

Onramp to the Postmodern Conversation

© Brian McLaren 2007

Posted on the IWS resources page by special permission.

the church **emerging**

in a **postal age**

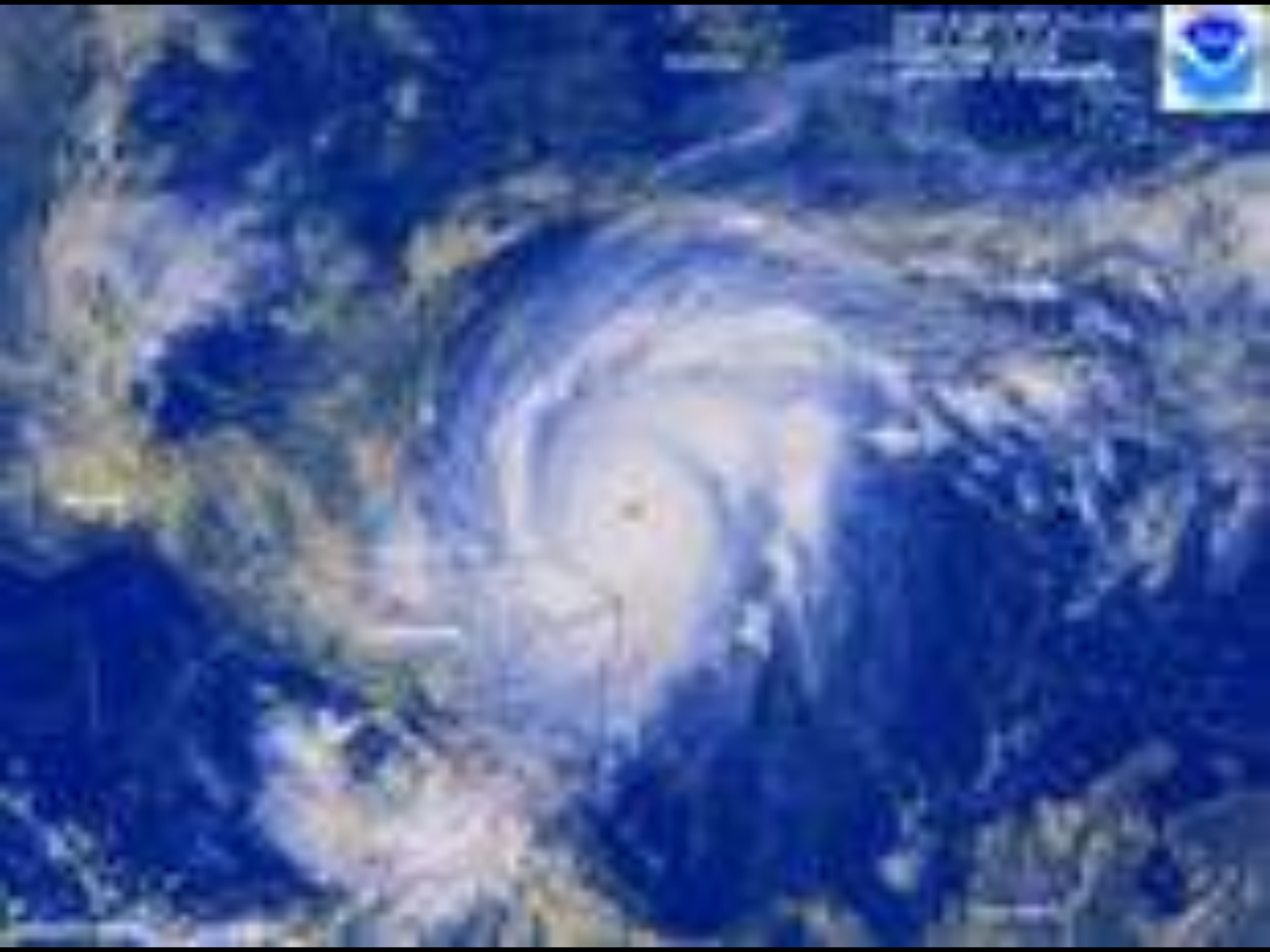
Psalm 131

A song of ascents. Of David.

My heart is not proud, O LORD,
my eyes are not haughty;
I do not concern myself with great matters
or things too wonderful for me.

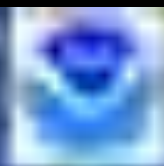
But I have stilled and quieted my soul;
like a weaned child with its mother,
like a weaned child is my soul within me.

O Israel, put your hope in the LORD
both now and forevermore.



