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BOOK CHAPTER IN RISTAMPA

GRIEVING FOR A LOST ETERNITY

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Abstract

Ancora oggi, (secondo Prince) le popolazioni indigene del Nuovo Mondo, a distanza di due-trecento anni dai primi contatti con i popoli occidentali (nella quale occasione furono tra l'altro decimati dalle infezioni da questi diffuse) riportano plurime conseguenze sulla loro Qualità della Vita, quali ad esempio alti tassi di suicidi o abuso di sostanze e nuclei familiari

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disintegrati. Le spiegazioni biopsicosociologiche (secondo Prince), fanno risalire questi problemi a fattori socioeconomici, alla discriminazione razziale, alla bassa scolarità e, non ultimo, come si è prima menzionato, alla decimazione subita in seguito alle malattie prima non endemiche importate dai popoli colonizzatori. È peraltro molto importante evidenziare anche gli aspetti religiosi, finora mai considerati. L'ipotesi si basa sul fatto che la visione di tali popolazioni di un mondo eterno sia stata sminuita e distrutta dalla colonizzazione Europea, lasciando solo un vuoto esistenziale, una perdita di identità culturale. Prince sottolinea che questo senso di "eternità perduta" non possa essere banalmente considerato con una risposta di tipo religioso, senza diventare noi stessi dei credenti. Egli ritiene che nella psichiatria, la fede dovrebbe essere tenuta in maggiore considerazione, investigando gli aspetti positivi e negativi delle certezze non verificabili, quali appunto sono gli orientamenti di valori (O.V.). In fin dei conti certezze inverificabili giocano un ruolo importante anche nell'espressività delle psicosi. L'autore riferendosi ad esperienze personali con le popolazioni della comunità Cree di James bay nel Canada subartico, riporta come questo gruppo ebbe il primo contatto coi missionari nel 1611, fu convinto da questi a rinunciare alle abitudini nomadi a favore di una residenza stanziale, e lentamente venne convertito al Cristianesimo. Attualmente la comunità ha raggiunto un accordo con il governo canadese, per lo sviluppo di un progetto per il ripristino delle tradizioni e delle abitudini di vita originarie. Ma nonostante i progressi fatti nell'assistenza sociale, il tasso di suicidi e di tentativi di suicidio è in costante aumento con una prevalenza tre volte maggiore rispetto al resto della popolazione canadese; rapporti altrettanto sfavorevoli esistono per l'abuso di alcool e di sostanze stupefacenti. È significativo come gli studi rivelino problematiche sovrapponibili agli Aborigeni australiani. Si analizza in seguito il bisogno di Eternità proprio della specie umana, risalendo sino all'uomo di Neanderthal, e valutando il valore simbolico delle costruzioni di Stonehenge e di altri siti megalitici; si confronta poi la struttura societaria della dinastia Shang e ci si sofferma in particolare sulla tomba di Chin Shi Huang: si analizza infine la dimensione eterna, paragonandola alle predette costruzioni. Successivamente viene preso in esame il problema delle epidemie secondarie alle infezioni importate dai conquistadores, e si pone l'accento su come tre fattori concomitanti (le epidemie, uno straniero tecnologicamente avanzato e l'idea di una condanna divina per ciò che stava in allora accadendo) abbiano contribuito ad annullare largamente l'identità personale e la prospettiva di un mondo eterno, nell'ottica che a Prince richiama Der Gòtterdàmmerung. Il lavoro si conclude riportando due esperienze, una dell'Autore stesso con gli indiani Cree, e l'altra con gli indigeni Salish della Columbia Britannica, attraverso un tentativo di "riattivazione" della credenza religiosa e di ricostruzione di un mondo eterno. Prince sottolinea un eventuale indice di terapeuticità alla Chiesa Pentecostale, che "predica" attraverso un

"alterato" stato di coscienza con fenomeni di glossolalia, un ritorno a Cristo ed ai Discepoli "posseduti" dallo Spirito Santo durante la Pentecoste. Accanto ad aspetti positivi vi sarebbero aspetti negativi dovuti al fatto che il Pentecostalismo crea parecchi scismi all'interno della comunità e dei nuclei familiari. Secondo l'autore, sarebbe forse meglio per un miglioramento della Qualità della Vita, cercare di reintrodurre almeno in parte i culti originari indigeni.

Introduzione a cura degli autori di "La Qualità della vita".

INTRODUCTION AND CAVEAT

The aboriginal peoples of the New World, descendants of prehistoric first settlers such as the Indians of the Americas and in this context, the Australian Aborigines, provide instructive examples of factors affecting the quality of human life. Sharing a history of contact with Europeans during the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries, they were simultaneously decimated by alien infectious diseases and by force of European arms. Two or three hundred years later, aborigines still suffer a grossly diminished quality of life as indicated by disproportionately high suicide rates, levels of substance abuse and family disintegration. Our biopsychosocial explanatory models in psychiatry all too readily attribute this diminished quality oflife to such socioeconomic factors as relative poverty, racial discrimination, substandard housing, and low education levels. In this paper however, I will ask to entertain possible religious dimensions to this aboriginal quality of life problem even though we scarcely ever consider such aspects in psychiatry. The religions of most cultures, past and present, emphasize the overriding significance of an eternal realm which coexists alongside the ephemeral world of every day. Drawing upon psychoanalytic concepts of grieving, I suggest that this eternal world fantasy functions as a kind of spiritual anchor against change; or to shift metaphors, as a dike holding back floodwaters of grief and rage over loss and death in a transient and often unfair world. Particularly among prescientific societies, it is generally accepted that religious scenarios play a significant role in the ordering and enhancing of quality of life. Here I propose that the quality of life of the world's aborigines is poor because their eternal world views have suffered unprecedented destruction and abandonment during the early colonial period, overwhelming European-aboriginal power differences were

