

Foreword

by Andrew Harvey

The deepest meaning of the all-embracing world crisis of our time, which threatens the future of the human race and of much of nature, is that it is an evolutionary crisis. It is, at once, a death of all our agendas, illusions and fantasies of uniqueness, domination over nature, and endless growth, and a birth—whose crucible is tragedy, heartbreak and devastation—of an embodied divine humanity capable of and inspired to work directly with the Divine to transform all existing ways of being and doing everything. Seeing the crisis in this way—as an unprecedented and inescapable dark night of our species that could lead to the unprecedented birth, on a massive scale, of a new embodied divine consciousness-in-action—not only enables us to endure its necessary horrors and ordeals with faith, perseverance, and grace; it aligns us with the design of the divine intelligence of evolution itself, a design that has been made available to us, with majestic passion and precision, in the divinely inspired works of great modern evolutionary mystics such as Sri Aurobindo, Jean Gebser, Teilhard de Chardin, Father Bede Griffiths and Ken Wilber. It is the essence of our terrifying and amazing time—its central and potentially all-transforming paradox—that in our darkest hour, the most all-encompassing and transfiguring vision of what we essentially are and could be is also arising to give us the passion and the peace, the knowledge and hope and strength that we will need to rise to the full height of our evolutionary destiny.

Philip Shepherd, in his profound and original masterpiece *New Self, New World*, now adds his distinctive, elegant, fierce and tender voice to those of his distinguished evolutionary predecessors. His book—written over a decade of painstaking, grueling self-exploration, and with the highest nobility and clarity of soul—provides us all with

an indispensable guide to why a radically embodied divine humanity needs to be birthed now, and birthed fast, and it also shows us how to allow this bewildering and majestic destiny to be worked out in and through us through divine grace. This is not a book to be read casually or fast; it is not a ‘self-help’ book with easily assimilable, facile ‘practices’, false promises of ‘instant healing’ and risibly superficial ‘quick fixes’. It is that rarest of works in our age—a brave, magnificent manifesto for a new kind of divine human life, a life lived in conscious dynamic harmony of illumined mind, impassioned and tender heart and increasingly, consciously, divinized body.

Those of us who are already experiencing the rigors, demands and glories of the birth that is now taking place will find in *New Self, New World* both a brilliant forensic analysis of our current dead-end, flatland obsession with reason and the mind and all the tyrannical, matricidal and suicidal structures and actions it engenders; and a luminous, inspiring, exact and exacting description of the embodied divine human life of the birth—a life in which soul is embodied and body ensouled and the ‘masculine’ energies of clarity, control and forceful action dance in abandoned, perfect lucid rhythm with the restored and celebrated ‘feminine’ energies of adoration, tender erotic love of all creation, and wise, sustaining, humble, nourishing interrelationship. Both in the way it is structured and in the precise but richly poetic and full-breathed, almost mantric way in which it is written, *New Self, New World* not only describes this sacred marriage of transcendence and immanence, body and soul, masculine and feminine, but also embodies it with a magical power and force that is at once challenging and healing.

Philip Shepherd’s book presents three ways of understanding ourselves that go so against the grain of habituated, sclerotic thinking that they can be considered revolutionary. These three radical contributions are: a new model of human consciousness; a new vision of our evolutionary history; and a new vision of the interrelated environmental, political, social and economic crises that now threaten our survival and demand a collective evolutionary leap in embodied, divine consciousness.

In the new model of human consciousness that *New Self, New World* offers, Philip Shepherd proposes a conscious ‘sacred marriage’ of what he calls “the two brains of the human being”—between, in other words, the intelligence we have ruthlessly and ruinously centered