NOAA
NATIONAL OCEANOGRAPHIC AND
ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION

NOAA
NATIONAL OCEANOGRAPHIC AND
ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION







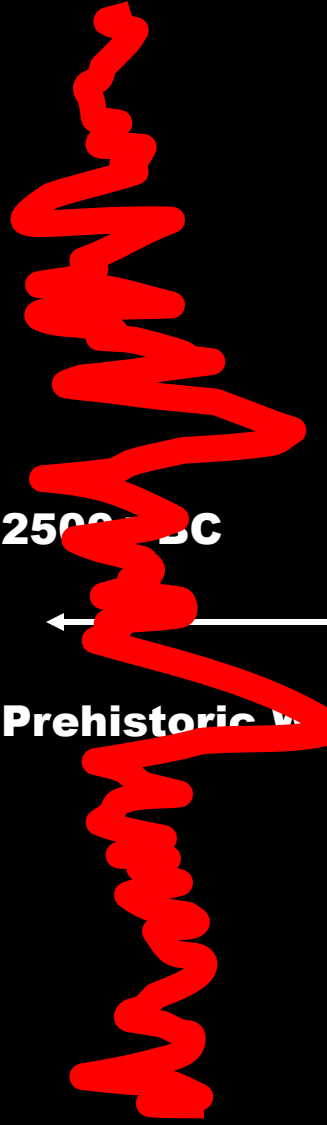
In your hearts, set apart Christ as Lord. *Always be prepared* to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect...