visible to all. The impotence of aboriginal healers in curing the diseases that differentially struck half their people down and the obvious superiority of European technology inflicted a devastating narcissistic wound. Like the destruction of Valhalla, the abode of the gods in Wagner's Der Gotterdammrung, the aboriginal mythologies of the eternal carne crashing down. The aborigines were faced with an existential vacuum; a loss, of cultural identity as, it were, so that when they gazed in a mirror or pool their reflections no longer looked back. In this rather reluctant step into taboo territory, I will try to show that it is helpful to think of aboriginal hopelessness as based upon this unhealing wound, this impotent grieving for their lost eternities I will further suggest that this fundamentally religious problem will best be solved by a religious solution. The significance of experiential religious forms such as those involving spirit possession in rebuilding aboriginal scenarios of the eternal will be briefly explored. Without becoming true believers ourselves, perhaps in psychiatry we should at least consider such religious matters as how one may lose one's faith or how one may become a true believer; and investigate the positive and negative features of espousing the unverifiable certainties that are religion's characteristic feature. After all, unverifiable certainties also play a major role in the psychoses.

I THE JAMES BAY CREE AND OTHER ABORIGINES

During my last ten years of psychiatric practice (1981-91), I became intensively involved with the James Bay Cree, an aboriginal group of Canada's sub-Arctic (Prince, 1993). Crees have occupied their difficult terrain of black spruce forest, muskeg, rock and waterways for several thousand years. Summers were short with clouds of black flies and mosquitoes; winters were long and exceptionally cold. Because of terrain and climate, agriculture was impracticable and the Cree eked out a marginal existence as nomadic hunters and trappers. The rhythm of their lives was punctuated by the spring and autumn migrations of vast formations of Canada geese. When the geese flew north to their Arctic nesting grounds in April, it was time for the widely dispersed Cree hunting bands to return to their summer congregation sites. A crop of new bark or skin tents

would appear along the shores of a major lake for the summer rendezvous. Life was less arduous during the summer with hot days and easily accessible fish, waterfowl and game and plentiful berries and roots; summer too was a time of joyful reunions with friends, and of marriages, festivals and recreation. In September, formations of geese once more darkened the sky and it was time for the winter dispersal. Small groups of families banded together to make their way to the family hunting territories (established by tradition, a family territory comprised the many hundreds of square miles required to support each 15-20 member winter band). Plying birchbark canoes, the hunting bands fanned out into the forest, throwing themselves upon its uncertain mercies. Based upon his fundamental kinship with animals, each band's designated leader determined through shamanic activities the location within the territory of the most plentiful game for the year and where best to erect winter quarters. All members participated in building the winter tents or a more substantial bark covered lodge. Floors were layered with replaceable spruce boughs; a stone hearth served both for cooking and heating. According to availability of game, living quarters might require shifting several times before spring. Winter survival depended upon small herds of woodland caribou, beaver, bear, hares, ptarmigan and fish. Based upon nature's inscrutable cycles, some winters provided abundant food, but others so little that some bands perished (Rogers, 1970). It is said that the first James Bay Cree contacts with Europeans was in 1611 when a "local Indian" came aboard English navigator, Henry Hudson's ice bound Discovery in the lower reaches of James Bay (near the mouth of the Rupert River). Hudson was in search of a northwest passage to the orient on behalf of Bristol merchants and was forced to spend the winter in the Bay. The lone Cree traded "two deeres skinnes and two beaver skinnes" for a knife, a looking glass and some buttons. Hudson made further trading advances to the Cree that spring but they were repulsed (Francis & Morantz, 1983). The Cree trade in Iurs, especially with the British, rapidly developed over the eighteenth century; and during the nineteenth, missionaries finally persuaded some Cree to give up their nomadic habits and build permanent settlements beside the trading posts. Some settled long enough to become Christian converts. Today Cree life is radically different. Some ten thousand strong, they live in nine fixed communities with well built permanent houses, churches, gravel roads, cars and snowmobiles, shops that are well stocked with southern food and clothing, and locally controlled police and fire services. Elementary

schools are well established and by 1985, secondary schools had been built in Mistissini and several other communities. In Mistissini, a band council office and sports arena are among the most recent developments. Radio, TV and the internet force open the not unwilling Cree eye upon the world. Still, the traditional hunting and trapping life persists in all nine communities. Today of course, with the ready availability of store-bought foodstuffs, survival is less problematic. Skidoos and aircraft facilitate the winter thrusts into the forest and there is much more shuttling to and from between villages and bush camps. Camps are now in continuous radio communication with the village office of the Cree Trappers Association for emergencies, weather reports and special requests. But at the same time, school and work virtually cease for the two week "goose break" in April to hunt wild geese; children continue to hate vegetables for dinner; and some young people would prefer to go to the bush with their parents rather than attend school. It should be noted that the rate of Westernization of Cree lifestyles has recently increased significantly due largely to the gigantic hydroelectric project launched by the Province of Quebec in 1971. Rivers were dammed, hydro generating plants and new highways were constructed and within a few years, some 4600 square miles of Cree hunting and trapping territory had been submerged (Salisbury, 1986; Richardson, 1991; Picard, 1990). But the Quebec Cree communities, banded together and by 1975, had negotiated a not unprofitable agreement with the Quebec and Canadian governments. For the Cree, the agreement included inter qua, a cash settlement of 225 million dollars; an income support program for Crees wishing to follow the traditional way of life; and Cree ownership of sizable are of territory surrounding their nine villages as well as hunting rights to much larger areas. What about psychiatric ills among the Cree? I have elsewhere compared the disorders I found among the Cree with those of the French/English of the south (Prince, 1993); here I will focus upon Cree social pathologies. Almost every time I visited these northern communities I was confronted with some new alcohol or drug related disaster: A car full of drunken adolescents celebrating their graduation from high school had been involved in a lethal head-on collision; several drug-using young people had drowned when their canoe overturned in the middle of the night; a suicide by an anti-tubercular drug overdose had resulted in a rash of adolescent suicide attempts using the same method; an inebriated husband had fallen asleep while smoking in his parked car and the car exploded. Vandalism and theft