only in the cranium, with its obsessive and dissociated cold passion for separatist analysis, objectification and control; and the vast, free-flowing, infinitely supple and responsive intuitive intelligence of our ‘second brain’: that of the enteric nervous system, immune system and genetic networks, with its locus in the pelvic bowl. In this radical new model, the psyche or spirit is shown to pervade every living part and every cell of our human organism in such a way that makes the transfiguration of the human into the divine human possible. The evolutionary significance of this very grounded and precise vision cannot be overstated: it accords, in every spiritual and material detail, with the universal law of interrelationship, inter-communion and inter-responsibility that is everywhere proclaimed by both the ancient mystical systems and those of the emerging evolutionary mysticism. Our only possible release from the psychotic tyranny of a heartless and radically dissociated glorification of bodiless intelligence lies in a reclamation of the almost miraculous, sensitive awareness of all the interrelated physical and cellular systems, and in a sacred marriage of that vivid and vibrant ‘feminine’ body consciousness—allowed at last to speak in its own sacred language—with a purified, chastened, tenderized ‘masculine’ rational consciousness. It is precisely this ‘sacred marriage’ and the birth of the divine human it makes possible that Sri Aurobindo, in his own inimitably grand way, celebrates in his *The Life Divine*. Philip Shepherd’s particular contribution to the understanding and unfolding of the birth now taking place is that it is rooted not in grand metaphysics alone, or even exclusively in a ‘yogic’ understanding of the mystical tantric transformation of matter, but in the latest astounding revelations of quantum mechanics and neurobiology that reveal to all those who dare to see the mystery of a material cosmos everywhere pervaded by dynamic spirit-energy. Such a vision—which fuses the highest mystical wisdom, the most advanced scientific inquiry, and the greatest and most poignant historical urgency—could only be born now. It is Philip Shepherd’s peculiar grace to be its midwife.

In Philip Shepherd’s second great contribution to our evolutionary crisis—that of a new vision of our history—he demonstrates how the entire ‘progress’ of our modern history has been severely maimed and distorted by a wholesale, ruthless, semi-demented denigration of the values and wisdom of the feminine. *New Self, New World* makes it fiercely clear that our now habitual neglect and ignorance of the center of our ‘feminine intelligence’—the second brain—is part of a

much larger and now blatantly lethal denigration of the feminine in all of the values that govern our rapidly more distorted and destructive relationships to each other, to Creation, and to the political, social and economic worlds we create and continue to keep going. Other major writers, of course, have pointed out, sometimes with as great an eloquence and elegance, this devaluation of the feminine and its increasingly catastrophic consequences in every domain of human life. What makes Philip Shepherd's work unique is that it demonstrates clearly and specifically how the orientation of our thinking about the body has determined and potentially aborted our evolution. In some of the greatest and most revealing pages of *New Self, New World*, Shepherd shows, definitively I believe, how the center of our thinking has risen through the body over the passing millennia, starting in the belly center of consciousness in the Paleolithic, and ascending to the isolated, tyrannical 'cranium' center in our modern era, birthing separatist belief systems, dissociated social, political, economic and scientific philosophies, and hierarchies of all kinds that enshrine division, injustice, horrible poverty and inequality, and thrive on the 'dominator delusion' that, if we continue to feed it blindly, can only now lead to the annihilation of humanity and the terrifying desecration of most of the natural world.

Once we truly dare to grasp how our own thinking is constricted and perverted by what amounts to the trained addiction of our body-thinking to predominantly masculine values and perspectives, then, Philip Shepherd suggests, we will begin to see clearly not only its horrific impact on the world around us but also—and this is crucial for our evolution and survival—the woeful superficiality, narrowness, and petty unwisdom of most of the proposed 'solutions' to the crisis we are mired in. We seem still to want to go on believing—against mounting evidence—that the interrelated crises of the death we are passing through can all be dealt with through a hyped-up, cracked-up application of the very addicted and heart-dead consciousness that created it to begin with, through technological legerdemain and wizardry, super-smart social engineering and political will radically dissociated from spiritual law or practice. This is a desperate, corrupt, bankrupt and dangerous fantasy, one whose absurdity is destined now to be exploded, and in increasingly deadly and dramatic ways, as we enter into the eye of our evolutionary perfect storm. Without the revolution

that *New Self, New World* proposes—a revolution of illumined mind, sacred heart and divinized body; without entering, in fact, into the integral transformation of the birth, and acting from its healed sacred consciousness urgently in every realm of human endeavor, we will not be able even to imagine—let alone labor to construct, enshrine, embody and enact—the new ways of being and doing and creating that we now need if we are to rise to the challenge of our evolutionary destiny. What lies ahead for us if we refuse the challenge of transformation is first, unimaginable chaos and horror, and then extinction; if we accept the terrors of the challenge and submit to its rigor and demands in grateful surrender, anything is possible. The great hope that Philip Shepherd offers—and that has clearly inspired him through all the long and lonely labor of creating his masterpiece—is that the human race will wake up in time, will go on a journey into a new, vibrant, embodied wholeness of heart, mind, soul and body, and will birth in divinely-inspired sacred action, in and through divine grace, a new and far more just and harmonious world. To that hope Philip Shepherd has devoted his life, his brilliance, his energy, and all the rich and profound wisdom and analysis of *New Self, New World*. May we all be worthy of his faith.