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**Theorizing Subjectivity, Gender and Islam  
A Psychological Perspective**

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# **Theorizing Subjectivity, Gender and Islam**

## **A Psychological Perspective**

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### **Abstract**

The paper is an interdisciplinary exploration of the relationship between patriarchal constructions of the modern self and their psychological impact on how the modern ‘mind’ constructs religion. It is primarily based on post analytic Jungian psychology, continental feminist philosophy, ecofeminist critiques of science and modernity, and post colonial cultural studies of women’s spiritualities.

Drawing on critiques of Christianity as “Christianism” by C.G. Jung and James Hillman, it is argued that this ‘Cartesian-Christianist’ construction of religion has by now been globally internalized, thereby distorting the contemporary self/understanding of all religions, precluding a realistic engagement by women (and men) with their subjectivities and spiritual-imaginative potentialities. Globally evident in multiple ‘secular’ and religious extremisms, and in Islam as Cartesian-Christianist-Islamism, the decolonizing of Muslim women’s subjectivities remains post coloniality’s final frontier.

## MODERNITY AND THE SELF

To theorize subjectivity is to theorize (about) the question what is (my) ‘human nature’, my ‘self’\*? Every civilization has tried to address this question. In our times, which we call ‘modernity’<sup>1</sup>, this self is called the ‘mind’ which is the brain in my skull. It is ironic that in an atmosphere of a growing respect for the laws of Nature, our ideas of human nature remain quite unnatural. By now, either there is no such thing and it is all biochemistry, genetics etc, or it is culturally relativized to an extent that, either way, there is not much to discuss. Nevertheless, while we are told that our cultural ‘values’ are different, the psychiatric mission sees the human mind as universally similar. Prozac is not a culturally sensitive pill. To this extent, modernity can be linked to a certain ‘mindset’ about how we think of self, others and the world at large.

‘Psychology’ originally meant a ‘*logos-of-the-soul*’ implying that its concerns were as much religious as mundane. Along with psychiatry, they are quintessentially modern disciplines about the self and reflect some core ideas within the conceptual scaffolding of the Enlightenment and modernity. Foremost, are the neo-Kantian/Cartesian notions of the human self as a freely choosing ethical subject functioning on the basis of pure reason leading to

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1. Briefly, modernity refers to the modes of social life which emerged from the 17<sup>th</sup> century onward in Western Europe. Its features include economic production, urbanization, centralized bureaucratic states, the privileging of science and rationality over religious faith and a belief in progress based on science and technology. In the last century, it also includes women’s rights and feminism. In the academic world today, it is fashionable to talk of post-modernities. Asserting that all knowledge is relative and subjective, its features are the globalization of business and culture across national boundaries, fragmentation, and a general mistrust of ‘grand narratives’ and absolute truths. However, while posing intellectual and philosophical challenges, post-modernity remains more of a debate within the global intellectual elite and poses its own problematics of ethics and morality. In fact, some believe that it is better called ‘high’ modernity.

pure moral truth which transcends culture. Similarly, economic behaviour is the application of reason to prioritize desires and means of their satisfaction. In short, the human self is primarily *Homorationalis* and *Homoeconomicus*. Absorbed into the ideas of Marx and Freud, this vision of self and ‘other’ dominated the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Not coincidentally, both saw religion as a psychological aberration, an ‘opiate’ (Marx), and an ‘infantile illusion’ ‘without a future’ (Freud).

For decades, and across numerous disciplines, western feminism has challenged this idealized and narrow Freudian-Cartesian conception of the self, claiming that western philosophy and popular culture is derived from the experience of predominantly white males, dead and alive. Cast as a lesser form of the masculine individual, woman is the Other and thus, the non-person, non-agent, non-subject<sup>2</sup>. In sum, “In western culture, the mind and reason are coded masculine, whereas the body and emotion are coded feminine (...) To identify the self with the rational mind is to privilege a narrow idea of reason and to masculinize the self.”<sup>3</sup> This split between an emotional, nonverbal, ‘feminine’ body and a rational ‘masculine’ mind is, of course, simultaneously a critique of the Cartesian dic(k)tum about the self: ‘I *think*, therefore I am’, leading to what Susan Bordo called ‘the Cartesian masculinization of thought’<sup>4</sup> and what feminists in different disciplines call the ‘logo-centric’/‘phallocratic’/‘disembodied’ mind in Western cultural and intellectual consciousness.

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2. Diana Myers. 2010. ‘Feminist Perspectives on the Self’, Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy. Retrieved March 2, 2011, from <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/feminism-self/>
  3. Genevieve Llyod, ‘Maleness, Metaphor and the Crisis of Reason’, in Antony and White Boulder (eds.), *A Mind of One’s Own* (Westview Press, 1992).
  4. Susan Bordo, ‘The Cartesian Masculinization of Thought’, *Signs: Journal of Women, Culture and Society*, 2, 3, 2011, p. 441. See also, *The Flight to Objectivity: Essays on Cartesianism and Culture* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987)

As a practicing psychotherapist, my main focus is not the intricacies of well known feminist academic debates and critiques such as ‘essentialism versus deconstruction’ implicit, for example, in my use of the terms ‘feminine’/‘Feminine’<sup>5</sup>. Rather, my concern is the *real* world of human psychological suffering of all types of individuals, including Muslim men and women. Here, in spite of feminism and a wide spread recognition of a crisis in the culture of modernity<sup>6</sup>, Cartesianism prevails in theories and methods.

Given our notions of ‘progress’ and more than 300 schools in psychology today, it may seem passé to talk of Freud or Jung. But no substantive understanding of women’s subjectivities is possible unless we are aware how deeply Freudian-Cartesian ideals have been psychologically internalized at a global level, the feminist debunking of both notwithstanding.

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5. Insisting on taking just one ‘position’ regarding, for example, holism or the essentialism versus deconstruction debate, only leads to polarization within feminism. All scholarship, feminist or otherwise, falls victim to what the Cambridge philosopher Jenny Teichman called the ‘peacock’ or ‘rooster factor’ in academia. That is, rivalry between purportedly incommensurable theories is often only an illusion based on *rivalry between men*, which has more to do with the masculinist tendency of competitive castration rather than knowledge per se. Rather than accepting that one *must* choose between them, issues around women and religion need to critically utilize multiple perspectives while simultaneously exposing the androcentric biases of mainstream religions (and academia), and articulation of alternatives. In this case, my use of the term ‘feminine/Feminine’ spans feminist philosophy/feminist spirituality/ecofeminism, Jung and the post-Jungian James Hillman, French feminist and psychoanalyst Luce Irigaray, *and* various religious cosmologies, including Islam. Collectively, they provide the contours of the Feminine/feminine which includes the body but also an un/consciousness beyond it. For details, see Durre S. Ahmed, *Gendering the Spirit: Women, Religion and the Post Colonial Response* (London: ZED Books, 2002).

6. Jurgen Habermas; “Faith and Knowledge... an Opening” in his acceptance speech for Peace Prize of the German Publishers Association. Frankfurt, 14 January 2001.

Invariably listed as one of the greatest minds of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as a laudatory *Newsweek* article unwittingly put it, Freud's views are now 'equated with universal common sense'<sup>7</sup>. Which means that you, I, (and global psychopharmaceuticals), continue to (unconsciously) think in Freudian ways. An alternative vision can be glimpsed in the foundational schism within psychology, namely the differences between Freud and his star pupil and subsequent rival, Carl Jung. While I am not endorsing post/Jungian therapy<sup>8</sup>, the Freud-Jung differences nevertheless *continue* as distinct *epistemologies*, functioning as specific *world views* underlying not only the entire psycho-medico-therapeutic project till today, but also what we have come to think of as our 'common sense'. Given that their central quarrel was over religion which Jung maintained was/is an integral part of our psyche requiring critical scrutiny, plus the fact that religion is back with a vengeance, before theorizing about any experience we urgently need to re/examine our ideas and assumptions about the locus of all experience *and* its theorizing, namely the human psyche. The following re-examination is based on an interdisciplinary theoretical framework, including the work of post/analytic psychologist James Hillman<sup>9</sup>.

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7. "Freud's Enduring Legacy: How his ideas still shape Psychotherapy". Article. *Newsweek*. 4 July 1998. Print. See also *Time Magazine's* special issue on leading thinkers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, 29 March 1999.

8. For a detailed critique of Jung's understanding of Islam (and Muslims), see Durre S. Ahmed, 'Islam and the West: A Psychological Analysis of the Collected Works of C.G. Jung', *Journal of the Henry Martin Institute*, 26, 2, 2000.

9. James Hillman, *Archetypal Psychology: A Brief Account* (Dallas: Spring Publications, 1981), p. 3. Hillman's post-analytic theory of Archetypal Psychology is especially relevant since, for Hillman, after Jung, "the second immediate father of Archetypal Psychology is Henry Corbin (1903–1978), the French scholar, philosopher who is principally known for his interpretation of Islamic thought". Corbin is best known for his work on the Muslim philosopher Ibn-i-Arabi and Suhrawardy. For other disciplinary perspectives see Note 5.