among youth were frequent. Rape, wife beating and sexual molestation, of children were not uncommon. There were also cases of incest and of attempted murder. Because of the clear progress towards self-governance, and improvements in housing, schooling, and economics generally, I had expected to see a reduction in these self-destructive behaviors over the years. This did not happen; it is clear that social improvements over a twenty year period have not affected social pathology rates. To all appearances, as the Cree communities became more successfully Westernized, alcohol excesses and related disasters continue unabated. Of course the Cree are not alone among aboriginal groups to demonstrate these high levels of social disintegration, substance, abuse, violence and suicide. To a greater or lesser extent, such behaviors have been characteristic of aboriginal groups around the world. Without launching upon an extensive review, it will suffice here to mention a few recent findings. Canada's population of 26 million is some two percent aboriginal (Indians and Inuit). In his review of suicide among, Canadian aborigines, Kirmayer (1994, p. 3) reported that: "The Aboriginal suicide rate is three times that of the general Canadian population. From the ages of 10 to 29, Aboriginal youth on reserves are 5 to 6 times more likely to die from suicide than their peers in the general population? Similar social pathologies are to be found among, US aboriginal groups. In a review of alcohol abuse and ethnicity, a 1996 Group, for the Advancement of Psychiatry Report provided the following contrasts between Native Americans (who make, up one percent of the: total 250 million population), and the majority population: there was three times the prevalence of alcohol related illness among Native Americans; 4.2 times the alcohol-related mortality rates; 2.3 times the suicide rate (estimated 80% alcohol related); and 2.8 times the homicide rate (90% alcohol-related). Although the Australians have not been so assiduous as the Canadians/Americans in collecting statistics on social pathologies among their aboriginal peoples (they make up some one percent of the total population of 17 million), it is clear that similar problems exist. Kidson (1990) for example commented upon the "profound and largely negative effects" of colonization upon the desert aborigines. Alcohol consumption is high, and "at times vast amounts of alcohol are drunk whereupon a desert settlement becomes a place of much violence. Old scores are settled and random aggression is common" (Kidson, 1990, p. 297). Eastwell (1982) noted that traditionally, suicide was virtually unknown among Australian Aborigines, but today acculturated Aborigines "show a very

high incidence of suicide". It was indeed, the very high suicide rates among imprisoned Aborigines that led to the setting up of a governmental committee to investigate suicides in custody" and the plight of Aborigines in general (Cawte, 1990). As reported by the Manchester Guardian Weekly (November 25, 1990), "Research undertaken by our committee reveals that such deaths have occurred in police and prison custody over a 9 years and 5 months period (January 1980-May 1989)... The tragedy of Aborigine deaths in custody in this country arises from the fact that Aborigine imprisonment rates are 17 times those of non-Aborigines, and Aborigine rates of police custody are 27 times those of non-Aborigines". As further evidence of problematic alcohol consumption, Cawte (1996) has described a missionary attempt in the early 1980s to curb alcohol abuse among Aborigines by introducing into Australia the allegedly less violence-releasing drink made from kava (Piper methysticum), widely used in neighboring south Pacific islands. This project failed because instead of using kava as an alcohol substitute, the Aborigines merely added an extra addiction to their repertoire.

II. QUEST FOR THE ETERNAL

"Where will you spend Eternity?" This question was inscribed over my grandfather's work bench. A white-haired, kindly patriarch and strict Protestant fundamentalist, I can still recapture from my childhood visits to his carpenter shop, the sense of awe engendered by those ominous words. Given our Judeo-Christian world view, we are very familiar with the mythology of an eternal world co-existing with the world of every day. Depending upon our behavior and attitudes during our earthly sojourn, at the sound of the last trump, we will be transposed to an eternity of bliss or of fiery torment. Distinctively human, this preoccupation with the eternal emerged very early in the archaeological record. In many ways, for our prehistoric forebears, existence in the eternal realm seemed more important than life in the here and now. Grinsell's (1953) conclusions about prehistoric English mound builders seems to hold good for prehistoric groups world-wide: "the tombs of the great, and the hot-so-great, have usually survived... while their habitations are to be sought in vain, and are fallen into oblivion".

