

VOLUME 26, August 2010

www.BrianJohnPiccolo.com

Avatar: The Movie

I have waited until now to write about the movie *Avatar* in order to allow the experience of seeing it work upon me sufficiently. There is so much being expressed on so many levels within the movie, that it is hard to know where to start. There have been many articles, books, and blogs about the movie since it first appeared in December 18, 2009. Some are complementary, some are critical, some are scholarly, and some are not so nice. However, the success of *Avatar* has been so overwhelming that it is being re-released on August 27, 2010, with eight extra minutes of unseen footage.¹ In addition, James Cameron says that the sequel *Avatar-2* will also be coming out perhaps in 2012 or 2013. He says that the environment will be very different and perhaps filmed mostly underwater. Cameron hints that there most likely will be an *Avatar* trilogy when finally finished.²



Princess Neytiri and Jake Scully

My view is that *Avatar* is like a multimedia onion whose skin must be peeled away layer at a time in order to get to the core archetype being expressed. At the outer skin, we can see that the alien planet *Pandora*, and its native people the *Na'vi*, is a type of the oil rich Middle Eastern areas of our Earth. The *Na'vi* are a type of every minority people that have ever been dominated by Western foreign

interests such as the United States and Great Britain. Like the Arab and Middle Eastern people of today, the *Na'vi* have the unfortunate luck of sitting on one of the largest deposits of a rare mineral that is greatly coveted by the corporate invaders of their planet. This is similar to the Middle Eastern people today who sit upon oil rich lands, the lands we currently occupy with our military might.

It is interesting that the name *Pandora* is taken from Greek mythology. Pandora means “all-gifted” in ancient Greek. In the myth, Pandora was given a jar that contained all the evils of the world. When she opened the jar, everything was released but one. The one thing left was hope because she closed the jar before it could be released. Pandora is a type of Eve, the first woman who is blamed for losing paradise in the Garden of Eden. Thus, under patriarchal terms and values, it is all her fault. The evils that are released in the movie *Avatar* come from an American/British military style-like corporation who aptly represents everything evil about an abusive patriarchal society gone mad. All the *Na'vi* have is hope against such a superior military force of invaders.

Thus, the planet of Pandora represents the feminine matriarchy and all that it values such as the Earth, life, relationship, and a high reverence for ecology. The corporate invaders represent all that is evil and exploitive about a malignant patriarchal society who has no feminine values or love of ecology. This is the first onionskin layer of *Avatar* and most writers and observers get this message loud and clear.

The Second Layer of the Onionskin

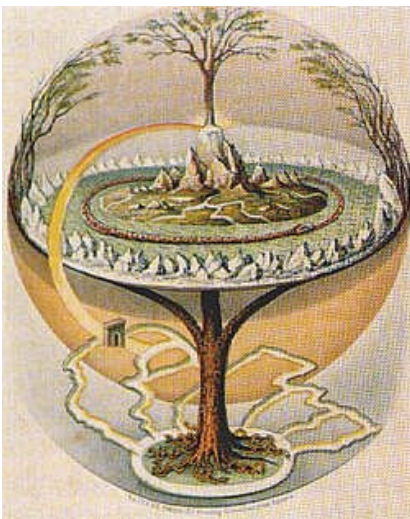
Interestingly, the name *Na'vi* is similar to the Hebrew term *navi*, which means prophet. The character Jake Scully is prophetically warned by Princess *Neytiri*³ that he, like the other “sky people,” does not belong on Pandora. It is at this point that religious scholars and anthropologists

recognize the second skin of the onion as a conflict between the earth goddess and the sky god.

The corporate sky people represent the transcendent theistic God who is separate from his creation, being in the sky, and supports duality. I am not you, you are not I, and we are not connected. By contrast, scholars want to call the Na'vi pantheist because they worship *Ey'wa*, the mother goddess consciousness of Pandora. Through *Ey'wa*, the Na'vi experience a total oneness with all life. I am you, you are me, we are all one and non-dual. Actually, the Na'vi are a combination of both theism and pantheism known currently as panentheism.⁴ Many modern day feminist scholars have made many arguments in this genre, the greatest of them being Dr. Mary Daly.⁵

The Third Layer of the Onionskin

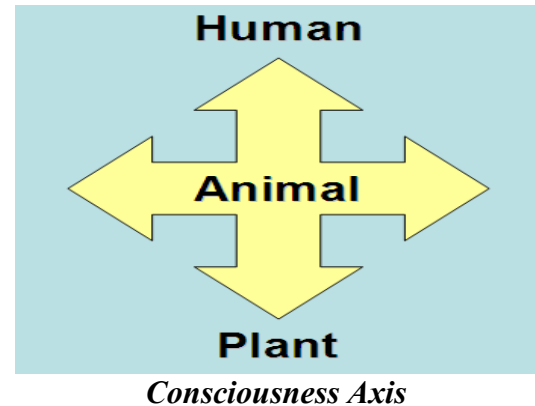
The next layer of the onionskin in *Avatar* was the "World Tree" motif. This was expressed in the movie as the "Hometree." Outwardly, the Na'vi lived in this tree like beautiful blue birds. However, the world tree is a universal motif. It is the Bodhi tree that the Buddha sat under when reaching enlightenment. It is the tree of life in the Garden of Eden story. The Mayan people also have a world tree that spans all dimensions of existence.