Very simply, in Freud's model of personality a mentally healthy person must have a well developed rationality and the ability to control through logic and will power, all impulses which run contrary to reason<sup>10</sup>. This 'ego' must govern all that is 'me'. Bringing a more culturally based approach, Jung viewed the psyche as it exists in our *experience*, which is of multiple, messy mosaics flowing through different levels of awareness.

You can test this inner multiplicity when you are alone. Even at this moment, you may be preoccupied with some other thoughts. Alone, or with others, there is nothing particularly rational about the inner streams of thoughts and emotions we experience daily. Entering/exiting randomly, they rove from desire, to ambition, betrayal, anger, sex and more. At times, we are 'haunted' by recurring ideas/emotions which refuse to submit to our logic/control. In short, the psyche as we experience it is not so much *consistent* as it is *insistent* about its wide ranging concerns. To recognize the reality of this inner diversity is to understand the psyche as it lives, and not how we think it 'should' be.

Additionally, Jung recognized that all cultures have mythologies which were actually religious *and* psychological in substance, and as such, were the earliest models for both psychology and religion. Different gods, male and female, have different domains which constantly intermingle. The gods frequently behave in (in)human ways. Mars, ruling over war and bloodshed, has a secret affair with Venus of love and beauty. Apollo rules over knowledge and reason but was capable of irrational cruelty. In short, individually and collectively, the gods were complex, multifaceted, at one level benevolent, presiding over agriculture, health, love, war, knowledge, death etc; at another, capable of cruelty and caprice. Very much, in fact, like you and I, as we experience the self(s) daily.

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10. That is, the 'superego' (including religion) and the dark/demonic 'id'.

In post/Jungian analytic psychology<sup>11</sup>, the figures of mythology are symbolic *personifications* of different sides to us, which in turn, can have different genders and qualities. So the psyche is ‘polytheistic’, that is, polyvalent, containing masculine/feminine aspects having numerous variations in form and style. Pan of the flute also represents panic. Zeus and Apollo are different and both have to contend with the bisexual Hermes or Dionysius who express more psychologically ambivalent ideas of masculinity. Similarly, the female form is host to Demeter, Venus, Sappho, and so on. Artemis the huntress, is quite different from the mature Aphrodite. Each is an archetype, that is, a *style* of un/consciousness, a psychological *attitude*, suggesting different *perspectives* on life, its stages, events and relationships. These attitudes/qualities are evident in *both* sexes, yet uniquely *embodied*. Thus, male and female divinities are symbolic representations of different dimensions of the Divine and diverse psychological capacities within humans<sup>12</sup>. That is, they were/are *simultaneously* a reflection and a projection, of both the transcendent realm and the psyche’s inherent multifaceted, polyvalent diversity.

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11. Specifically Archetypal Theory/Psychology, which is ‘a style of thinking and a revisionist engagement on many fronts: education, criticism, medicine, philosophy, religion, therapy and science. In trying to delineate the structure of a postmodern consciousness, archetypal theory lends its terms and viewpoints to a variety of intellectual concerns, seeking to draw individuals from diverse geographic and intellectual areas into rapport with each other for the revisioning of their ideas and their worlds’. Also see Hillman, ‘Archetypal Psychology’, 1981, p. 54.

12. For example, as a psychological attitude ‘masculinity’ may refer to pure reason, detachment, clarity of thought expressed frequently in a linear, sequential style. ‘Femininity’ may refer to an attitude of receptivity, contemplation rather than controlling action, more inner oriented rather than externally focused. These are just one set of dimensions among innumerable others with multiple nuances.



Similar to the *Yin/Yang* of Taoism, the monotheisms also contain this symbolic, internal, nuanced, multi-dimensionality. In their stories and descriptions of men, women and God, we see soft, tender ‘feminine’ dimensions, such as the Virgin Mary, and more awesome ‘masculine’ qualities. The Torah has hundreds of ‘faces’, one for each Jew in exile, and in Islam there are the proverbial 99 Names of God and many other Attributes in the Quran.

In view of our inherent inner multiplicity, the rational modern Cartesian-Freudian ‘ego’ with which we principally identify the self and our common sense, is modelled largely on a set of youthful heroic male ‘gods’, including Apollo. Within this psycho-cultural basis of ‘mind’, for Jung, mental illness is thus, an imbalance, a ‘one sidedness in the presence of many’. Which is another way of describing *any* fundamentalism.

### **CARTESIANISM AND LOSS OF THE SYMBOLIC**

If this sounds ‘unscientific’ and ‘archaic’, it confirms the triumph of Freudian ‘common sense’ and should alert us to how handicapped we are when it comes to words such as ‘symbolic’ or ‘archetype’ which we connect primarily with art/literature and not with our self. Starting with Jung, to by now many others in the west, there is a well established corpus around the idea that the great tragedy for the west has been its loss of symbolic consciousness<sup>13</sup>. As summed up by Armstrong, “we must disabuse ourselves of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century fallacy that myth is false or represents an inferior mode of thought, which can be cast aside when humans have attained the age of reason”<sup>14</sup>. The tragedy extends beyond religion

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13. They include Paul Ricoeur, Ernst Cassirer, Mircea Eliade, Northrop Frye, Gilbert Durand, Henry Corbin, James Hillman, Joseph Campbell, Georges Dumezil, Karen Armstrong, George Lakoff to name a few.

14. Karen Armstrong, *A Short History of Myth* (London: Penguin, 2004), p. 117. As she said in a TV interview, when it comes to religion, the ‘west has lost the plot’.

because today, via the modernity project, this malaise increasingly afflicts much of the world, particularly the educated.

### Mythos and Logos

For millennia, humans inhabited two psychological worlds and ‘languages’ in tandem: The world of fact (*logos*), having to do with the rational and pragmatic, enabling practical functioning at the material level; and the world of meaning (*mythos*), which has to do with ‘making sense’, giving meaning to the complex emotional experiences we call ‘life’. Overwhelmed today by *logos*, the symbolic language of *mythos* has become almost extinct or reduced to literalism.

The symbolic is not just ‘allegory’ or a literary term but a *psychological reality*. Science/*logos* itself utilizes symbolic language but according to the specific law of non contradiction, applying Cartesianist logic to material facts. By definition a fact can only have one meaning. Water will always be 2 parts of hydrogen and 1 part of oxygen, no two ways about it. But what water ‘means’ to each of us will depend on our *span of experience* of it: as rain, sea, drinking, swimming we don’t think of it as ‘H<sub>2</sub>O’, but as qualities which are *subjective, multiple* and *cannot* be communicated quantitatively. Similarly, when asked to describe ‘depression’, we say, I feel ‘blue’, ‘black’, ‘heavy’, ‘down’. This is the psyche’s *natural* symbolic/metaphoric capacity for conveying its meaning via inter/connection and relationship<sup>15</sup>. The most significant events of our lives, from love to despair etc, engage us at

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15. See George Lakoff, *Moral Politics: How Liberals and Conservatives Think* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987); George Lakoff, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980). George Lakoff, *Moral Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996). Lakoff’s work on Conceptual Analysis and Cognitive Linguistics shows how it is virtually impossible to communicate without metaphor which is central to human

a different level than, say, the molecular structure of water. Life as such, including religion, was never meant to be made ‘sense’ of literally. The question about religious stories was never, ‘are they factually true?’ but ‘do we need to know this?’, if so, ‘what do they mean?’. In short, the span/spectrum of meaning in *mythos* is expansive, multiple (meaning-full), and is restricted (meaning-less) in *logos*.

In spite of technological progress, life, as we live and experience it, remains the same: security, love and its defeats and triumphs, confusion, despair, and death. In all their nuances and opposites, and more, the ‘stuff of life’ is unchanging. The symbolic (*mythos*) is about this ‘stuff’, which because of its universality can be seen as stereotypical and banal. Nevertheless, when encountered by the individual, the impact is frequently profound. All of us have experienced being ‘in the grip’ of emotions such as love, grief, fear, or ‘moved’ by an event/situation. Psychologically, these are *archetypal* experiences and best understood/expressed symbolically. Here again, one is not using these terms (archetype/symbol) as literary tropes but as psycho-theoretical concepts in postanalytic depth psychology<sup>16</sup>.

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thinking, society and political behaviour. For a brief overview also see ‘The Contemporary Theory of Metaphor’, Scribd. Retrieved March 20, 2012, from <http://www.scribd.com/doc/116663225/The-Contemporary-Theory-of-Metaphor>

16. James Hillman, *Revisioning Psychology*, p. xiii (New York: Harper and Row, 1985) 3rd edition. The concept of the archetype was first elaborated by Jung and despite the fact that it is difficult to define precisely, the word has been absorbed into general usage. James Hillman further developed this idea and considers archetypes as axiomatic first principles, similar to models which are found in other fields, like ‘matter’, ‘energy’, ‘health’, ‘society’, ‘art’ and ‘God’. These ideas hold worlds together and yet can never be pointed to, accounted for, or even adequately circumscribed. ‘They are the deepest patterns of psychic functioning

Deeply intertwined with culture and religion, the symbolic world of *mythos* is the world of the *imagination*<sup>17</sup>, providing us emotional ‘containers’, enabling us to say what *cannot* be said in any other way when faced with extremes of horror, suffering, joy etc. Helping to cope with the inexpressible by giving it a name, image, ritual, place; *mythos* also points to a parallel, ‘higher’ plane of existence/transcendence. Functioning as a sort of *cultural DNA*, the symbolic also has a transformative potential, offering cues, options, guidelines through various individual life stages. Since its meanings are ambiguous, multiple and subjective, it will always contain a transpersonal element of mystery, which at times we refer to as a ‘sense’ of the sacred<sup>18</sup>.