By the use of stone for their burials rather than the wood and baked clay of their houses, our prehistoric ancestors at once announced the paradoxical priority of their death and hoped for immortality over life and living. A few examples will illustrate both the ubiquity and diversity of detail among these odd heavenly mirror-worlds. There is general agreement that Neanderthal man was the first human group to concern itself with death and the hereafter. These lowbrowed, stocky creatures with receding chins first appeared on the world scene about 150,000 years ago. Weathering the early incursions of the final ice age, they survived until some 28,000 years ago. Neanderthals ranged widely across Europe, the Middle East and Central Asia from Spain to the Hindu Kush mountains. Despite their unprepossessing appearance, they were masters of the difficult art of stone toolmaking, courageous and adept hunters of mammoths and gigantic cave bears, and surprisingly compassionate caretakers of their disabled and elderly. Neanderthal burials often included grave goods and evidence of religious rituals. At Le Moustair in south western France, an adolescent boy was laid carefully on his right side, head resting on his forearms though sleeping. A stone axe was placed by his arm and the bones of wild cattle scattered dose by suggested that food had been buried with him. Most believe that the axe and food were in tended to sustain him on his journey to the other world. A Neanderthal child's skeleton was found at Teshik Tash, Uzbekistan. The child's head was surrounded by six sets of ibex (mountain goat) horns suggesting some type of burial ritual. But perhaps the most unexpected discovery has been that Neanderthals sometimes buried their dead on a bed of flowers. American archaeologist Ralph Soiecki (1957) found several Neanderthal skeletons in the 45 foot layer of earth and debris on the floor of Shanidar cave in Iraq, 250 miles north of Baghdad. The setting of one of these, Shanidar IV, estimated at 60,000 years old, was examined for pollens by climatologist Ariette Leroi-Gourhan. As described by Leakey (1981), Leroi-Gourhan was surprised "...when she discovered dense clusters of pollen that could have come only from whole flowers. The arrangement of the flowers was not random: they were carefully placed around the body of Shanidar IV man. The pollen analysis revealed the presence of yarrow, cornflower, St. Barnaby's thistle, ragwort, grape hyacinth, hollyhock and woody horsetail. The effect would have been a delicate mixture of white, yellow and blue flowers with the green branches of the woody horsetail which... would have made a sort of bedding on which the dead could have been Jaid". Leakey concluded

that the Neanderthal burials and care of their disabled members, “speak clearly of their deep feeling for the spiritual quality of life (Leakey, 1981, p. 153). The age of megaliths (great stones) from about 6000 B.C. to 1000 A.D., extended worldwide and human of that age seemed! even more concerned than their forebears with the religious and the afterworld (Mohen 1990). Their megaliths offered proof of eternal survival. Often weighing many tons these great stones were set up in, circles or rows or stood in solitary splendor; they marked centers of prehistoric worship or the graves of important families, groups or individuals. Perhaps the world’s best known megalithic monument, Stonehenge lies eight miles north of today’s — Salisbury in the center of downlands of Salisbury plain. Construction commenced in a modest way with a circle of wooden stakes surrounded by a ditch about 3000 BC and continued in stages over some 1400 years. In its heyday about 2500 BC it was a powerful architectural statement of the human yearning for the eternal. The construction of Stonehenge included the hewing of dozens of 26 ton blocks of sandstone (the sarcen stones) and their overland hawling from the vicinity of Avebury some twenty miles away; and the transport by sea and land of giant bluestones from Prescelly quarry in south Wales, a distance as the crow flies of 135 miles. Although Stonehenge itself was largely devoted to religious or political ceremonials, hundreds of prehistoric tombs (long or round barrows) dotted the surrounding chalk plains. Many predating Stonehenge and dating back 6000 years, these barrows were burial places for important individuals or sometimes large extended families clans. Many barrows contained a wealth of grave goods: clay beakers, flint arrowheads, archer’s wrist guards, tool kits for leatherworking, conical buttons, of amber, jet, or shale, and bivalve-moulds for making bronze axes and daggers (Stover & Kraig, 1978, p. 62). Salisbury plain seems to have functioned as a vast and long-standing burial ground with Stonehenge at its center? a piece of religious celebrations, of unknown and probably unknowable imagery. But unquestionably, a landscape imbued with a powerful sense of the eternal. Besides Stonehenge other important examples of megaliths include the menhirs of Brittany and Avebuy; the mighty stone heads of Easter Island and of the Olmecs of Mexico; the pyramids of Egypt and the — temples of Teotihuacan. of gigantic proportions all, they mystify by their indestructible bulk. The megalith age roughly coincided with the Neolithic with its settled agricultural populations and use of polished stone and only began to disappear with the coming of

bronze (Mohen, 1990). Mohen's descriptions of these megalith burials from across Europe indicate that human sacrifice was not unknown. At Les Chatelliers-du-Vieil-Auzay in Vendée for example, the skeleton of a deceased male was accompanied by a second male who had died by violence. The implication is that the servant of the deceased would accompany his master to the other world. These, European megalith tombs also included evidence of two stage burial rituals. The first stage involved the removal of flesh from the bones of the deceased: this was sometimes achieved by scraping which left tell tale marks on the bones; or alternatively by long term exposure of the corpse to the weather. The second stage was the final burying of the clean bones: sometimes the skeleton was buried intact; but more often it was disarticulated and groups of like bones were heaped together in separate piles in an ossuary; often the skulls were found grouped together. The reason for such special handling is unknown. It is possible that flesh, like the lived-world, was seen as transitory; the bones on the other hand could last for ever and were more worthy of preservation and reflection in the heavenly mirror. Thus far we have considered pre-literate peoples and based our speculations about the nature of their eternal worlds on tombs and grave goods. But, even as Stonehenge was rising on Salisbury plain, the rulers of the Chinese Shang Dynasty (circa 1722-1050 BC) were already communicating- messages in writing to their ancestral denizens of the eternal world. Thousands of divinatory questions and answers inscribed on tortoise shells or animal scapulae (oracle bones) have been unearthed from the ancient Shang capital at Anyang and bear witness to the lively interchange between the two worlds. By the time of the Shang Dynasty, the rulers of China were interring large quantities of priceless grave goods to accompany the deceased to the afterworld; some especially fine objects were no doubt intended to curry favour with ancestors. Characteristic goods included ornate, 200 to 300 pound bronze vessels, bronze mirrors, weapons and tools, as well as finely carved jades and other works of art. Not infrequently art works were purposely broken to ensure that they would be of use only in the other world and not to grave robbers; this logic only seems illogical to thosè few of us who live in a one-tiered world. Slaves and servants often accompanied their rulers; for example, Shang tomb 1001 at Anyang contained the bodies of 300 or more sacrificial victims (Dien, 1987). Early Chinese rulers viewed their passage to the ancestral realms almost as a trip of homage to a foreign dignitary; they