The World Tree Motif

We see this tree in the Jewish or Indian Kabala and in nearly all religions and spiritual systems in one form or another. Esoteric philosophers teach that like the Kabala, the world tree symbolizes the constitution of both humanity and the universe simultaneously.⁶

According to Dr. Rudolph Steiner, a human being is an upside down tree with his or her roots reaching into heaven. The fact that we alone stand upright with our genitalia pointing towards the Earth while plants, flowers, and trees have theirs towards the sky shows a graphic difference in consciousness development. The animal kingdom is halfway between the human and the vegetable kingdom walking on all fours with a horizontal axis of consciousness. The more sentient the animal, the more it begins to mimic us by standing erect.



This does not mean that one level of consciousness is better or less valuable. What it does mean is that consciousness is malleable and evolutionary. To have a fully developed ego, one must stand erect. This leads to the fourth layer of the onionskin and why the hero of the *Avatar* story had to be a Western male who is paralyzed.

The Fourth Layer of the Onionskin

Corporal Jake Scully⁷ is paralyzed from the waste down and is replacing his brother (his alter ego) in the *Avatar* program/experiment on Pandora. His brother was a scientist like all the others researchers on the *Avatar* team, but unfortunately had died. The other *Avatar* team members do not want Jake because he is a warrior, and an ex-marine, not a researcher, but his DNA is the same as his brothers so they have to use him. His identical DNA means he can power and connect to his genetically engineered *Avatar* Na'vi blue giant body.

Colonel Miles Quaritch⁸, the evil military commander of the corporation's mercenary forces, approaches Jake and promises him that he can get the corporation to repair Jake's spine so he can be normal again. The only stipulation is that Jake gives secret reports back to him on every thing the he has

learned about the Na'vi. In this way, Quaritch can find out the Na'vi weaknesses and exploit them militarily. Quaritch is convinced that military force is the only way the Na'vi will surrender their planet and *home-tree* to the corporation.

Contrasting this situation is Dr. Grace Augustine⁹, an anthropologist, who believes she can actually convince the corporation to honor the sacredness of the Na'vi people and eventually even let them be. Here Grace represents the type of liberal intellectual who believes that she can change the system through education etc. However, the lesson here is that patriarchal systems and institutions cannot be changed; they must be abandoned and replaced.

The Na'vi spiritually represent the unearned mysticism of all primal people. They represent a time before the development of strong ego consciousness. It is a time of picture consciousness and feeling, not of words and mathematical abstractions. The Western corporation represents the over developed ego in which one is shut off from all transcendent thought and perception of the spiritual realms. Psychic realms of picture and feeling consciousness are cut off. There is no longer a direct connection to the spiritual realms. While the Na'vi have a direct connection to Ey'wa, they do not have the type of ego consciousness that Jake Scully does. Thus, they are incapable of asking Ey'wa directly to intervene in the conflict with the sky people. For them, Ey'wa takes no sides because Ey'wa is universal consciousness without self-awareness. This concept of consciousness without self-awareness is typical in Eastern philosophy.

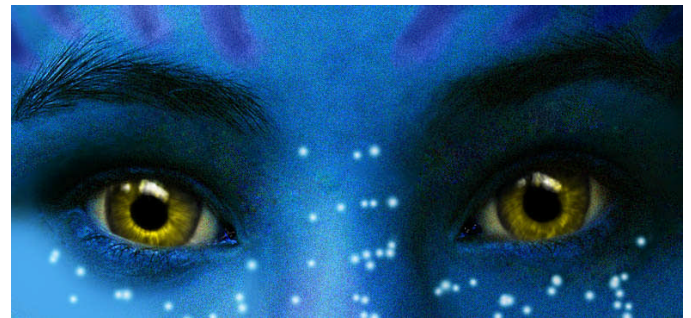
The fact that Jake Scully can only connect with his Avatar body during dreaming or alpha brainwave activity is important. Jake Scully is a type of the new ego, different than the Western corporations. He is able to access both dream consciousness and still have a sense of self. Thus, the Na'vi know him and his team members as *dream walkers*.