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governing the perspectives we have of ourselves and the world, as axiomatic self-evident images to which psychic life and our theories about it ever return.’

17. In this context, ‘imagination’ is not about flights of fancy, but as a central concept in understanding and affirming an existential and experiential notion of truth. See Morny Joy, “Images and Imagination”, in the *Encyclopaedia of Religion* (New York: Macmillan, 1987) Vol. VII & VIII.

Similarly, Gilbert Durand has discussed the work of writers such as Corbin and the idea of the ‘creative imagination’:

We should not be surprised therefore to find that, over the last half century, developments [...] resulting from Freudian psycho analysis and Jungian depth psychology have converged with a new orientation of the old history of religion discipline. Thus, with Mircea Eliade, Henry Corbin, and Georges Dumézil – to cite only a few authors – reflections on the phenomenon of religion have broken away from etiological reductions within purely historical, social [...] contexts to enter the territory of a more anthropological field – one centered on the properly religious function of the creative imagination. See Gilbert Durand, “The Imaginal”, in the *Encyclopaedia of Religion* (New York: Macmillan, 1987) Vol. VII & VIII.

While not strictly historians of religion or theologians, the feminists writings of Luce Irigaray and Julia Kristeva can also be considered part of this shift.

18. The modern understanding of symbols in anthropology and semiotics, does not consider this dimension of affect. Their interpretation of symbols is more an interpretation of signs (such as the matchstick figures for male/female public restrooms), or substitutive allegory. Genuine

### The Ascent of the Hero

For the French feminist and psychoanalyst, Luce Irigaray, mythology is ‘one of the principal expressions of what organizes society at a particular time’<sup>19</sup>. A post/Jungian ‘reading’ of the loss of *mythos* in the western mind, indicates the dynamics of a two thousand year process of obliterating psychological and theological diversity, particularly the feminine aspects of the psyche and the Divine. The principle (symbolic) force behind this process is the ‘ascent’ and dominance of the Hero myth in western un/consciousness<sup>20</sup>. Like Jason (and Moses) going up the mountain, the hero’s ‘ascent’ reflects a vertical trajectory from South to North towards

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symbols abide over a considerable period of time; have a strong affective element, capable of ‘holding’ a particular emotion or idea. The veil, the Kaba, Hercules, mother – can never be fully explained and will always have an element of mystery, that is, an individually unknowable, transpersonal element which cannot be fully circumscribed. If this circumscription, or pinning down occurs, the symbol loses its collective ‘power’; the individual (literal) becomes dominant, and diversity of interpretation, is excluded. But the power of the *idea* lives on in the individual in terms of affect.

19. As quoted by Margaret Whitford, *The Irigaray Reader* (Oxford. Blackwell, 1992), p. 11.

20. For example, stories of Ulysses, Jason, Hercules, Achilles, etc. As a universal archetype, the story, briefly, is of a young male, born in unusual circumstances. An early separation from origins is followed by difficult journeys, obstacles, tests, battles. Finally, victorious, he returns to origins as Ruler, Redeemer, Law Giver. Then, through betrayal or pride (hubris) or simple mortality, there is the ‘fall’, death and collective mourning. Among other meanings, the story is a *psychological* rite of passage marking the emergence of two psychological capacities, reason and will power. It is still evident in ‘primitive’ tribal rituals, or joining the army or college in which teenage males are sent to the ‘jungle’, learn how to survive and return as ‘reborn’ adults. Pain and fear are transformed into will power and reason. As such, it is an adolescent developmental stage within a larger life cycle/stages. Modern versions, e.g., Superman, Rambo, Terminator follow the same trajectory, the only difference being, they refuse to die.

‘Light, Height and Law’<sup>21</sup>. Starting with the Mediterranean Great Mother goddesses, the initially gender-diverse Greek pantheon was steadily overwhelmed with the rise of the Age of the Heroes (young males). Eventually Zeus, who was just one of the Olympians, gave way to the God-Father of Christianity. Finally, the vestiges of the Divine Feminine of Marian Catholicism were erased by the heroic North German Protestant materialist ethic and its exclusively masculine God<sup>22</sup>. This final wiping out of diversity and the Feminine was accompanied by the Inquisition and its primary target was tens of thousands of women who were branded ‘heretics’ and brutally tortured/killed by both Catholics and Protestants.

Psychology itself reflects the hero’s ‘ascent’. Freud’s conception of personality on a vertical North-South axis reflects the Cartesian mind/body split in which ‘North’ is associated with masculinity/light/reason/power and ‘South’ is feminine/body/dark/‘mindless’. Thus, North/South are not just ethnic and geographic terms but also psychological and cultural places, where ‘South’ is woman, Nature, the colonies etc<sup>23</sup>.

Almost as if in protest after millennia of suppression, by the turn of the last century the psyche ‘erupted’: Freud’s classic *The Interpretation of Dreams* sensitized the modern mind to the inner richness of the psyche, albeit literally and within a masculine frame of ‘pathology’. The first two ‘dis-eases’ to be discovered were schizophrenia (multiple personality disorder)

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21. Also see Hillman, ‘Archetypal Psychology’, 1981.

22. The foundations of science are in the German language. Similarly, crucial consciousness changing technologies, such as the printing press, originated in Germany.

23. ‘South’ is the (soft) ‘unthinking’ body which must be denied or ruled by the (hard) head. It is ‘below’, within as the ‘unconscious’, namely those areas, emotions, perspectives which are different from the masculine ego. ‘South’ thus, is also women everywhere. ‘South’ is nature and the ‘other’ which colonialism sought to ‘rape’, ‘tame’, ‘civilize’. For details see Hillman, ‘Archetypal Psychology’, 1981.

and hysteria (the wandering uterus), by definition, a dis-ease only women can have<sup>24</sup>. By 1952 there was 130 page booklet listing around 35 mental illnesses. Today, it is 900 pages, listing 374 and still counting<sup>25</sup>. In Jungian terms, ‘the god/desses have become diseases’<sup>26</sup>.

Today, every one must aspire to this disembodied, western male construction of ‘normalcy’. Based on psychological *apartheid*, it reacts with violence to anything different, feminine, intermediate, ambiguous, symbolic and relegates it to ‘pathology’ to be ‘treated’ by reason or scientific methods such as drugs, shocks, etc. Its criteria are overwhelmingly masculine, Aryan, Apollonic, Heroic, Germanic, positivistic, rational, Cartesian, and as I will discuss shortly, Protestant Christian.

Given the deeply intertwined roots of psychology and religion in western cultural history, much of what we call psychopathology can be seen as a secularization of ‘heretical’ tendencies, which in the western/Christian public imagination is represented by Joan of Arc and the witches of the Inquisition. Today women still bear the brunt psychologically. WHO reports that *worldwide* more women suffer from depression than any other illness. Almost everywhere women are given more multiple and repeat prescriptions, more excessive dosages

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24. This is not just a literary exercise, but about cultural realities and serious consequences. For example, from being epidemic in the West till the 50’s, today hysteria is non-existent and now anorexia is epidemic, pointing to the present condition of the Feminine.

25. David Barlow (eds.), ‘Clinical Handbook of Psychological Disorders, Fourth Edition: A Step-by-Step Treatment Manual’ (New York:Guilford Press, 2007).

26. Carl Gustav Jung, *The Collected Works of C.G. Jung*, trans. R.F.C. Hull (London: Routledge, 1967). Vol.13:54.H. Read, M. Fordham and G. Adler (eds.).

and pills than men having the same condition<sup>27</sup>. In short, women are either bad or mad. No wonder Freud asked the exasperated question ‘what do women want?’.

### An Environ-Mental Crisis

The Greeks imagined the psyche/soul in the symbol of a beautiful young woman or a butterfly (What do they mean?). Today, it is trapped between the ‘soft’ therapeutic project of more than 350 ‘schools’ of psychotherapy bearing witness to its psycho-theological diversity, albeit in suffering. Or, being reduced to ‘nothing but’ ‘hard’ science and brain neurochemistry, making it (psyche) big business. The combined annual sales of the psychiatric industry is more than 300 billion dollars and robust long term growth is predicted<sup>28</sup>.