required a full retinue of servants, sustenance and wine for the journey and above all a goodly supply of their kingdom's most magnificent works of art. The motivation here was obviously not a matter of prestige associated with conspicuous consumption. The se activities were kept as secret as possible. Indeed there was every effort to conceal the tomb and its contents from public view to avoid depredations of grave robbers. Burial practices represented secret communications between the mundane and the eternal worlds. According to Dien (1987), it was vital that the living demonstrate utmost respect for the King of Heaven and for their own deceased ancestors both to assure that their ancestors be appropriately esteemed within the heavenly hierarchy and also to assure the continued blessings of the ancestors upon their earthly descendants. The tomb of Marquis Yi, discovered in Hubei Province in 1978, exemplifies funerary practices in Central China about 400 BC. The some 7000 burial objects included bronze objets d'art, weapons, horse and chariot ornaments, articles of gold and jade and lacquerwares of superb craft and design. Marquis Yi was evidently a lover of music and dance for the most distinctive feature of the find was its collection of musical instruments: 64 moulded bronze bells ranged according to size and pitch; 32 stone chimes made of thin slabs of jade and stone; pan pipes; and rare five and ten-string zithers. Along with his own coffin were the individual coffins of 21 young women between 16 and 25 years old to serve him in the next world as in this, as concubines, singers and dancers (Quian, Chen & Ru, 1981, p. 45). Asa final example of the paramount importance of the after world in the human scheme of things, I will briefly describe one of its most remarkable manifestations the tomb of the emperor Chin Shi Huang (259-210 BC) who first unified China and completed the Great Wall.

Soon after he ascended the throne at the age of 13, he began building his gigantic mausoleum near Lishan mountain about 18 miles east of today's Xian (Sian). Suu-Ma Chien described what he had been able to learn of the burial a century after Chin's death. Over 700,000 "criminals" were conscripted to build it. The mound covering the mausoleum was 140 feet high and three miles in circumference — The foundations were dug deep in the — earth and molten bronze was poured to protect from underground streams. The mausoleum contained whole courts, special quarters for officials and a great hoard of treasure. Quicksilver was pooled to create the seas and "hundred rivers" of Chin's unified empire and mechanisms to make them flow strategically placed loaded

crossbows were poised to discharge their bolts if the tomb was disturbed. When the emperor's body was finally entombed, his childless wives and concubines were killed and buried with him; and the work-men who had been employed in the construction of the tomb were themselves enclosed when it was sealed. Presumably the workmen were killed to preclude reports of the tomb's location. Bushes and trees were planted upon it to give the appearance of a natural mountain. But inspite of precautions, an ancient author reports that Chin's palace was burned and his mausoleum dug up and destroyed only two years, after his death (Chen & Ru, 1981, p. 65). Today the giant mound still dominates the landscape. To date, there have been no archaeological investigations. In 1974, about a mile east of Chin's artificial mountain, peasant well-diggers discovered several pottery heads about twelve feet below the surface. An archaeological dig revealed a remarkable ancient army of some 7000 life size pottery warriors-an eternal army created by Chin to defend his capital city from warlike states. Today the entire dig has been covered by a huge hangar-like roof. Visitors can view the row upon row of highly individualized soldiers, horses and chariots: "the ancient burial system is a mirror of the real ancient world. The mausoleum reflects the kingdom over which the first Emperor of Qin once ruled" (Quian, Chen & Ru, 1981, p. 84). Given the splendor of Chin's mere army outpost, who can say what unexpected magnificence may emerge when his mausoleum itself is finally unearthed.

III ABORIGINAL GOTTERDAMMERUNG

The above examples illustrate aspects of the origin and development of the quest for the eternal and the remarkable efforts some cultures have invested in its material representation. We must next consider what I have called the "unprecedented" case of the destruction of the eternal worlds of aborigines. To claim this destruction as unprecedented requires explanation for during the evolution of world cultures, most religious forms have undergone dissolutions and renewals. In ancient Rome, for example Jupiter and attendant gods and goddesses were largely replaced- by Eastern mystery religions such as Mithraism and Christianity; New World syncretism's

involving the fission of West African orishas (Yoruba spirit ancestors) with Catholic saints have been well documented (Herskovits, 1937; Pressei, 1974) and a host of other religions have either painlessly incorporated alien deities through their polytheistic structures (such as Hinduism) or, as when Christianity replaced the religion of the Vikings, old gods were overthrown after struggles between fairly equal powers. Rather than creating existential vacuums or long term social disintegration, these religious changes have often been accompanied by cultural revitalization. What was there then about Euro-Aboriginal contacts during the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries that were so extraordinary? A recent space of publications (Thompson, 1970; Ray, 1974 Hopkins, 1983; and, Trigger, 1985, to mention only a few examples) has revealed that the key feature was the lethal introduction of Old World diseases into virginal New World population; the result of reuniting two branches of the human species that had been separated for some 20,000 years in the Americas and 40,000 in Australia. In broad terms about a third to a half of aboriginal populations perished on contact; and for two or three centuries afterwards, these mass destruction were repeated at twenty or thirty year intervals. Smallpox, malaria and yellow fever were the main killers but even measles, whooping cough, influenza, and other diseases which were regarded as minor in the Old World, decimated the immunologically naive aborigines. But besides this disease overkill, I suggest another essential determinant of the aboriginal Gétterdammerung: the occurrence together of these selective decimations of aborigines by unknown diseases and the sudden appearance of white-skinned strangers with their weapons and missionary zeal. Although from our present vantage point, we readily understand the lie between strangers and plague's without religious explanation's, the participants in that encounter of 500 years ago saw things differently. The fact that the victims were almost entirely aborigines was highly significant. Like a divinatory revelation, this apparently purposeful destruction was clearly determined by divinities; the, aborigines had become the object of divine wrath and an annihilation beyond redemption. Until recently the plague factor received only passing mention by historians. As a result, in early accounts, the destruction of the Aztec empire in Mexico by Fernando Cortez (1485-1547) and of the Inca empire of Peru by Francisco Pizarro (1478-1541) seemed little short of miraculous. In 1518, Cortez set out from Cuba to conquer Mexico with 11 ships, 110 sailors, 553 soldiers, 14 cannon and 16 horses (Prescott, 1909/1843). Although there are