1 Peter 3:15-16

2500+ BC



Prehistoric World



2500 BC

Prehistoric World



2500 BC - 500 AD



500 BC

1 AD

500 AD

Ancient World

**Sumerian, Akkadian, Egyptian,
Hittite, Assyrian, Babylonian,
Persian, Greek, Roman empires**



2500 BC - 500 AD



500 BC

1 AD

500 AD

Ancient World

**Sumerian, Akkadian, Egyptian,
Hittite, Assyrian, Babylonian,
Persian, Greek, Roman empires**

2500 BC - 500 AD

500 AD - 1500 AD



500 BC

1 AD

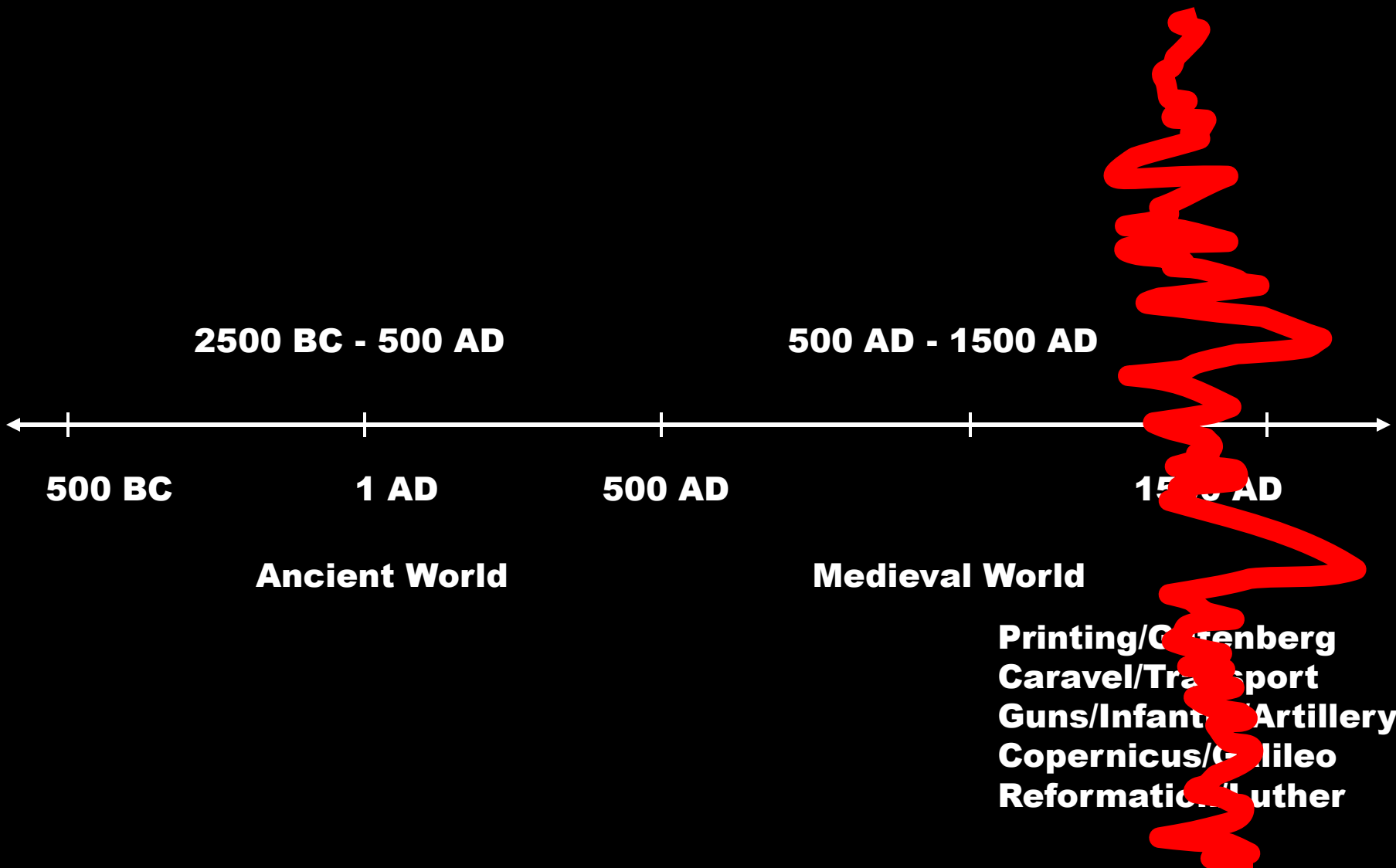
500 AD

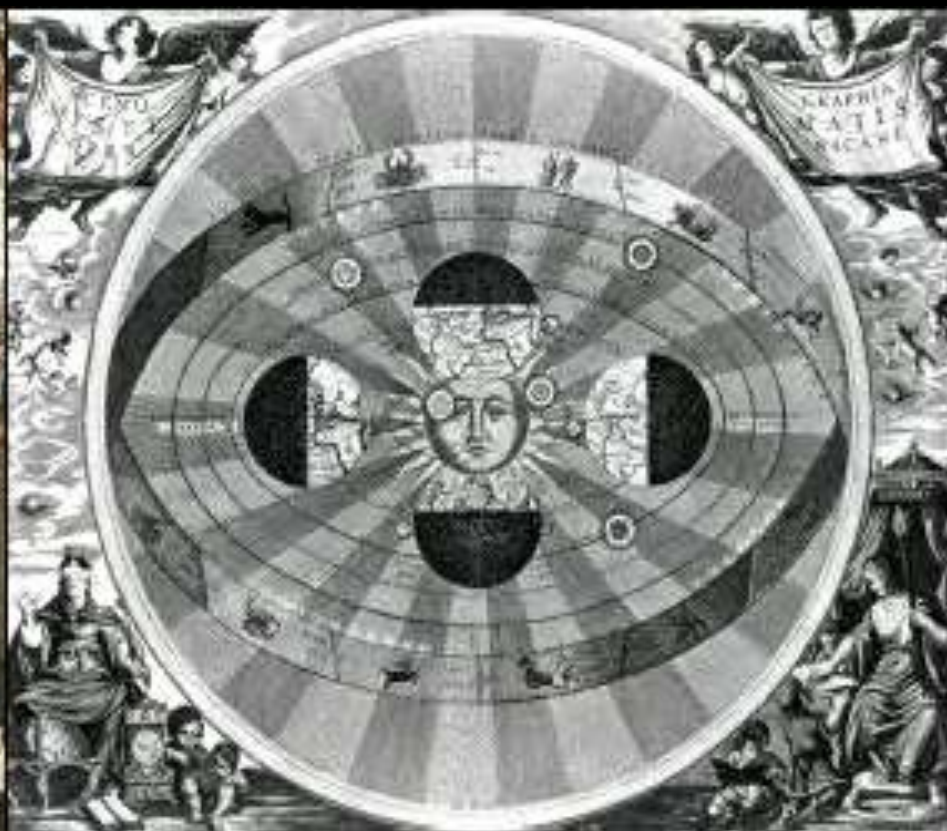
1500 AD

Ancient World

Medieval World

Printing/Gutenberg
Caravel/Transport
Guns/Infantry/Artillery
New Economy
Copernicus/Galileo
Reformation/Luther