In the absence of the feminine/body and without the capacity to comprehend the significance of the symbolic; the psyche’s moral/ethical transformative potential remains dormant. As we are discovering, the world does not become better, but simply different, and for every gain there is a loss. The cost for the idea of ‘progress’ (again, reflecting the heroic ‘upward’

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27. S. Matteo, ‘The Risk of Multiple Addictions: Guidelines for Assessing a Women’s Drug and Alcohol Use’, *The Western Journal of Medicine*, 149, 6, 1988, pp.741–745. See also, Muriel Nellis, *The Female Fix* (New York: Penguin, 1988). Also, Jackie Ashley. 2008. ‘Richer But Less Happy, We Are Now A Pill Popping People’, *The Guardian*. Retrieved April, 3, 2012 from <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2008/feb/11/health.health>

28. In 1966 pharmaceuticals were offering 44 psychotropic drugs. Today, there are 174 available and as new illnesses are ‘discovered’ more drugs developed. Just the top five psychotropic drugs make more money than the GNP of over half the countries on earth. In the US, since 2008, more antipsychotics are sold (\$14.6 billion) than cholesterol lowering drugs, and robust growth is anticipated worldwide for drugs dealing with schizophrenia, anxiety, depression and other mental ailments ([www.imshealth.com](http://www.imshealth.com)). It is predicted that by 2020, one third of the world’s population will require some psychiatric drug. (Harper’s Index. May 1997. Sources listed therein.)



trajectory) is self evident, not just in the growing psychopharmacological industry, but most vividly in the natural environment. From time immemorial Nature/Earth was seen as Feminine, filled with mysterious spirits and power. But between worldview *of homorationalis* and *homoeconomicus*, it came to be seen as lifeless, or like women, ‘mindless’, to be tamed, witness the metaphors of science<sup>29</sup>. Similarly, the Freudian view of the ‘unconscious’ as something to be owned, mastered and civilized by the will of the rational ego was echoed in the colonial project and its mission of ‘civilizing’ the colonized South<sup>30</sup>. Today, the destruction of Nature and the steady extinction of environmental and cultural diversity, symbolically mirrors the ravaged human psyche and the pathologizing and erasing of its psycho-spiritual-cultural diversity. Still mysteriously connected by a mutual reflection-projection, both psyche and Nature point to what is truly a *man* made, environ-mental crisis.<sup>31</sup>

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29. According to the Harvard biologist R.C. Lewontin; “The metaphors of science are, indeed, filled with the violence, voyeurism and tumescence of male adolescent fantasy. Scientists “wrestle” with an always female nature, to “wrest from her the truth” on to “reveal her hidden secrets”. They make “war” on diseases and “conquer” them. Good science is “hard” science, bad science (like that refuge of so many women, psychology) is “soft” science, and molecular biology, like physics, is characterized by “hard inference”. See Richard C. Lewontin. 1999. ‘Women versus the Biologist’, *The New York Review of Books*. Retrieved on April 15, 2012, from <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/1994/apr/07/women-versus-the-biologists/?pagination=false>

30. See Note 22. For Freud, the ego’s goals should be to “make it independent of the superego”, that is culture/religion, and to “enlarge its organization ... appropriate fresh portions of the id. Where id is there ego should be. It is a work of culture.” See Freud, *New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis* (London: Hogarth, 1933), p. 106.

31. By now there is a huge body of work from within different disciplines that place these ego-attitudes at the heart of modernity and its psycho-cultural condition. Deep ecology, critiques of science, feminist spirituality and eco-feminism particularly, have analyzed how these *attitudes* underpin the environmental crisis. They suggest how woman/body/nature/colonized are, from the view of the Cartesian ego, psychologically synonymous, regarding them, as this ego does, to be tamed, owned, civilized, mastered and manipulated at will. The mythic element of the Hero remains. Thus, from this feminist-post/Jungian perspective the logocentric worldview of modernity is, a heroic, confrontational, patriarchal, fundamentalist machismo that permeates our ideas ranging from politics and health, to science, development, progress, religion and nature.

## CARTESIAN- CHRISTIANISM

### Theos, Theo-rizing and Theo-logy

‘*Theos*’ in Greek means ‘god’, as in mono-theism and theo-logy (a logos-of-god). But ‘*theos*’ also constitutes ‘theo-ry’ and the intellectual/academic endeavour of theo-rizing, that is, constructing a framework of meaning. As such, there is a ‘god’ behind any construction of theory/meaning. As a perspective, rational logic can also psychologically become god, functioning as a sort of religious conviction and we keep seeing how people keep falling into the ‘grip’ of ideologies which exercise a psychological power similar to religion. Thus, how we theo-rize about our experiences as Muslim women, will depend on not only a theo-ry of the self beyond the rational ego, but also our awareness of the nature of ‘*theos*’ (god) in any given theo-logy.

For Jung, the west’s “true religion is a monotheism of consciousness”<sup>32</sup>, that is, the god-like supremacy and valorization of rational logic within the psyche and a corresponding dominant psychological *attitude*. As such, it has nothing to do with *any* religious belief<sup>33</sup>. However, he

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32. Jung, ‘Collected Works’, 1967. Vol. 3, No. 51.

33. For Jung, “a creed gives expression to a definitive collective belief, whereas the word ‘religion’ expresses, a subjective relationship to certain metaphysical factors” (Jung, ‘Collected Works’, 1967. Vol. 10 No. 507.) It is important to distinguish between the psychology of a religion and the psychology of a religious person, between a religious *belief* and a psychological *attitude*, and one can exist without the other. In Judaism, the Torah was a myriad faces, one for each Jew in exile and there are the 99 Names/Attributes of God in Islam. Yet both are monotheistic. A religious Hindu can be termed a *psychological* MONO-theist if he believes his is the only ‘correct’ religion, as would a secular Hindu if he insists that the only ‘correct’ view is to see Hinduism as irrational or false. The same applies to followers of monotheisms. Such a ‘mono’ consciousness has no capacity for anything opposing its view even though life at its most basic physical level is dual, witness the

also discerned a high resonance and fusion between Cartesian modes of thought and certain central aspects of Christian monotheism, particularly Protestantism. For example, similar to Cartesianism's insistence on a singular exclusivist 'meaning', the Christian creed (*credo*) demands that the acceptance of a *singular* literal-historical meaning regarding the birth, death and divinity of Christ<sup>34</sup>. By accepting an essentially mental set of beliefs in a specific male-person-as-God as historical 'facts', Evil cannot touch me, my salvation is assured. Anyone who does not 'believe' this, even a Buddhist saint, is damned. Thus, Christianity became the first religion ever to try and prove its claim through sciences such as archaeology, carbon dating etc. (No such efforts to locate the devil.) This sort of unprecedented application of *logos to mythos* was a response to the post Enlightenment, secular ideal that 'those who think cannot believe and those who believe cannot think'. The splitting of faith and reason, good

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hormones that stream through our blood. 'Contradiction', 'ambivalence', 'opposite', 'inconsistent', are dirty words, a sign of mental weakness and demand 'resolution' into a singular frame of meaning and action. In all instances, there is the conviction of an exclusivist, singular truth cut off from diverse inner realities.

34. It should be noted that Jung's/Hillman's critique focused on western Christianity and not the Eastern Orthodox churches. Nevertheless, the Nicene Creed has been normative to the Anglican Church, Assyrian Church of the East, Eastern Orthodox Church, Oriental Orthodox churches, the Roman Catholic Church including the Eastern Catholic Churches and the Old Catholic Church, the Lutheran Church and most Protestant denominations.

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty  
maker of heaven and earth, of all that is seen and unseen.  
We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God,  
eternally begotten of the Father,  
God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God,  
begotten, not made, one in Being with the Father.  
Through him all things were made.  
For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven  
by the power of the Holy Spirit he was born of the Virgin Mary, and became man.  
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered, died, and was buried.  
On the third day he rose again in fulfillment of the Scriptures;  
he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.  
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,  
and his kingdom will have no end.

and evil, leads to the tendency to split all phenomena, literalize and *morally reduce* them to irreconcilable opposites. Christianist dogma turns evil into a metaphysical notion of the devil, which is projected onto others and then endlessly philosophized about as ‘The Problem of Evil’<sup>35</sup>.

In order to function, *logos* requires problems which it can solve, and which eventually leads to a search for the ‘Final Solution(s)’. Jung’s critique urged the “white man (and woman) in general”<sup>36</sup> to recognize the evil *within* the psyche (the ‘shadow’). It is axiomatic in depth psychology that what we deny within comes forward to ‘meet’ us from without, that is, our own evil is projected onto others, who are then seen as exclusively evil. No other religion, including Islam, is based on these metaphysics of evil<sup>37</sup>.

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35. “Christianity has made the antinomy of good and evil into world problem and by formulating the conflict dogmatically raised it into an absolute problem”, see Jung, ‘Collected Works’, 1967, 12:16. The Enlightenment paradigm’s rational Cartesian-Christianist vision separates everything into warring, literal dualisms, including faith from reason. This leads to asking foolish questions (and foolish answers) of which *Time* magazine is a global symbol. A cover story on ‘Evil’, posed the question ‘*If God is all Good and all Powerful, why is there Evil?*’ on 10 June 1991. These are adolescent propositions. The fact is that no Divinity Itself has ever proclaimed that it is *exclusively* kind, good, and fully comprehensible to modern ideas of reason. Whether in the Hindu or Chinese traditions, or in Judaism, Christianity and Islam’s 99 Names of God, the concept of Divinity is ‘paradoxical’, in which numerous opposites exist *simultaneously* as part of a *mutuallydefining* Unity. This is as true for our bodies which have male/female features as it is for our psyches. The problem, then, is not with any religion per se; or about being modern or not, rather, it lies in the heroic, adolescent vision we bring to our construction of both knowledge and meaning regarding self, other(s) and the transcendent/Divine.