no reliable estimates of the magnitude of Aztec forces at the time of the conquest, unquestionably the tiny band of Spaniards faced, a mighty host of seasoned and warlike adversaries who were overlords of a large part of today's Mexico. No doubt Cortez was a talented and determined leader. As soon as he disembarked in Yucatan, he destroyed his own entire fleet to show his men that he would conquer or die. He rapidly grasped the important political and military features of his task: he obtained accurate intelligence of the might of his Aztec adversary Montezuma and his magnificent island-capital (Tenochtitlan) that could be accessed only by vulnerable causeways across a lake; and capitalized on the disgruntlement of Montezuma's vassal states to recruit important allies. He was also bolstered by the aborigines awe of Spanish firearms and horses, previously unknown to them. But even given Cortez advantages when he first crossed the great causeway into Tenochtitlan on November 8, 1519, the odds were greatly in favour of Montezuma. Undoubtedly the main reason for Cortez stunning victory was that he had for ally, the deadly smallpox A black slave from Cuba had brought the disease to Yucatan almost simultaneously with the conquest. Prescott (1909/1843) described the outcome: "... it spread rapidly over the neighboring country, and, penetrating through Tiascala, reached the Aztec capital, where Montezuma's successor, Cuitlaiuac, fell one of the first victims. Thence it swept down towards the borders of the Pacific, leaving its path strewn with the dead bodies of the natives, who, in the strong language of a contemporary, perished in heaps, like cattle stricken with the murrain. It does not seem to have, been fatal to the Spaniards, many of whom, probably had already had the disorder...". Numerous contemporary Spanish accounts of the epidemics reveal something of the extent of the disaster. Spanish historian Fuentes y Guzman reported that when he was a boy of 13 or 14 (in 1656), many, Ouatemalan villages were totally wiped out by smallpox and measles: "... he saw that there survived only eight or ten Indians, veritable walking skeletons, in each village" (Thomson, 1970, p. 53). From the Tabasco area, the author of Relaciones de Yucatan ascribes a decrease of 90 percent of the Indian population between the Spanish conquest in 1520 and 1579 largely to "the great infirmities and pestilences which there have been throughout the Indies and especially in this province, namely, measles, smallpox, catarrhs, coughs, nasal catarrhs, hemorrhages, bloody stools, and high fevers which customarily break out in this province" (Thompson, 1970, p. 53). Of the population of the island of Hispaniola

colonized by Columbus on his first voyage, Judge Alonso de Zuazo in 1518 remarked: "When Hispaniola was discovered it contained 1,130,000 Indians; today their number does not exceed 11,000. Judging from what has happened, there will be none of them left in three or four years time unless some remedy is applied" (Williams, 1963, p. 84). From a report to Philip II of Spain by Captain Juan Melgarejo, Governor of Puerto Rico, 1582: "At the time of the division of the Indians which was made when the island was annexed, there were 5000 Indian men and 500 Indian women... Today there is not a single Indian left, except for a few that were brought from the mainland, about twelve or fifteen. They have all died from illnesses they contracted like measles, colds and smallpox, and because of ill treatment they fled to other islands with the Caribs..." (Williams, 1963, p. 85). Finally, a note concerning the Indians of Cozumel, an island off the north east coast of Yucatan: "Cortez was received in friendship at Cozumel, which is described as populous; as the grant of Juan Nunez in 1549, it was taxed for 220 heads of families; by 1579 the region generally was said to have lost two thirds of its people and Cozumel reduced to 20. The blame for this boss, along with the whole east coast in the earliest period, lies first in the sweeping smallpox brought in 1520 by one negro on a Spanish ship; then from 1546 on to the merciless cruelty of Pachecos, let loose to reduce the revolt of that year". (Friar Diego de Landa, 1978/1566, p. 143). Following the initial leap from Europeans to aboriginals, the diseases spread like wildfire without further European help. Epidemics often appeared ahead of European contact and engulfed not only Mexico but Central and South America. Similar plagues appeared in North America as early as 1617. It is interesting that the land settled by the famous Pilgrim Fathers at Plymouth Plantation in 1620 had previously been occupied by local Indians who had been wiped out by a mysterious epidemic: "...about five years ago, all the inhabitants dyed of an extraordinary plague, and there is neither man, woman, nor child remaining... so as there is none to hinder possession, or to lay claim unto it". (Stratten, 1986, p. 33). William Bradford, Governor of Plymouth Plantation during its early years described the same outbreak. He noted that the Indians in the area were few: "...being dead and abundantly wasted in the late great mortality, which fell in all these parts about three years ago before the coming of the English, where in thousands of them died. They not being able to bury one another, their skulls and bones were found in many places lying still above the ground where their houses and dwellings had been

a very sad spectacle to behold" (Bradford, 1981, p. 97). Puritan clergymen were clear as to the meaning of these afflictions. Writing, about a slightly later epidemic near Plymouth in 1633, the leading Boston Puritan divine, Increase Mather (1639-1723) expressed the common view: "... the Indians began to be quarrelsome Touching the Bounds of the land which, they had sold to the English; but God ended the controversy by sending the small-pox among the Indians at Saugust, who were before that time exceeding numerous. Whole towns of them were swept away, in some of them not so much as one Soul escaping the Destruction" (Hopkins, 1983, p. 235). It is now clear whether these earliest recorded epidemics in North America had originated in the earliest English settlement at Jamestown, Virginia, founded in 1607; or in Port Royal, near Digby Nova Scotia, the French settlement founded in 1605; or even possibly from other sources. In any case, from 1617 smallpox and other alien infectious diseases decimated North America as they had Mexico, and Central and South America.