This is why Jake Scully had to be paralyzed to the world of the senses. He is the Western ego reborn new and expanded to a world Ego, the great I AM that sleeps in everyone. Thus, he could not go back to his old body of sense perception, he had to go on into his new Avatar body completely. In a sense, it is a type of the resurrected body in Western and Eastern theology.

Therefore, Jake is able to integrate both the primal mysticism and modern ego development into one new person. He is able to approach Ey'wa and ask for help with a strength/focus that no one else possessed. Thus, the unconscious can be conscious of everything but itself like Ey'wa. Jake brings self-awareness and polarity with unity to Ey'wa. Ey'wa is then able to send all her help to aid the Na'vi and Jake against the mercenary military forces of the corporation. The Na'vi would have lost the battle against the corporate military without Jake Scully. As Dr. Carl G. Jung use to say, "All it takes is one number in front of a string of zeroes to give the zeroes a value and an identity." This leads to the final onionskin: the "I" within the "I."

The Fifth Layer of the Onionskin

During the film, Jake Scully is on the hero's journey. He will die and be resurrected, both essential components of the heroes journey. He is initiated through the Na'vi ceremonies in becoming a warrior through various tests and trials. After the completion of all these feats, he is initiated into the tribe as an equal member. Then an interesting thing happens. Princess Neytiri looks into Jakes eyes and says, "I see you."



Princess Neytiri, "I see you."

She does this in the same context as the Sanskrit term *Namaste*. Translated this means *the God in me sees the God in you*, or *the Ey'wa in me sees the Ey'wa in you*. One cannot do this without a sense of self or I am too. Jake Scully strengthens this sense of self in the right way. The Na'vi can never go back to their *home-tree*. It is gone forever and they will never be the same. However, this is good; spiritual evolution has taken place, as it should. The little ego of Jake Scully is reabsorbed back into relationship with the great I AM, or Ey'wa. Something new is added to the mix that was not there before. It could be argued that Jake brings a new sense of sentience to Ey'wa herself. Thus, the

Na'vi as a whole become the global ego of Ey'wa. Therefore, Ey'wa hears Jake and responds.

Some Conclusions

In very much the same way, we the human race of the planet Earth, cannot go backwards either. We reminisce about the noble savage motif and glorify a pre-technical age that none of us really wants to live in. How long would some of us last without our cell phones? Still others are dependent upon modern medicines, electricity, and automobiles. Yet, does this mean we are doomed to an apocalyptic end of the world covered with oil spills and pollution?

The success of the film *Avatar* suggests that we, the people of the Earth, at our inner most core, actually care about the planet and each other. However, like Jack Scully, we have to initiate our sense of self, back into a community of selves who see the divine in each other. I have written on many times that quantum physics, and physics in general, is all pointing to the illusion of duality and a unity of all matter. At the Big Bang, the whole universe was about the size of a pinhead and everything you see around you today was all united and compressed into that one point.

It has take 4.5 billion years for humanity to become sentient and self-aware. Now we must learn to live as a global community of voluntary "I's" that choose to align themselves in global concerns. This global community needs its own mythology and its own new spirituality. This badly needed global myth will not come from scientists, engineers, or medical doctors. No, the mythology will come from the artists, the painters, the writers, the poets, and the musicians. The movie *Avatar* is the first installment of what our brave new global mythology will consist of. May the artistic presentation continue until all the world of humanity is converted to being able to look at each other with love and say, "I see you."

© **Brian John Piccolo, 2010**

NOTES:

¹ http://www.moviesonline.ca/movienews_18183.html

² <http://www.nowpublic.com/culture/avatar-2-james-cameron-set-shoot-sequel-2568888.html>

³ [Zoe Saldana](#) as Neytiri.

⁴ Jay Michaelson, "The Meaning of Avatar: Everything is God", Internet article, Dec. 22, 2009.
www.huffingtonpost.com/jay-michaelson/the-meaning-of-avatar-eve_b_400912.html

⁵ Mary Daly (October 16, 1928 – January 3, 2010) was an American radical feminist philosopher, academic, and theologian. Daly, who described herself as a "radical lesbian feminist," taught at Boston College, a Jesuit-run institution, for 33 years. One of her greatest works was, *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation* (Beacon Press: Boston, 1973).

⁶ Rudolph Steiner, *Esoteric Lessons 1904-1909* (Great Barrington, MA: Steiner Books, 2007), pp. 342-347.

⁷ [Sam Worthington](#) as Corporal Jake Sully.

⁸ [Stephen Lang](#) as Colonel Miles Quaritch.

⁹ [Sigourney Weaver](#) as Dr. Grace Augustine.