36. Jung, ‘Collected Works’, 1967, 10:210.

37. In Islam, the closest to a ‘creed’ (‘I believe...’) is actually not the Shahada, but in the Qur’an, see sura Al Baqarah verse 2:285. The ‘*Shahada*’ therein is a ‘witnessing’: ‘no god but God’ which is more like a zen *koan*, not a gendered-historic-event-belief. Since all Prophets came with the same message, there is no claim to a unique or exclusivist morality. As such the Judaic ‘eye for an eye’ is as valid as the Christian ideal of forgiveness, though the latter is encouraged. Iblis is a fallen angel but also a prototype of all wicked persons (see Qur’anic verses 2:102, 38:41, 43: 36). Like the ancient Greeks, the ultimate evil is *hubris*, arrogance, the archetype of which is Pharaoh, hence the antidote of ‘islam’-as-‘submission’. Related to

Jung's psychological deconstruction of Christianity is complex<sup>38</sup> and he was frequently accused of heresy. But as he repeatedly said, and what I also want to reiterate, is that the issue here is not about the truth of Christianity as a religion or about Christian fundamentalism, but about the modern *mind* and how it *thinks* of religion<sup>39</sup>. This mind has literalized and thus reduced the meanings of the idea of monotheism<sup>40</sup>.

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it, is *shirk*, giving anything more importance than God. The Qur'anic concept of the individual *nafs* ('soul') is dense and complex, and in many ways similar to 'psyche' including linguistically feminine. One dimension of *nafs* is *Nafs-i-Amarra*, "the soul which incites to evil", "whatever evil visits you is from yourself" (Qur'an, verse 4:79), hence the 'greater' *jihad*, which is not war (obliteration) but 'struggle against'. Between forgiveness and revenge, human nature is seen for what it is, weak, prone to ingratitude, arrogant, yet capable of good and as such the human psyche/body is the jewel in the crown of Creation (*Ashraf-ul-Makhluqat*). Unlike Christianity, there is no patience with 'original sin', Eve was not responsible for the fall and Adam's 'sin' was forgetfulness (see Qur'an, verse 20:115). Morality is a spectrum and everything is not salvation/damnation. Between *halal* (permissible) and *haram* (forbidden), there is a vast grey domain of *makruh*, that which is undesirable, but not a sin, e.g. divorce; and *alsomandub*, praiseworthy acts but carrying no penalty if not done. These intermediate domains reflect an approach to notions of 'evil' and 'morality' which are more about *proportions* and requisite *balance*, than absolutes. Human diversity is a 'sign' (see Qur'an, verse 30:22), a given, and Islam "suits the requirements of which He has made the nature of mankind" (see Qur'an, verse 30:30). In resonance with the human psyche, the 'requirements' have been obfuscated and morally reduced to warring Halal/Haram opposites in current Islamist discourse.

38. As a hint of this complexity, one can note that the lives of the founders of the major religion, follow the trajectory of the Hero myth and that Christ is also the Divine *Logos* 'The Word' in (Johanine) Christianity.
39. "I do not combat Christian truth. I am only arguing with the modern mind." Laurence van der Post, *Jung and the Story of our Times* (London: Penguin, 1978).
40. To say, 'our God is one' is different from saying 'there is One god'. The first is about Unity, the second about a Unit (Mono). The idea of Unity is meaningless without diversity. In so far as the three traditions incorporate multiplicity within an ideal of Unity (God, Yahweh, Allah), apart from being individual religions, Islam's monotheism can also be seen as a religious perspective *about* religious perspectives, talking of the unity among all religions. For example, the idea of 170,000 prophets bringing the (same) message of *Tawhid*, that is Unity, of not just God, but also all facets of Creation, including humans. Monotheism of consciousness refers to a literal attitude towards symbolic events in which one vision, in this

For post/Jungians such as Hillman, it also does not matter if this ‘mind’ is a believing Christian or not. Either way, it manifests the mutually reinforcing, self reflexive relationship between an unconscious Cartesianism which exclusively claims the ‘light’ of reason and insists on singularity of meaning, and a similar unconscious Christianism based on theological exclusivity and singular meaning absolving one of the darkness within<sup>41</sup>. Since the Christian mind “cannot allow a destructive possibility co-present with love and goodness”, the psychological consequence of splitting phenomena and reducing them to warring opposites ensures *moralreductionism* as a *general attitude*, whereby the negative is projected onto ‘the enemy, the heathens, the Jews, the Catholics, terrorists ... the Christian heritage is constantly at work ... invisibly inside our feelings and reactions and ideas, preventing us from seeing ourselves and our world ... you and me, too, we cant help but be Christian’<sup>42</sup>.

Thus, from the post/Jungian perspective, the psycho-theological ruptures in the modern self have created a psychological and moral sickness in the western psyche leading to a world

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case Christianist-Cartesianist, dominates, its literalized, reductionist notion of ‘unity’, renders ‘pathological’ or ‘heretical’ what was/is a natural matrix of psychological and religious diversity.

41. “The world conquering force of Christianity was not inspired by Christian love but by successfully mobilizing the will, which needs fundamentalism or it does not know what to do ... there (has to be) only one meaning, one reading of the text... one meaning of Christ’s suffering”. Hillman, *Inter-Views* (Harpers and Row: New York, 1983), pp. 81-82.

42. Hillman, ‘Inter-Views’, 1983, pp. 78-84

view which can be called Cartesian Christianity<sup>43</sup>, which is the sanitized term for ‘secularism’. As the ‘dark epiphanies of the 20<sup>th</sup> century’ -- its wars, genocides – reveal, secular humanism does not automatically evoke compassion and nor does religious belief per se, and people are as willing to kill in the name of God as in its absence.<sup>44</sup> These failures tell us that the problem is not with any religion but with human nature and how it theo-rizes its self and its relationship with religion.

All religions encompass notions of good and evil and other dialectical concepts. However, these are not to be seen literally, or existing separately in warring conflict, but rather, as symbolic, interconnected, contrasting, mutually defining complementary qualities. The Islamic ideal is a balance, not obliteration of one by the other which results in an inflated ego (arrogance/*hubris*), and absence of humility. Similarly, all sacred texts are less about ‘correct’ mental ‘beliefs’ and more about how to cope daily with this beautiful, painful, paradoxical, frequently confusing and difficult business called ‘life’.

## **PENETRATIONS AND (S)PERMUTATIONS**

Internalised today by millions belonging to different religions, or not to any (that is, Cartesian Christianity), the insistence on *psychological* singularity is an implicit, mythical ideology, supplying images and appropriate feelings about self and other, creating a fantasy of a

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43. Hillman, ‘Inter-Views’, 1983, pp. 78-84.

44. For Jung, it was not that westerners are more evil than their ancestors, rather, given the distortions and internalization of Cartesian-Christianity, and given the wars, genocides and invention of horrific chemical, nuclear weapons etc, in the west, their moral capacities have not evolved in proportion to their modern ability to destroy on a massive scale. “That is the great problem before us today. Reason alone no longer suffices”, see Jung, ‘Collected Works’, 1967, 10:574.

literalized 'unity' and what it means to be 'a people'. Every concept is MONO-theised, whether as a one-dimensional theo-logic-al god or a 'secular' (Cartesian-Christianist) political ideal. For instance, One God(mine) is accompanied by One Faith (orthodoxy/modern secularism). There should be One Law (sharia/WTO), One State (*darul-Islam/globalization*), served by One body of the faithful. A perfect evocation of a totalitarian, paranoid society. As a collective global condition, paranoia is *the* dis-ease of our time.<sup>45</sup>

Promoted and internalized via the universally 'civilizing' projects of colonialism, post/modernization/globalization, or what Derrida also called Christianist 'Globalatinization'<sup>46</sup>, the nature of 'secular' fundamentalisms today exhibit similar Cartesian-Christianist features in which the world of 'facts', that is, One meaning, dominates: an exclusivist-reductionist-literalism, and a morally reductionist reliance on history-as-fact. This historicism bears directly on our individual and collective consciousness which today believes that historical 'facts' determine us to the exclusion of everything else. It ranges from evolutionary psychology to genetics, to the 'case history' project of

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45. This literalized unity requires a Hero who can lead/fight dangerous dragons: Thus, the Communists and Capitalist west required each other and now the Muslims, who in turn, require the Great Satan and their own heretics (minorities and women). Any MONO-theos is morally reductionist, seeing all issues in terms of good/bad, either/or. This heroic masculinism is evident today in globally popular films such as Harry Potter and Lord of the Rings. Reflecting a literalist, reductionist, adolescent view of both God and human, these narratives rely on techno-magical weapons of destruction not philosophical wisdom. The view of the world is as a decisive battle between good and evil. The goal of victory is destruction, extermination, annihilation. Even though many myths/religions speak of options such as deliberation, negotiation, redemption, reconciliation, not to mention Christian ideals of love and forgiveness. A decade before 9/11, Hillman's observation on Christianity and the modern person remains relevant for today and multiple fundamentalisms: "Terrorism and nihilism are already in our western world view, inherent to our system of thinking (...) its roots lie in our religious unconsciousness". See Hillman, 'Inter-Views', 1983, p. 81.