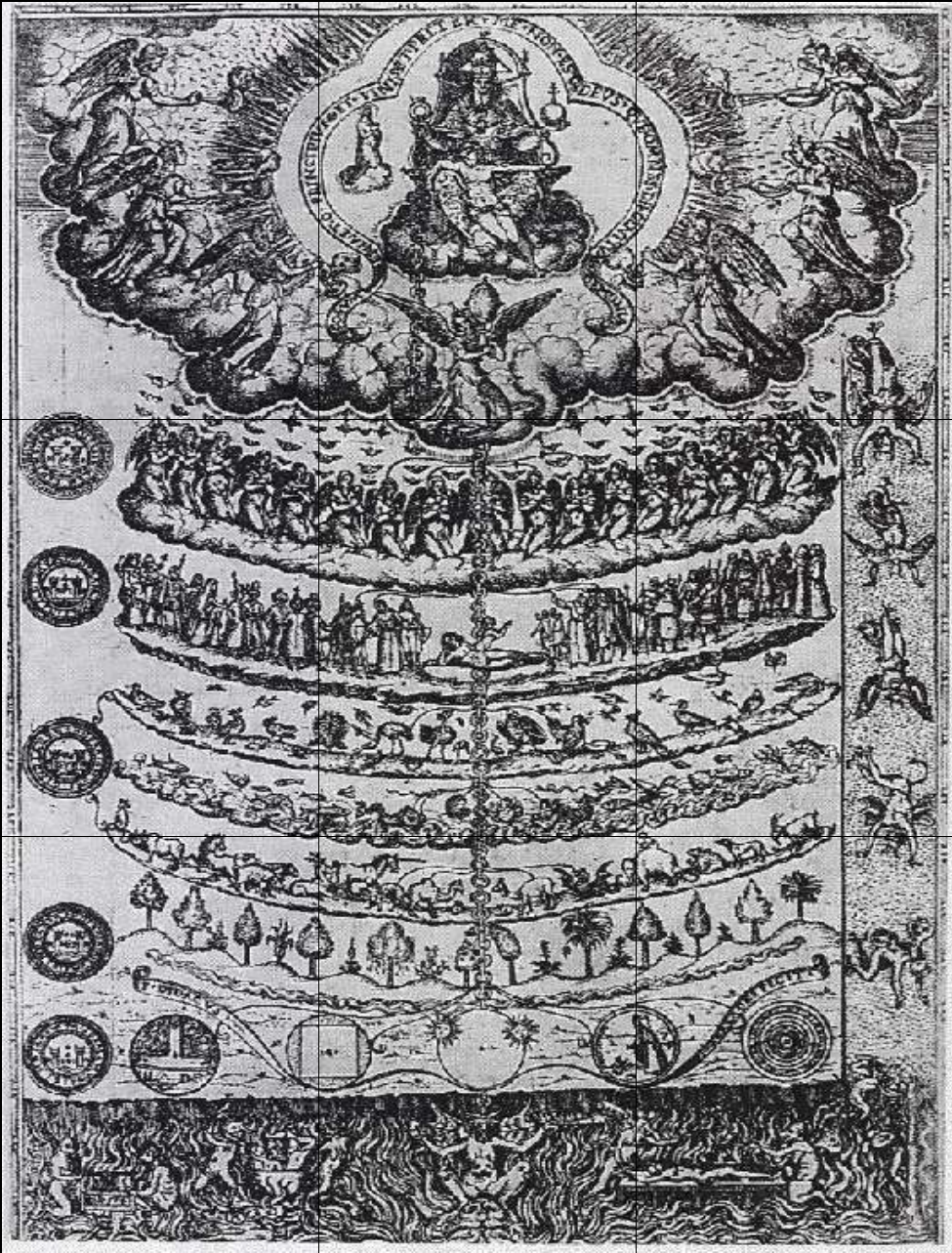
Mary Evans Picture Library

**‘The new Philosophy calls all in doubt,
The Element of fire is quite put out;
The Sun is lost, and th’earth, and no
man’s wit
Can well direct him where to look for it.
Tis all in peeces, all cohaerance gone;
All just supply, and all relation:
Prince, Subject, Father, Sonne, are
things forgot,
For everyman alone thinkes he hath got
To be a Phoenix, and there can bee
None of that kinde, of which he is, but
hee.**

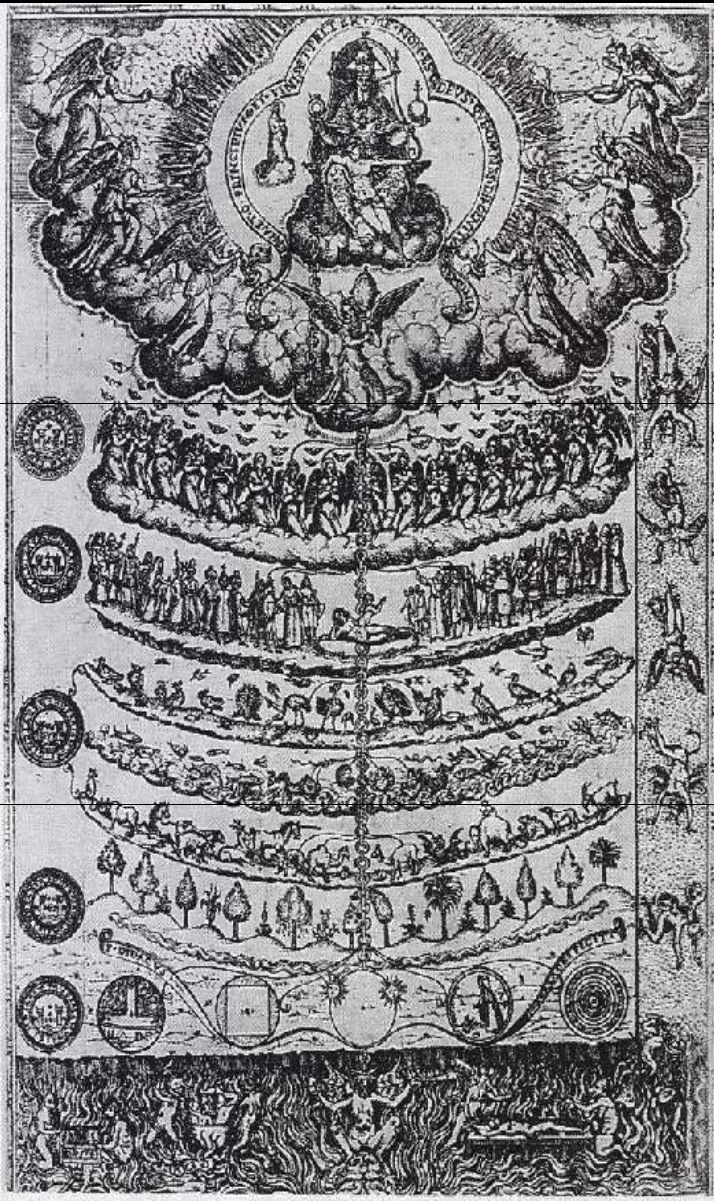
John Donne, 1611 (1572-1631)



**The
great
chain of
being**



**Is an “unchained”
universe a
liberated universe
or a fragmented
universe, cast
adrift?**



**“Nature and Nature's
laws lay hid in night:**

**God said, "Let Newton
be!" and all was light.”**

Alexander Pope (1688-1744)

***Epitaph Intended for Sir Isaac
Newton (1642-1727)***



**Consider the poetic
metaphor:**

LAWS OF NATURE ...

