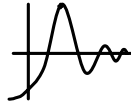


Merely the Messenger

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Bonn, Germany – April 2012

It was in the small hours of a Bonn spring morning, amid the plush leather and marble of an international club lounge, that the idea of a new civilisation was first mooted. Two middle-aged men at the end of a marathon environment conference, their tongues and ties loosened by fatigue and alcohol, dropped the seed as a weary jest, and as they later slept it germinated. By the time they came down for breakfast it had sprouted viable roots.

Future historians would debate that the re-genesis was conceived in that midnight moment, that the two great minds, having wrestled long with apprehension for mankind's future, had jointly formed the proposal and an alliance of founding fathers was joined. But the historians would be only partially correct.

The two men would indeed go on to become founding fathers of a new order, but the idea they dropped in their moment of throw-away humour was not the conception. It was merely the first dim awareness of a pregnancy already established; an embryonic quickening deep in the womb of existing society.

Had this pregnancy been the issue of a regal courtship with due matrimony and tender nuptials, as one might dream, the confinement might have attracted more attention, but it was not. It was the issue of a brute mankind's juvenile dalliance with the innocent and comely Gaia; a marriage marked by misuse and mutual harm, devoid of respect and regard yet suffused with lure and dependence.

Anyone knowing the couple might have foretold that his constant misuse of her would end in vitriol and decree nisi, but