46. Jacques Derrida, *Acts of Religion*. (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 63.



psychotherapy/psychiatry's reduction of the meaning(s) of life to bio-chemicals or what happened in childhood; to rigid ethno-religious ideas of identity and the creation of nation states based on the politics of nationalism and literalized spiritual geographies. Similarly, it is evident that even apart from the Muslim world, it is the literalist-historical view of religious and political identity that dominates. Thus, Hindu fundamentalists also relied on archaeology to destroy the Ayodhya Mosque and there is a similar science-justified psychotheology about Jerusalem.

It should not be forgotten that the majority of colonized people were Muslims, and from the 'native's' perspective, the primary 'image' heralding the colonial project, was of white men carrying weapons accompanied by a priests/missionaries. They telescope the fusion of a distorted hyper-macho vision of religion (Christianism) and an instrumentalist-weaponized rationality/power (Cartesianism), and their internalization in the colonized/modernized psyche. Today the top leadership of Al-Qaida are highly trained in sciences such as engineering, medicine, physics etc. The psychology of the rational-warrior-priest fuels all sorts of extremism, including the way we relate to self, society and any religion. Religious or 'secular' (Cartesian-Christianist), as participants in a global modernity, we are all influenced by what Hillman calls "this extraordinary religion, the religion that we are all in no matter how hard we try to deny it or escape it"<sup>47</sup>. We are all in the same boat<sup>48</sup>.

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47. Hillman, 'Inter-Views', 1983, p. 143.

48. By and large, the only ones trying to escape in academia are the ecofeminists, and other men and women who link Christianity with the environmental crisis. Additionally, there are numerous feminist scholars engaged in a critical re-viewing of Judaism and Christianity, but who are not throwing out the baby with the bathwater. Similarly, women are claiming their spiritual rights within other traditions by radically re-visioning and reclaiming them from patriarchy (see, Ahmed, 'Gendering the Spirit', 2002). Globally, the by now burgeoning literature on feminism, religion and spirituality indicates the significance of the feminist re-

By now, Hinduism is increasingly Cartesian-Christianist-Hinduism, and similarly, we have Cartesian-Christianist-Judaism or Buddhism, and of course, Cartesian-Christianist-Islamism. Religious or secular, these fundamentalisms are misogynist, hegemonic, hypermasculine expressions which psychologically and theologically artificially negate psychospiritual tendencies in favour of logocentric supremacist thought. As such, the terrorism of political Islam is one side of the symmetrical psychodynamics underlying post/modernity where there is only ONE 'choice': Whether in the 'cold' war of the last century, or Algeria in the 80's, when religious extremists killed unveiled women and secularists the veiled, or today, "you are either with us or against us". In the psycho/theological absence of the Feminine, it is a mirror image response to various masculinist 'penetrations': psychologically, of western Cartesian-Christianist modernity, and literally, the penetration of a homophobic, homoerotic 'dialogue'/battle into a language of violence/war.

Ideas, like pills, are not gender sensitive and can be swallowed uncritically by men and women. Given the psychological power of archetypal ideas, simply being female is no prophylactic against these psychologically heroic (s)permutations, witness the many women who join religious fundamentalist movements, or, for example Condoleezza Rice.

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viewing of religion and its contemporary variants. The strongest evidence for the occurrence of a massive paradigm shift in the scholarship on religion can be noted in the new revised edition of a premier reference text, *The Encyclopaedia of Religion*. The longest new addition in it (80,000 words) is the compound entry on 'Ecology and Religion' and 'Gender and Religion', see *Encyclopaedia of Religion* (New York: Macmillan, 1987).

## Cartesian-Christianist-Islamism

A prominent western scholar on Islam states: “(...) for Muslims the word ‘religion’ does not have the same connotations as it has for Christians (...) for Muslims, Islam is not simply a system of faith and worship (...) {it} concerns the whole complex fabric of life”<sup>49</sup>. This is entirely correct. But as vast numbers of even nominal Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs will tell you, their religions too concern the ‘whole, complex fabric of life’. Nevertheless, the Protestant Christian *exception* has become the decisive *norm* for studying all religions<sup>50</sup>. Only recently have leading scholars started admitting that it was an enormous mistake to have considered Protestantism as the paradigm of religion, indicating that the entire edifice of the academic study of religion merits serious reconsideration<sup>51</sup>. Additionally, that prior to the Enlightenment, it was impossible to distinguish religion from culture in the west<sup>52</sup>.

The fact that ‘culture’ is also described as a ‘way of life’ indicates its inextricable links with religion. The roots of all the major arts -- drama, myth, epic, poetry, music, architecture, dance, constitute the bedrock of *mythos*. Disconnecting ‘religion’ from ‘culture’ leads to

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49. Bernard Lewis, *Islam and the West* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 83.

50. I have yet to decipher the origins and logic of the adage. ‘The exception proves the rule’.

51. Bruce Lincoln, *Holy Terrors: Thinking about Religion after September 11* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2003), pp. 3-4. As Lincoln acknowledges, this recognition has been driven primarily by religious historians and anthropologists working on Islam, particularly, W.C. Smith and Talal Asad.

52. See, for example, Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *Faith and Belief* (Princeton University Press: 1979.). Jonathan Smith, *Map is Not the Territory: Studies in the History of Religions* (Leiden University Press: 1978). Paula Coe, *Religious Imagination and the Body: A Feminist Analysis* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994). And Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam*, (Baltimore: JHU Press, 2009).

different individual/collective psychopathologies. Time constraints restrict their detailing<sup>53</sup>, but some relevant points need to be reiterated if one is to avoid falling into Cartesian-Christianist-Islamism.

### Culture-Vultures

Within 100 years of its inception, Islam had settled across continents and widely divergent cultures. Over 1500 years it gave rise to at least five great civilizations – the Mughal, Ottoman, Persian, Moorish and Spanish. Indicating its inherent cultural adaptivity and fecundity, each was a distinct civilization of the highest order and at the same time uniquely Islamic<sup>54</sup>. In the (then) absence of ‘a monotheism of consciousness’, monolithic centralized authorities and priestly patriarchal hierarchies, the creative imagination engendered by Islam was self reflexively mirrored in the cultural diversity of its adherents and the fertility of their

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53. For example, in Europe where culture is dominant, the pathology is around what was called ‘manic-depression’ and now ‘bi-polar disorder’. In Pakistan where increasingly religion, disconnected from culture is dominant, the pathology is ‘obsessive compulsive disorder’. Whereas the latter’s focus is frequently the body, the former is the ‘mind’. Both are diseases of meaning, rather, an absence or search for it. Durre Ahmed, ‘Globalization, Religion and Culture’, *Journal of the South North Network Cultures and Development*, Special Issue 31/32, 3, 1998. Keynote for ‘Conference on Globalization and the Vitality of Cultures’ in *Cultures and Development*, Brussels.

54. They are civilizations in the sense of different and highly developed languages and literature, cuisine apparel, architecture, to name a few. Architecturally, an Ottoman mosque is very different from a Persian one. Yet, both are instantly identifiable as ‘Islamic’. As part of the Indian subcontinent, Pakistani culture and hence its Islam, is primarily Indo-Persian Islam which subsumes the rich *mythos* of two ancient civilizations, not to mention the multi layered world of *mythos* which is the Quran. I was raised in a modern environment in which English literature, the Arabic Qur’an, the Persian poetry of Rumi (13<sup>th</sup> century) and the Punjabi poetry of Bulleh Shah (16<sup>th</sup> century) and others, were intermingled in conversations on religion. Apart from literature, this intermeshing of culture and religion, in particular of Persian/Central Asian Islam and Hinduism, is fully visible in the exquisite beauty of Mughal architecture (and its colonial expressions) and in the classical music and performing arts of India even today.

spiritual imagination which was strongly predisposed towards mysticism, which, in turn, can be called the ‘feminine’ side of religion<sup>55</sup>. As Karen Armstrong points out, what we broadly term Sufism today, was the normative form of Islam until the end of the Nineteenth Century<sup>56</sup>. As such, people did not see themselves as ‘mystics’ or ‘Sufis’ but simply Muslims living in what was/is a vast, multilayered canvas of what I term as numerous *indigenous* Islams. I have been raised within this complex and multifaceted religious perspective(s), and am old enough to bear witness to its normative existence in South Asia and elsewhere. Edward Said is correct in saying that there are actually innumerable Islams<sup>57</sup>. Jung called Sufism the “secret backbone of Islam”<sup>58</sup> because it is indistinguishable from culture. By now,

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55. “The feminine nature of mysticism is obvious: the surrender to nature or to God, the passive attitude waiting for the spiritual blessing and uplift to ecstasy, essentially quietist, contemplative and resigned ... an expression of femininity as expressed through the feminine side of all human beings. The ‘prophetic’ aspect of religion, on the other hand is uncompromisingly masculine: a self assertive will to live, active, aggressive, ethical, believing in God-given revelation rather than individual ecstasy and seeing the handwork of the Almighty as revealed through the historical process rather than the more poetic spatial display of nature, through time rather than space.” Amaury de Riencourt, *Sex and Power in History* (New York: McKay, 1974).