**The universe becomes a
courtroom, God the
lawgiver and king/judge ...**

**Natural Law and Revealed
Law**



The 10 Spheres are gone ...

The Great Chain is gone ...

But order has returned:

Invisible and universal rules,
principles, laws, patterns,
standards, systems.

The Divine Right of Kings
and popes is gone:



The divinely sanctioned system has come.

1500 AD - 2000 AD

1950 AD - ???



1500 AD

1750 AD

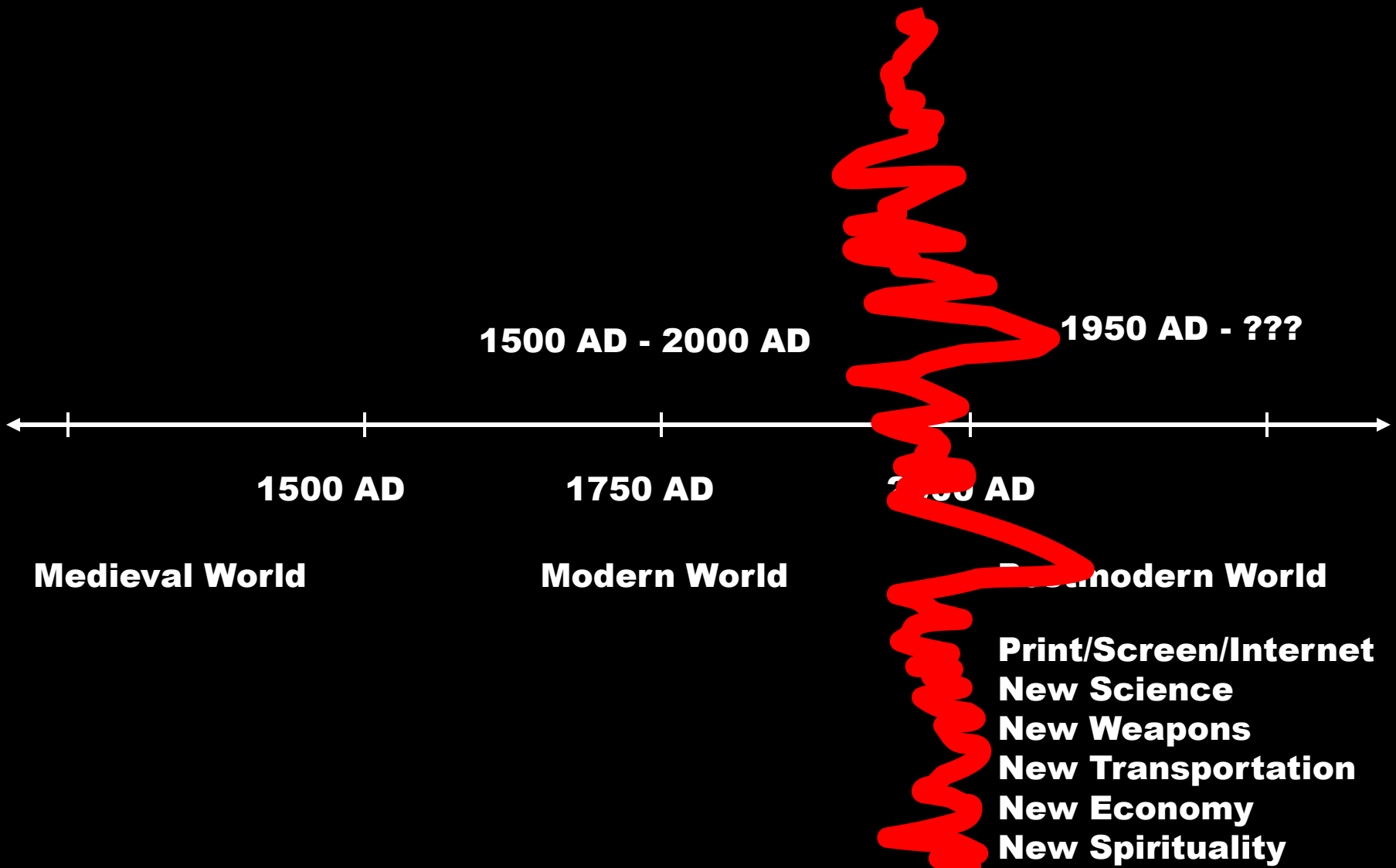
2000 AD

Medieval World

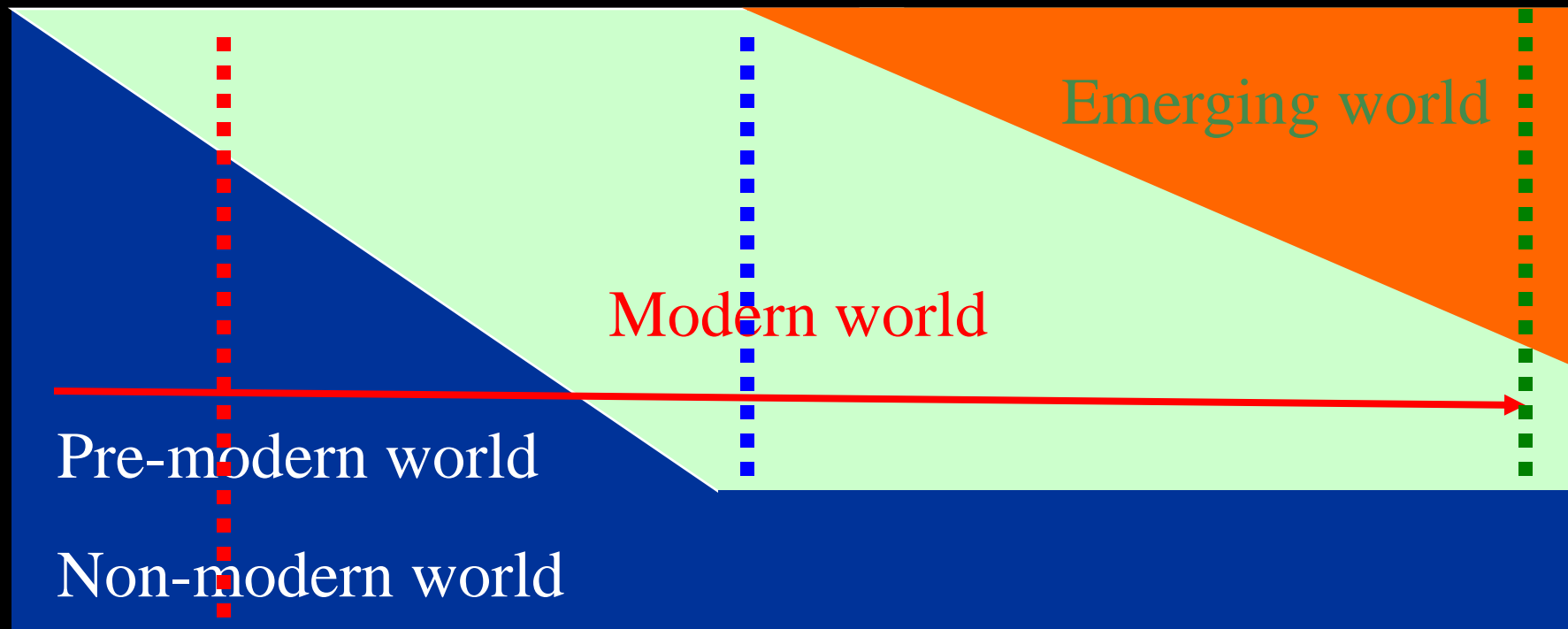
Modern World

Postmodern World

Print/Screen/Internet
New Science
New Weapons
New Transportation
New Economy
New Spirituality




Consider that we live in at least three worlds.