To summarize, in elaborating my metaphor of Der Gotterdammerung, the destruction, of the eternal worlds of the aborigines, I have largely drawn upon the example of the Spanish conquest, of Mexico emphasizing three aspects: the selective decimation of aborigines by epidemic s of previously unknown diseases; the concurrent appearance of bizarre strangers with superior Technology; and the perception that these annihilations were by divine fiat.

IV. REBUILDING AN ETERNAL WORLD

If our argument here has any validity, one factor in the healing of the aborigines would be the reconstruction of their eternal worlds; the reactivation of Their religious faith. I know of two examples which support this view; one from my own Cree experience (Prince, 1993) and the second from the observations of Wolfgang Jilek (1982) on the Coast Salish aborigines of British Columbia. During my involvement with Cree communities I became aware of the psychotherapeutic potential of the Pentecostal Church. Almost always, if | worked with a Cree family without alcohol or drug problems and enquired the reason, I was informed that it was because they had become

"Christians". In local parlance, "Christian" meant membership in the Pentecostal Church. Although Anglican, Baptist and Catholic churches were represented in Cree communities, these were much more permissive regarding proper Christian behavior than Pentecostals. Members of these other churches were known as "drinkin Christians".

Pentecostalism originated in the United States in about 1900. Its distinctive characteristic is "speaking in tongues," an altered state of consciousness accompanied by glossolalia which harks back to the New Testament "Pentecost" in which Christ's disciples were inspired or possessed by the Holy Ghost (as described in Acts 2:2-4). Pentecostalism imposes strict behavioral constraints upon its members: abstention from drinking, smoking, gambling, dancing, wife beating and extramarital sexual relations. Pentecostalism spread from the United States to the Caribbean, Latin America and around the world. It seems to have first appeared in Cree territory in the late 1960 and rapidly attracted converts from other religious groups. Today al least half the James Bay Cree population is Pentecostal. In my view Pentecostalism's main appeal for the Cree has to do with its experiential aspect; during church services many achieve a euphoric glossolalic state which powerfully convinces their subject of authenticity. Participants believe because they have experienced divine power first hand. In anthropologist Goodman's words: "The speaker is thought to be possessed by the Holy Spirit. The first appearance is greeted with joy by the congregation, since it means that another person has joined the group and has been saved from perdition. With this cultural conditioning, the person engaged in glossolalia reports experiencing great joy, relaxation and hope. Troubles are forgotten, according to many informants, and life is faced with new confidence" (Goodman, 1974, p. 264). In describing the phenomenology of the glossolalic experience, Goodman has divided it into three stages: an entry stage of "hyperarousal" marked by a characteristic pressure in the chest along with ... exaggerated perspiration and salivation. Tears may flow and the face is flushed, the subject is rigid-or he shivers, shakes, twitches or jumps"; the second stage is the actual glossolalic behavior in which the subject rhythmically vocalizes words without evident meaning; after glossolalia subsides there is a period of recovery during which the subject may be confused, slow of speech, and "inhibited" less than in his normal state". Unlike Pentecostalism with its speaking in tongues, the more cognitive and aesthetic rituals of the Anglican, Baptist or Catholic alternatives do not kindle first-hand experience of the

divine. And of course the very evident power of Pentecostalism in the rescue of families from alcohol abuse and degradation is for some, another important motivation for joining. Pentecostalism has also some negative effects. Perhaps the most important complaints have to do with schisms created in Cree communities; some factions become ardently opposed to Pentecostalism while others are totally committed. Splits also occur in families; drinking adolescents may oppose their parents; more commonly a wife will convert along with her daughters and adopt a teetotal stance against the father and sons. In my own view, Pentecostalism may well be important in providing conviction and faith and may assist the Cree in rebuilding an eternal world based upon a Christian model. Nonetheless, as I have already mentioned, social pathology among the Cree continues unabated in spite of: some 25 years of Pentecostalism and 20 years of economic improvement related to the James, Bay hydroelectric project. Jilek (1982) has described an alternative religious approach. On the basis of his involvement with British Columbia aborigines, Jilek recommends a return to aboriginal religious beliefs rather than Christian. The historical context is of special interest in British Columbia in that between 1884 and 1951, traditional Indian religious activities were prohibited by government statute. The so called "spotlatch law" stipulated that those engaging in Indian religious activities such as potlatch or spirit dancing where "liable to imprisonment for a term not more than six and not less than two months". Jilek had found, a pervasive depressive state among Fraser Valley aborigines which he called "anomic depression". The Fraser Valley Indians called this state "spirit sickness". Reading Jilek's case histories, it is clear that the aboriginal malaise I have been calling "grieving for a lost eternity" is closely related to "spirit sickness" and to Jilek's "anomic depression". According to Jilek, the symptom pattern of anomic depression or spirit sickness includes: "anorexia, insomnia, apathy alternating with restlessness, dysphoric moods with nostalgic despondency and crying spells, somatizations such as pain in the abdomen, chest or back and sometimes also conversion reactions (psychogenic paralysis and fainting spells)". Jilek noted that spirit sickness may be precipitated or intensified when the individual is in mourning or is otherwise led to contemplate the days of long ago (Jilek, 1982, p. 56). Jilek reported a significant renewal of religious activity in the Fraser Valley of British Columbia after repeal of the potlatch law which led him to study possible renewal-related therapeutic effects upon spirit sickness and alcohol and drug