56. Armstrong, ‘Short History of Myth’, 2004, p. 101. According to de Riencourt, “The massive theological superstructure that Muslim’s elaborated during the first three or four centuries following Muhammad’s death was a replica of the Christian one, but it never satisfied the Muslim soul: sternly ethical and dryly philosophical, it made no appeal to sentiment, emotion or intuition. So, it was that mysticism soon appeared [...] in the guise of Sufism, to enlist the enthusiastic support of the masses, not expressed directly in the increasingly repressed Muslim women, but in the feminine emotionalism of Islamic mysticism [...] In the end, Sufism defeated and routed the ulemas”, from de Riencourt, ‘*Sex and Power in History*’, 1974.

57. Edward Said. July 2002. *Impossible Histories: Why the Many Islams Cannot Be Simplified*, Harpers. Retrieved June 13, 2012, from <http://harpers.org/archive/2002/07/impossible-histories/>. In this context, their existence illustrates a more authentic notion of the concept of ‘Unity’.

58. C. G. Jung, *Seminar on Dream Analysis* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984) p. 336. He also noted that in Africa, compared with Christianity, Islam was widespread, because it was ‘more reasonable’, that is, more in tune with pre-existing culture.

for a variety of reasons, including the influence of Saudi ‘money-theism’, this backbone has been severely damaged<sup>59</sup>.

For Jung, the main tragedy for Christianity was the loss of its mysticisms, namely, the mystic Gnostic tradition. Pagels has shown how in the earliest stages of Christianity, the ‘woman friendly’ Gnostic Gospels emphasizing the subjective/experiential were de-legitimized, excised and eventually forgotten<sup>60</sup>. The subsequent steady decline of mysticism with its emphasis on individual subjectivity, was accompanied by the consolidation of patriarchal, centralized, hierarchical institutions. By the 16<sup>th</sup> century whatever traces remained were obliterated<sup>61</sup>.

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59. Some longstanding reasons: the colonial, modernization/globalization projects, 20<sup>th</sup> century geopolitics, dictatorial regimes ‘officializing’ Islam by ‘Islamizing’ society and the world wide promotion of Saudi ‘money-theism’ and a MONO-cultural Salafi vision which has resulted in cultural vandalism across the Muslim world. It is one of the most deadly assaults on Islam(s). The *logos* centered analytic gaze of the west on a logocentric (Cartesian-Christianist)-Islamism, neglects the dimension of cultural history, perhaps because of its own cultural amnesia, which, given its violent history (colonialism, wars, etc), is understandable. The fact that Islam has never had an official clergy or ‘Church’, no ‘Rome’ or ‘Canterbury’, has been true for 1500 years. But within roughly just the past four decades, Saudi money-theism has successfully first created a clergy (the ‘high’ Islamists), and then will follow the inevitable central ‘Church’. This of course will be encouraged by the west since it is in resonance with its own centralized (Christianist) religious institutions. It is also intellectually easier for the West to ‘deal’ with a handful of ‘officials’ rather than a cacophony of innumerable voices and languages all claiming to be Muslims.

60. Elaine Pagels, *The Gnostic Gospels* (New York: Vintage Books, 1988). Pagels research should alert us to the fact that inspite of patriarchy, no religion has similarly strong centralized institutional structures of Christianity, and all others have *living* mystical traditions till today. These crucial historical differences, particularly no historical equivalents to the Inquisition, point to the existence of profound theo-psychological differences, and problems, generated by the academic Cartesian-Christianist gaze on both women and religion in all religions.

61. For Jung, the west had basically destroyed its own religion and via the modernity project threatened the world not just physically but also psychologically and spiritually. “No wonder the western world feels uneasy, for it does not know what it has lost through the destruction of its numinosities (symbols). It has lost its moral and spiritual values to a very dangerous degree. Its moral and spiritual tradition has collapsed, and has left a worldwide disorientation

Today, a similar momentum is prevailing within Islam. Between Cartesian-Christianist modernity and the monolithic Saudi-Salafi theo-cultural bulldozer, the psycho-cultural-spiritual diversity of Islam is being steadily obliterated. This is a disaster for any natural phenomenon, and religion is no exception. All religions are languages of the soul, and like all languages, have numerous dialects and accents. Today, this idea has its literal counterpart in the notion that all Muslims must ‘speak’ with just *one accent*, in *one dialect*, namely Salafi Islam. Even though 85 percent of more than a billion Muslims are not Arabs.<sup>62</sup> If this momentum towards creating ‘Rome’ in Mecca, continues, it will eventually result in the extinction of 85% of the Islamic spiritual/cultural rainbow, replacing it with the monolithic monochromatic bigotry of Wahabi/Salafism and other hypermasculine expressions.

Unlike Christianity, God in Islam (and other religions) is beyond gender. The ‘He’ is more of a linguistic constraint rather than a theological imperative and there is no such notion as ‘Father’ (or Mother). However, for centuries, numerous commentaries on the (more than) 99 Attributes/Names/‘Traits’ of God have categorized many of them as Names of Majesty/Power (*Jalal*) and Names of Beauty/Compassion (*Jamal*), that is, symbolically ‘Masculine’ and ‘Feminine’. This ‘gendering’ is similar to Taoism’s *Yin/Yang* which together make for the ‘Great Absolute’. All religions are internally structured around such

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(...) The great religions of the world suffer from increasing anaemia (...).”Jung, ‘Collected Works’, 1967. Vol. 19, No. 254.

62. This is most evident in the outer, performative aspect of *hijab*, historically a cross cultural, colourful, multi-styled expression of female sartorial ‘modesty’. The black/white canvas of Saudi female/male attire is symbolic of the monochromatic mind.

symbolic, mutually defining, dialectics. Life is both male and female and even our bodies<sup>63</sup> bear witness to this in terms of *ratio* (which gives us the word ‘rational’).

The ‘Cold War’ had a disastrous long term global impact, particularly in Africa and Asia<sup>64</sup>. The genesis of the Taliban, was the war in Afghanistan which started more than 30 years ago with no end in sight. Tens of thousands died and many children lost one or both parents. Thousands of young males were put into segregated orphanages run by semi-literate ‘clerics’, and grew up having literally NO experience of woman -- as mother, aunt, sister, grandmother etc. This literal absence in psychological experience of the feminine was reinforced by the indoctrination of a patriarchal, hypermasculine interpretation of Islam which only emphasizes the Names linked to God’s Power, Vengeance etc, not the dominant ones of Love, Mercy, Compassion, to name a few. Thus, the feminine, Divine or human, had been rendered wholly ‘Other’, obliterated in the psychological and theological consciousness of

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63. As Nasr observes: ‘The differences between the sexes cannot be reduced to anatomy and biological function. There are also differences of psychology and temperament, of spiritual type and even principles within the Divine Nature which are sources *in divinis* of the duality represented on the microcosmic level as male and female. God is both Absolute and Infinite. Absoluteness and Majesty, which is inseparable from it, is manifested most directly in the masculine state, and Infinity and Beauty in the Feminine state. Syed Hossain Nasr, ‘The Male and Female in the Islamic Perspective’, *Studies in Comparative Religion*, 14, 1 and 2, 1980, pp.67-75.

64. The ‘Cold War’ between Communist Soviet Russia (Cartesianism) and the ‘West’(Europe/USA, Christianity) lasted from the end of World War II till the Soviet collapse in the early 90’s. During this time, much of the world was forced to choose sides. Commenting on the several million lives lost in Zaire alone between 1996-2002, it is undeniable that ‘cold war politics helped create the calamity that is much of Africa today’. (*The Economist*. 24.2.2007, p. 83). Similarly, Pakistan became the location for a real but ‘proxy’ war between the Soviets and the West, in which the Pakistani’s and Afghans were footsoldiers. At its peak in the 80’s, Pakistan was host to the world’s largest number of refugees, 6 million Afghans.



the Taliban (and many other Muslims). Once this sort of mutation occurs, it takes generations to reverse.

Seen from this post analytic/Islamic perspective all religious fundamentalisms can be understood as psycho-theologically hypermasculine approaches to text, interpretation, meaning(s) and expression which negates and devalues the Divine Feminine. In Pakistan, where this sort of Cartesian-Christianist-Islamism is becoming the norm, my research indicates that accusations of heresy and violence are inevitably directed at individuals/communities having a more feminist/feminine vision<sup>65</sup>.