2007

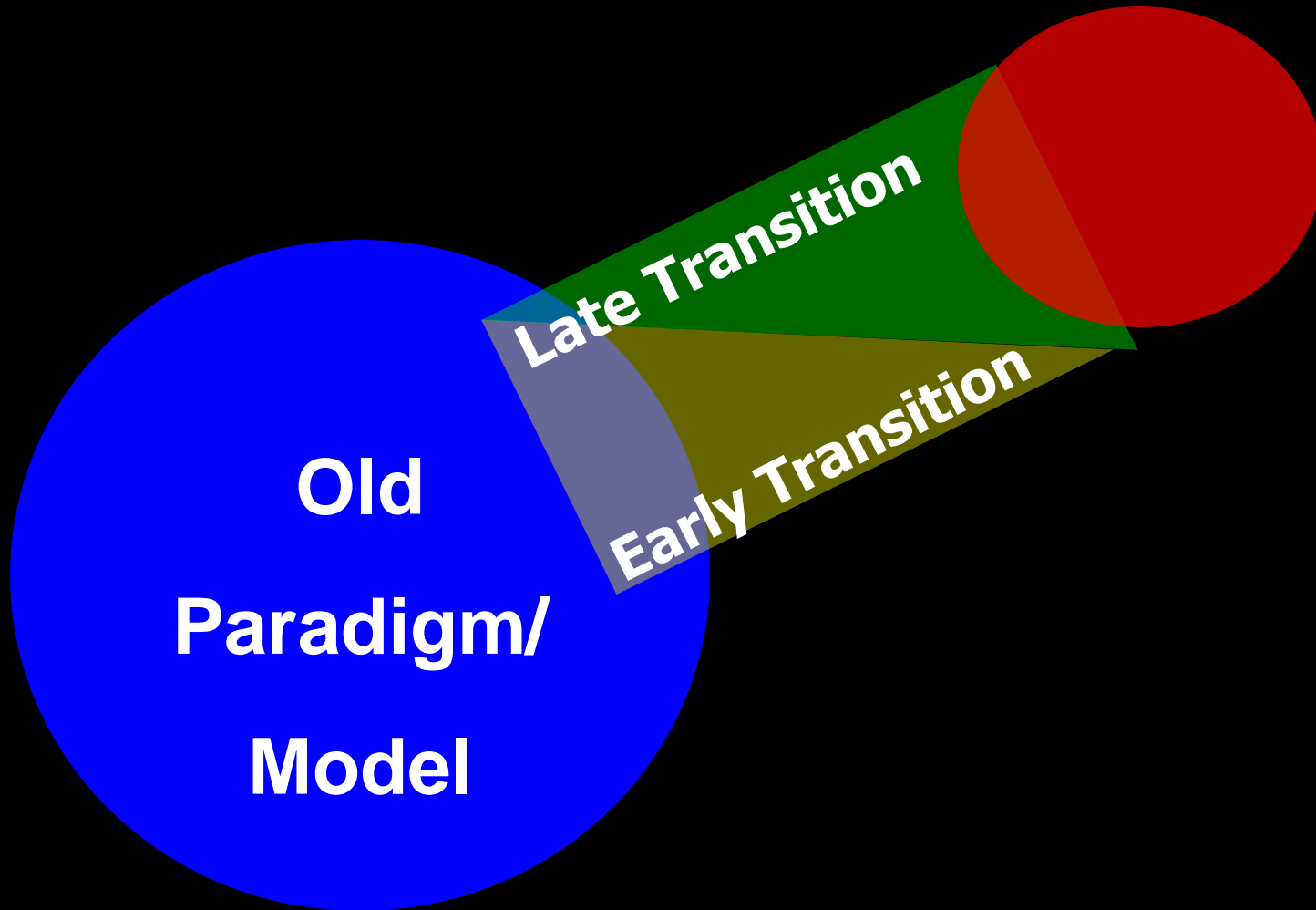
Themes of Postmodernity

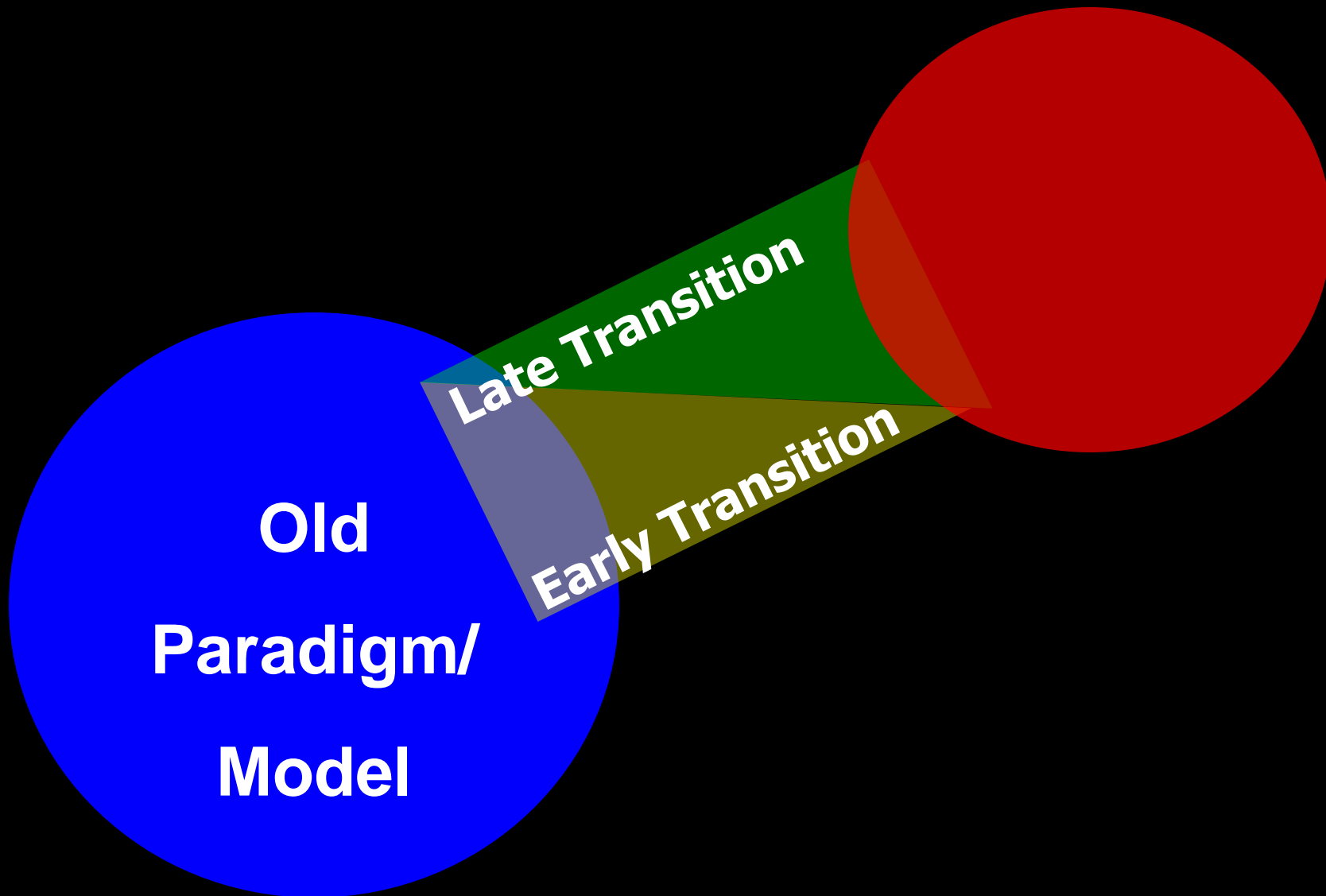
- | | |
|------------------------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Conquest, Control, Progress ... | Conservation |
| 2. Mechanistic/reductionist ... | holistic/systemic |
| 3. Analytical ... | post-analytical |
| 4. Secular/scientific ... | spiritual/scientific |
| 5. Objective ... | Intersubjective |
| 6. Critical ... | Post-critical |
| 7. Organization ... | alliance, network |
- 

