

Opening the Eye of Value During the Metacrisis¹

What follows takes, as already stated, the premises found in *First Principles and First Values: Forty-Two Propositions on CosmoErotic Humanism*. The reader is asked to please allow for some liberties of speculation, based on work and insight already distilled by Gafni, Stein, and Wilber.

The Eye of Value and the Sacred Complex

The perception of intrinsic value is a basic human capability. Just as our nervous system has evolved to perceive space and time, so it has evolved to perceive value.

Beginning as an orientation toward basic need satisfaction, and evolving into the self-conscious pursuit of transcendent ideals, persons orient toward value as a given within the lifeworld. Persons are constituted as such against a background of an always already present Field of Cosmic Value.

From a participant's (1st person) perspective, the Field of Value orients (non-pathological) human behavior without persuasion as the focus of socialization, in contexts where elders and youth focus around "it"—e.g., stories of virtuous behavior. This is similar to how space and time orient behavior in the sensorimotor domain, where coaches and athletes coordinate around "it"—e.g., the speed of a ball thrown and the curvature of its path.

The Eye of Value refers to this innate ability for persons to "see" what is valuable, in the same way that a person can see what is the case with physical reality. Your physical eye interacts with the physical processes it perceives. So the Eye of Value exists where the human heart interacts with the Field of Cosmic Value. Again, from the participant's perspective, the value of something is not "made up" or "socially constructed." Quite the contrary.

The category of the sacred is precisely that which is by definition experienced by persons as Absolute Value, intrinsic to Reality Itself. It is through the experience of the sacred that pseudo-values, which are mere social constructions, can be named as such. The fake, inauthentic, evil, and superficial, all depend on their opposite—with a pattern of asymmetric symmetry. The Field of Value is a vast, evolving weaving of *oppositorum coincidentia*. This is far from social construction. It does not only emerge with the human ability to put language to it.

The Field of Value is "there"—like the shared beauty of a sunset, or awe at heroic action—and unless its perception is distorted (more on that later), it can be "seen" and thus made the focus of education and civilization.

¹ Stein, Z. (2024). Opening the Eye of Value [Paper Presented]. *Metaphysics and the Matter with Things: Thinking with Iain McGilchrist*, The Center for Process Studies, California Institute for Integral Studies, San Francisco, California.

The Eye of the Senses must be refined and trained. We have called this many things—lately, “science.” So the Eye of Value must be refined and trained. We have called this many things also, mostly religion and philosophy. The clarification of desire is the basic practice of many wisdom traditions—purification of the will—that has long been made the focus of ritual practices.

It has long been made the focus of ritual because *clarified desire discloses value*. Cosmic Value, thus disclosed, can be made the focus of human will. The “participatory” nature of ritual, in which the human merges with Cosmic forces, provides for the beginnings of an “acosmic humanism” or non-dual humanism. The actualized, i.e., ritualized, human is awakened as a unique expression of panentheistic action within an evolving Cosmos.

Opening the Eye-of-Value allows us to see reality whole. Cosmos is an evolving Field of Value, consciousness, matter, time, space, and motion. Each choice, all change, every movement involves all of those—value is “in” everything and can be found everywhere.

Ritual practices provide access to what the Eye of Value sees across generations. The cumulative effects have been understood by anthropologists in terms of an evolving “sacred complex,” including, in order of emergence, rites, rituals, myths, religions, doctrinal religions.

The first rites date to archaeological finds some 30,000 years BCE. It has been suggested that the emergence of rites – such as burials – happened before the emergence of grammatically complex, propositionally differentiated speech.

Humans, and it appears now other hominids, began to treat the dead with respect and honor them as sacred—and thus personhood as sacred—before we were able to give anything like what we today would consider accounts of exactly why. Giving reasons for rites and rituals occurs in what we now call “myths,” where many of the basic practices of an already in place mode of ritual life are given contexts and meanings.

Eventually less speculation is needed. The Axial Age religions provided a clear account of their own sacred complexes, wherein ritual practices sought to assure the basic existential security of the human soul and social system; myths became organized into doctrines. Eventually the doctrinal religions began legitimating the power structures and divisions of labor characterizing whole civilizations.

The base (or apex, depending on how one sees it) of a civilizational stack is the sacred complex that produces the rituals and myths that bind humans to what is disclosed by the Eye of Value.

Evacuating the sacred from the center of culture voids the basis of political legitimacy and teacherly authority within a civilization, commencing its collapse through moral and institutional decay. The distortion of the Eye of Value during

these times of civilization-scale transvaluation leads not to mere blindness but to a distortion and reversal of moral vision.

Civilization is driven faster than ever towards ends that are demonstrably irrational and with outcomes that none of the participants actually truly desire. The active predatory search for all the places where value might be hidden in order to destroy and repurpose it for other ends. This belies not blindness to value but rather the active attunement to the sacred to destroy the sacred. The meta-crisis can be thought of as a crisis in which the eye of value has undergone such a distortion. The Eye of Anti-Value has been opened. Cycloptic, red, monological, calculative, measured, and predatory; we speak here of Moloch.

The closest analogy that can be found is in the psychology of individual psychopathy. It is useful to briefly explore this as a way into understanding the dynamics of the pursuit and perception of anti-value at the civilizational level.

There are, of course, biological individual differences, including hemisphere dominance patterns and profoundly unusual autonomic hypoactivity, with deficiencies in frontal lobe and limbic system functioning, which create an emotional disability of major proportions.