## THE FINAL FRONTIER

It is now well known that what began as colonial classifications of religions and populations in India<sup>66</sup>, eventually replaced pre-colonial self conceptions<sup>67</sup>. In short, as the foundational postcolonial scholar, Ashis Nandy, put it in the context of colonial politics, "... the concept of

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65. Ahmed, Durre S. 'Violence and the Feminine in Islam' in Durre S. Ahmed (ed.), *Gendering the Spirit: Women, Religion and the post Colonial Response* (London: Zed Books, 2002). See also, Durre S. Ahmed, 'Gender and Islamic Spirituality: A Psychological View of 'low' Fundamentalism', in Lahoucine Ouzgane (ed.) *Islamic Masculinities* (London: ZED Books, 2006).

66. As pointed out by Tambiah, in Roman times 'religion' was not a doctrine or dogma of speculative interest but something one "felt and did". While early Christianity still retained the all inclusive view, it also developed a definite conception of itself which was exclusive and intolerant of other religions. The present usage of 'religion' comes from the Enlightenment and its emphasis on schematizations of 'doctrine', 'dogmas', 'beliefs'. The process of "objectification" was taken further in the colonial period and by the 20<sup>th</sup> century, "western scholars had already labelled the great religions as isms: such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism". Stanley J. Tambiah, *Magic, Science, Religion, and the Scope of Rationality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p.32

67. Gerald Larson, 'Discourse about "Religion" in Colonial and Post Colonial India', as cited in Paula Cooley, *Religious Imagination and the Body; A Feminist Analysis* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), p. 123.

the modern west is a psychological category. The west is now everywhere, within the west and outside; in structures and in minds.”<sup>68</sup>

Similarly, by now, feminism and post colonial studies have shown how scholarship is not just a discursive exercise but also a constitutive act, having implicit “sins of commission and omission”<sup>69</sup>. Thus, ‘religion’ (and ‘psychology’) can also be considered cultural constructions reflecting various agendas. Starting with Anderson<sup>70</sup>, by now, the post colonial project of *The Decolonization of the Imagination* is well underway and based on a recognition of the relationship between power, culture, domination and different ‘imaginaries’, leading to a convergence of different lines of inquiry on the theme of the imagination<sup>71</sup>. To the extent that *mythos* is nourished directly from the depths of the human imagination, we seem to have come full circle, back to the human psyche.

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68. Ashis Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self Under Colonialism* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983), p. xi.

69. “... scholars of religion have also constituted what counts as religion by way of omission ... witness, for example, the extent to which women’s practices and roles were, and often still are, overlooked or subordinated in status to men, even in egalitarian populations; thereby reflecting the andocentric assumptions of the male and female scholars rather than the values of the communities being studied.” Paula Cooley, ‘Religious Imagination’, 1984, p. 123.

70. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991).

71. ‘Shifting Imaginaries: Decolonization, Internal Decolonization, Post Coloniality’, in J.N. Pieterse and B. Parekh (eds.), *The Decolonization of the Imagination* (London: ZED Books, 1995). “This interest in the imaginary is different from the iconoclasm of earlier rationalists and positivists since ‘it posits instead the imaginary as constitutive of community and society’. As a metaphor, colonialism has come to be seen as a political, economic and cultural condition which exists globally and it is argued that one can speak of ‘any number of metaphorical “colonizations” having to do with region, class, race and gender’. Shohat and Stam. Shohat, Ella and Robert Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media*, (New York: Routledge, 1994) in Pieterse and Parekh, ‘Decolonization of the Imagination’, 1995.

However, having witnessed, by virtue of age and experience, endless series of theoretical somersaults on tightropes set up, to begin with, by academics themselves, I am not so sure that the present re/‘discovery’ of a Muslim ‘imaginary’/‘imaginaries’ will be productive unless it is based on a dispassionate survey/theorizing of the psychodynamics of personal subjectivity and its imaginative potentials. Much of what we know remains dominated by masculine narratives/‘imaginaries’, which, for me, are marked by a disturbing absence of humour<sup>72</sup>. And which is why we need more long term projects on Muslim women’s subjectivities and their relationship with religion<sup>73</sup>.

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72. For example, given widespread ‘secularization’ in the west, the western academic’s long disconnect from religion is understandable. But, in the South, secularism has always been on the margins of overwhelmingly and self evidently religious societies. Yet, generally religion was seen as ‘backward’ and not part of the intellectual self. A serious self examination would reveal the all too human desire to follow fashion, which intellectuals deplore, but also end up following, in this case, the western academic kind. Not having the imagination required to have a sense of irony and laugh at one’s human ‘failings’, many current analyses are restricted towards simple West/modernity bashing. Decades of analytic training are set aside to embrace an uncritical acceptance of a Cartesian-Christianist-masculinist expression of Islam in which faith and knowledge are forever incompatible and can only be bridged by a heroic ‘leap’. Today, we see perfectly rational, ‘secular people who have ‘flipped’ into becoming grim, hair splittingly ‘correct’ Muslims and what were till recently ‘regular’ Muslims, adopt a strict regimen of *halal/harams*. In short, the Muslim intellectual’s re-linking with the religious imaginary is at best a mental-analytic cop out; at worst, it borders on fundamentalism. Either way, it betrays a still colonized postcolonial imagination vis-à-vis religion.

73. In my analysis of certain women’s spiritualities, I noted that: “They take what can be considered an ‘irreverent’ and ‘perverse’ delight in carnivalising established religious norms and terms, not to mention the liberties they take with the visual accouterments of high-serious religion. But these women are actually devout spiritual ‘pundamentalists’, opening us up to multiple meanings and possibilities inherent in the human-divine relationship. Pusters *par excellence*, they are the antithesis to grim (and boring) one dimensional certainty, in short, to all types of fanaticism.” Ahmed, Durre S. ‘The Last Frontier’ in Durre Ahmed (ed). *Gendering the Spirit: Women, Religion and the Post Colonial Response*, 18 (London: Zed Books, 2002), p. 18.

My clinical and social experience suggests that a major problem among Muslims today, is the constant conflation of the sociological/political with the psychological. The internalization of various socio/political/economic discourses constituting ‘identity’ have overwhelmed one of the main reasons why religion exists, namely, not just ‘how to live’ but more so, given the mystery of death, ‘how to die’. This is something we will all experience and know nothing about. Death is a uniquely *individual* experience, it has to be faced alone, there are no experts on the matter. Hence, the psychological primacy of the individual’s subjectivity and religion. Personally, I doubt that the posthumous Interrogation of the self will have much to do with nationalism, ethnicity, gender, geopolitics, even education. Rather, it will be the *body* and its limbs, tongue, skin which will ‘testify’ (Qur’an verses 24:24 and 41:21); not what was in our ‘mind’ but what was in our ‘heart’, which we frequently link to ‘soul’ when conveying subjective depth (‘heart and soul’). Today heart dis-ease is the leading global illness and a preferred method of treatment is to ‘by pass’ it (surgically).

According to Jung, most highly educated people remain profoundly ignorant of their self(s), their unconsciousness is “incredible ... not to mention their prejudices and irresponsible way of dealing, rather not dealing, with them”<sup>74</sup>. Knowledge is power, but also a burden. Only ignorance is bliss and one must remember that Christ carried his own cross. Similarly, the decolonization of women’s subjectivities requires a re-valuing of *mythos*, a re-visioning of *logos*, and a re-negotiation of a cognitively complicated nexus of one’s personal, religious, cultural and intellectual history.<sup>75</sup> These histories preclude any substantive engagement with

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74. Jung, ‘Collected Works’, 1967, Vol. 18, p. 611.

75. That is, a re-visioning of *logos* beyond adolescent Cartesianism into its widest sense of the application of vast knowledge resources which are the gift of modernity. A wide range of

the body which remains, for many women (and men), a mystery, which does not require to be ‘solved’ but rather experienced as mediated by the imagination. For women, re-configuring the ‘mind’ and re-connecting it with the body is a daunting task which will necessarily, eventually involve at some level, an active engagement with the politics of meaning and interpretation and risks the accusation of academic and religious ‘heresy’. Prior to its meaning in post-Nicean Christianity, the word ‘heresy’ in Greek simply meant ‘to *choose* for oneself’. Depending on our choices, the de-colonization of the religious imagination of women remains post coloniality’s final frontier<sup>76</sup>. Those who have ventured forth and glimpsed this horizon, report that:

*Women’s emerging spirituality is not just a vertical relationship with God ... It is risk rather than security ... joyful rather than austere ... expansive rather than limiting. It celebrates more than it fasts ... It is vibrant, colourful and liberating.*<sup>77</sup>

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insights from psychological, cultural, linguistic and historical sources need to be interfaced with religion to construct subjective architectures of meaning.

76. Ahmed, ‘The Last Frontier’, 2002.

77. Mananzan, Mary John. ‘Theological Perspectives of a Religious Woman Today – Four Trends of the Emerging Spirituality’, in Ursula King (ed.), *Feminist Theology from the Third World*, 347 (London: SPCK Publishing, 1994).