abuse. The indigenous remedy for spirit sickness is initiation as a spirit dancer. Like the glossolalia of Pentecostals, altered states of consciousness generated during initiation provide spirit dancers with experiential contact with the eternal. Initiation rituals follow a death and rebirth pattern. Religious leaders identify community members suffering severe spirit sickness (which commonly includes those involved in substance abuse and related behavioral problems). A prospective candidate is "grabbed" during the winter spirit festival and ritually "clubbed to death". Although the clubbing is symbolic, some candidates react as if actually killed and enter a cataleptic state- "stiff as a board". Guarded by attendants, the candidate is secluded in a small room where, "except for bouts of physics exertion, he has to lie still and avoid bodily movements". These bouts of physical exertion may include forced runs in which the subject "trots through the bush for hours until exhausted and half-crazed"; sleep deprivation; acoustic stimulation such as attendant s chants and prayers and the persistent deafening of deerskin drums; and radical temperature changes through ice-water swims and "roasting" under many blankets Resurrected after symbolic death, the "newborn" devotee is confined to a tent for at least four days where he is treated like a baby-bathed, fed and dressed and cared for by a "nursemaid". Initiation procedures enable the initiate finally to perceive his own "guardian spirit" and discover his own "spirit song". Once initiated, the devotee continues to dance on frequent occasions at subsequent winter festivals (November to May). Devotees report intense feelings of bliss during the dance. Jilek provides case histories illustrating important therapeutic effects of initiation and spirit dancing in relieving depression, anti-social behavior and substance abuse. He advocates a policy of non-assimilation as providing the best prospect for aboriginal mental health. Jilek reports a renaissance of religious activity not only among Fraser Valley groups but more generally among aborigines across Canada and the United States. We have then at least two different religious approaches to rebuilding the eternal world of aborigines-the adoption of experiential forms of Christianity and the return to traditional aboriginal religions. The respective advantages of these alternative solutions have been discussed in anthropological and sociological circles (albeit in other cultural contexts). Anthropologist William Wedenoja (1981), for example, has studied similar alternatives in Jamaica where the population consists largely of the descendants of slaves from West Africa. In Jamaica, a return to traditional West African religions versus conversion to

Pentecostalism were the most evident alternatives. Wedenoja suggested that Pentecostalism was more appropriate because of its incorporation of personal values more resonant with the modern world. In his view traditional African cults such as Pukkumina which flourished in Jamaica during the late nineteenth century, were backward looking and unrelated to the contemporary zeitgeist.

Pentecostalism (as the Church of God) first appeared in Jamaica about 1907 but began to flourish only after the Second World War. By 1976, Wedenoja found that fully one quarter of churchgoers (in the rural parishes of Clarendon and Manchester) offended Pentecostal Churches. This significant growth of Pentecostalism at the expense of other denominations, occurred during a period of rapid social change as Jamaica moved from agriculture to industrialization. Along with technological change, there was rapid urbanization, increased affluence and social mobility, and the development of a more democratic political system. Modernization also fostered a new sense of self and encouraged new personality traits such as individualism and self-reliance. Upwardly mobile wage earners cut themselves off from communal and family obligations. They became less cooperative and more selfseeking; acquisitive rather than generous; and self-directed rather than group-dependent. According to Wedenoja, Pentecostalism was more in tune with modernization than the traditional African cults which were hierarchical and authoritarian. Affiliation with the Pentecostal movement exposed the convert to the values of modernity and expressed a commitment to a new society in contrast to African religious movements which were traditional and static.

Perhaps such socio-cultural analyses would help aborigines determine optimum religious choices. Yet in the long run the Cree and other aboriginal peoples will make their own decisions based upon their own very different individual perceptions.

DISCUSSION

In this essay I have drawn attention to our odd human propensity to see ourselves as inhabiting a two-chambered world, a world of here and now bounded by birth and death,

and an eternal world beyond both. Most if not all cultures participate in this two-chambered vision. The specifics of individual eternal worlds vary considerably of course and in some cultures, there may even be more than two chambers such as an extra world for the unquiet souls of suicides or for other malignant agencies. No doubt there is a dose relationship between a culture's mundane life and the content of the eternal world it generates; but local religious geniuses, through their private mystical experiences must also make an important idiosyncratic contribution. These matters await systematic study. These eternal versus time-bound conceptualizations are not confined to religious spheres. Philosophers have made use of them. Plato (427-347 B.C.) for example conceived an eternal realm of ideas or forms which manifested in the mundane in such transitory guises as this particular bed or that specific lily or peculiarly spotted cow. Science has also employed similar dichotomous thinking. For example in the world of genetics there is the gene pool characteristic of each species and stable over time; and the individual phenotype, the unique manifestation of its idiosyncratic genome which is born and dies. Even in our contemporary world of, computers and internet we express something of the dichotomy when we "download" a specific text or, image from a "universal" data pool that ricochets from satellites or the moon.

To end on an optimistic note, I will remind you that Der Gotterdammerung. Doesn't really depict the final end of the world. While on the stage we witness Valhalla consumed in flames and gradually inundated by the rising waters of the Rhine, the orchestra bursts into a jubilant repetition of the redemption-through-love motif and we know that although one world has been destroyed, the next one is in gestation.

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