by therapists who have “something in their personalities that gives the patient a sense of the primacy of charity and acceptance,” who do not preach, but who at the same time convey to their patients “an awareness that the therapist ... believes in moral values” (p.73). Here is where I think the distinction between superego and conscience becomes crucially important. Patients have a right to expect acceptance and exemption from superego judgment by their therapists but, whether they know it consciously or not, they need the therapist to have a conscience and to be able to hear its “still small voice,” for the entire therapy depends upon their getting our help to be able to hear it themselves. For this is the only avenue of escape from the persecutory superego. Since the conscience is devoted to truth, love and justice, it will naturally assist us in sorting out what we are authentically responsible for and what we are not.

Karl Stern (1965) is being too generous to Freud and giving insufficient credit to his own powers of discernment when he writes: “The Freudian discovery meant no less than that man’s modes of *knowing* and *loving* arise out of a pre-conceptual, pre-rational and pre-verbal world—a world inhabited by mother and child together” (p, 35). Even when we justifiably replace the term mother with that of primary carer (who might well be a nurturant male), it remains a world as yet free of that “ghastly fissure” (Stern, 1955, p. 141) between subject and object, self and other. Granted this primary union must be surrendered so the higher union represented by mature, self-dispossessing love may be

developed. But, surely, if we are to have any hope of healing our destructive alienation from our environment, ourselves and one another we must retain some echo of that “sensation of ‘eternity’, a feeling as of something limitless, unbounded—as it were, ‘oceanic,’” “that feeling of an indissoluble bond, of being one with the external world as a whole” that Freud (1930, pp. 11-12) confessed to Romain Rolland that he had never personally experienced and that he proceeded to devalue as infantile in favor of the experience of the ego as “autonomous and unitary, marked off distinctly from everything else” (p. 13). Although mystics of all traditions have always known this ego is illusory, today, in light of such phenomena as “the butterfly effect” (Lorenz, 1963), such knowledge is scientific. As His Holiness Pope Francis (2015) writes in *Laudato Si’*, “It cannot be emphasized enough how everything is interconnected. Time and space are not independent of one another, and not even atoms or subatomic particles can be considered in isolation.” Whatever else the illusory autonomous ego has made possible for us, we are rapidly becoming aware of how it is contributing to anthropogenic climate disruption and quite possibly to the sixth extinction (Kolbert, 2014; Carveth, 2015a).

Freud regarded enhanced “reality-testing” as a central goal of psychoanalytic therapy. Stern (1975) endorses this goal, but goes well beyond Freud’s understanding of what it entails. For Stern “our development aims toward a state in which there exists not only a clear demarcation between self and non-self but where for the non-self, the object to be experienced in its full reality, for what it really *is*, the self has to do a kind of disappearing act” (p. 86). In this connection Stern cites a passage by Emil Cioran quoted by Gabriel Marcel: “So-called civilization teaches us how to take possession of things when it should initiate us in the art of letting-go, for there is neither freedom nor ‘real life’ without an apprenticeship in deposal” (p. 95). I think Stern would agree that the self that needs to disappear, that we need to let go of, is the idol that Jacques Lacan (1949) called the “specular ego” or self-image, that Donald Winnicott (1960) saw as the “false self” that usurps the rightful place of the, essentially unknowable, yet realizable “true self,” the “I-subject” who can only *be* in the presence of a non-intruding, non-abandoning (i.e., loving) “Thou.” In making an “it” of everyone and everything through processes of objectification and commodification, in inflaming our narcissism to a pathological degree, our consumer capitalist culture of narcissism (Lasch, 1979; Klein, 2014), far from assisting us in the task of self-depossession, may well result in our deposal of a world that was given to us as a gift but of which we have proved to be poor caretakers. All this, for me at least, gives new meaning to the *Genesis* account of our expulsion from the Garden, an account we have always taken as a story of the beginning rather than of what increasingly appears may be the beginning of the end. We must weep for what we have lost and are losing.

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