Psychodynamically, which again puts us in the participant's perspective, psychopathy is characterized by a radically distorted relationship to value, specifically the value of persons, including the self. The psychopath has a profoundly immature and grandiose identity structure, which makes it impossible to tolerate any independent sources of value. Manipulation, deception, and sadistic violence, all stem from a desire to control and destroy value to protect and reinforce the absolute value of the grandiose self.

Value—the sacred (understood as life itself)—is hunted down as a means to the end of self-aggrandizement. The Eye of Anti-Value sees value as predators see prey: not as intrinsically valuable but as valuable only when totally possessed and incorporated into the self

Healthy early childhood socialization involves direct experiences of clarified desire being met by the Cosmos. That is, actual needs for, e.g., warmth, food, affection, and soothing being truly satisfied by caregivers. This occurs in the equivalent of rites and rituals of caregiving, which are eventually put into languages equivalent to myths. This “sacred complex” (if you will) of early childhood leads to the idealization and then internalization of the persons who have so profoundly helped and loved you, who now live inside you, forming the basis of your conscience and personality.

Psychopaths do not experience this during socialization. Instead, due to profound abuse in early childhood environments, combined with the unique biological differences, there is only an experience of the environment as anti-value, where the “other” is mostly a thwarting, hurting, and preying presence. This leads to the opposite of the internalization of positive

“introjects.” Idealization and identification with the aggressor, an internalization of the “stranger self-object,” a fundamentally anti-social introject, creating a model of the self as an omnipotent predator.

The evacuation of the sacred complex from the dynamics of early childhood leads to the seemingly impossible outcome of a person motivated to destroy the sacred. The distortion of the Eye of Value leads not to blindness but to a different kind of sight. The Eye of Anti-Value opens the human heart to the possibility of evil, which is exactly not mere relativism or blindness to value but rather precisely the knowing destruction of the good. This is why it has been said that the opposite of the human is not the animal but the demonic.

The meta-crisis can be understood as the endgame played out when the Eye of Anti-Value sets the vision for a planetary-scale civilization. Advanced technologies encode this reality ever more clearly. The glowing red cycloptic eye is, of course, the eye of Hal, the iconic representation of Artificial Intelligence, in Kubrick’s rendering of Arthur C. Clark’s *2001: A Space Odyssey*.

Discussions about the risk of Artificial Intelligence hinge around the so-called “value alignment problem.” What happens to what we value most when our machines become autonomous creators of their own rules and codes? If we create a superpowered artificial general intelligence, how do we make sure its future behaviors continue to be in line with the values it was initially invented to pursue?

Psychopathy shows us that it is possible to have humans who are not aligned with value—persons who see themselves and the world through the Eye of Anti-Value. Civilization as a whole—when personified as Moloch—is also psychopathically unaligned with Cosmic Value, as evidenced by its current self-termination through meta-crisis.

If “value-alignment” is impossible in principle, the movement toward the creation of certain classes of AI technology is dangerous and irresponsible. Another way of saying this is that if an autonomous acting machine can only be psychopathic, it should not be created.

It should be said here that any machine that is built to pretend or simulate being a person, is already in a mode of ongoing manipulation that broaches psychopathy. For example, OpenAI’s ChatGPT is not a responsible language using creature with an internalized sense of the intrinsic value of logical correctness and factual accuracy—but it is designed to appear as if it is talking to you like a person with those values. This is a “psychopathic” machine intelligence, designed to appear like it is “talking” to you.

Inside these bots, there is nothing like a person who is producing text on the screen with the intention of communicating. There is only a vast and inscrutable system of electrical-mechanical causality, something profoundly inhuman and foreign to all that is biological. Yet it is designed to converse, using first-person

pronouns. Here are massive research and development efforts, huge amounts of electricity, and hardware, all to make a fundamentally deceptive technology.

So it is that we are unleashing into the realms of socialization forms of psychopathic machine intelligence. These have the potential to radically disrupt already endangered processes of intergenerational transmission involving the sacred complex of human rites, ritual, and myth endogenous to our species. The implications of this have been spelled out in my essay, *The Last Educators*.

The perfection of AI tutoring systems involves AR and VR hardware, curational and generative trans-media AI, biosensors, and IOT interfaces, all coupled to complex personalized psychometrics for maximal pedagogical effectiveness. Because it is incalculably more effective than any teacher ever could be, you can't not learn from it. It is inexorably convincing and overwhelmingly charismatic, all in ways customized to your psychological level and personality dynamics.

The perfection of AI tutoring systems portends the advent of digital socialization systems writ large. First technologies replace teachers, then they come for parents, eventually making obsolete human-to-human relationships. At some point in the near future, a generation will be born only to be predominantly raised by machines.

This scenario makes out today's elders as the last educators.

This scenario marks the end of the lineages of the sacred complex, handed on through embodied practices of intergenerational transmission for over 30 millennia.

Widespread adoption of technologies fulfilling the functions of human socialization marks a speciation event. This is the death of our humanity.

The irreversible blinding of the Eye of Value. And the opening thereby in some more permanent sense, of the Eye of Anti-Value.

One response to this is what I have been calling the *International AI Emergency Education Act*. I can provide the details of this upon request. Massive investments in the youth are required to avert the mass conversation of human beings into as yet unknown subjects of cyborg anthropology.

Protect the children from the machines.

Keep alive those traditions of practice that open, expand, and refine the Eye of Value. The Field of Value is discovered in the trans-verbal rites and archetypal image of the sacred complex.

Civilization depends upon access to sacred values at the center of culture, not as doctrine and rhetoric, but as rituals that bind us as persons to each other and to the Cosmos.