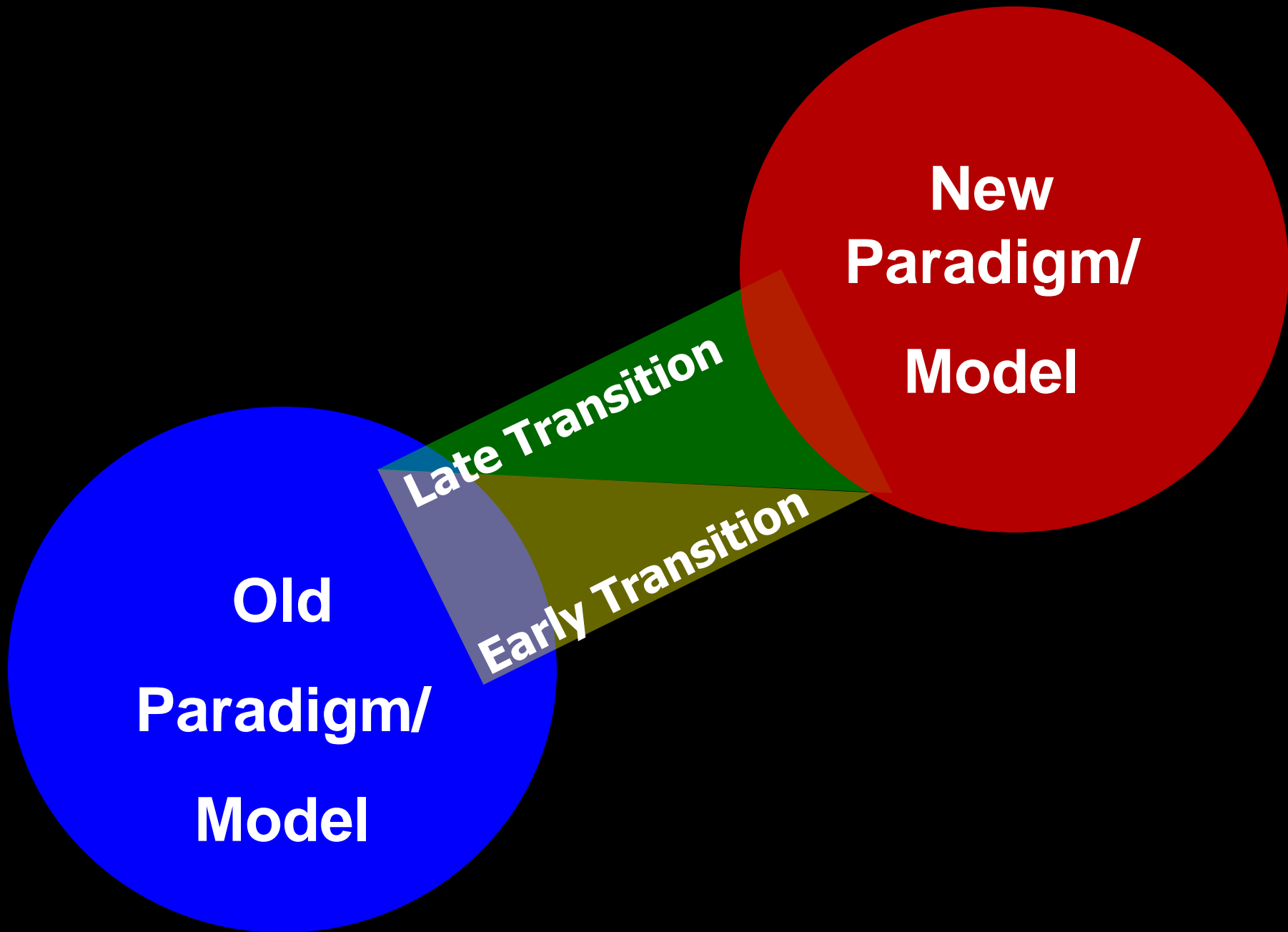
Themes of Postmodernity

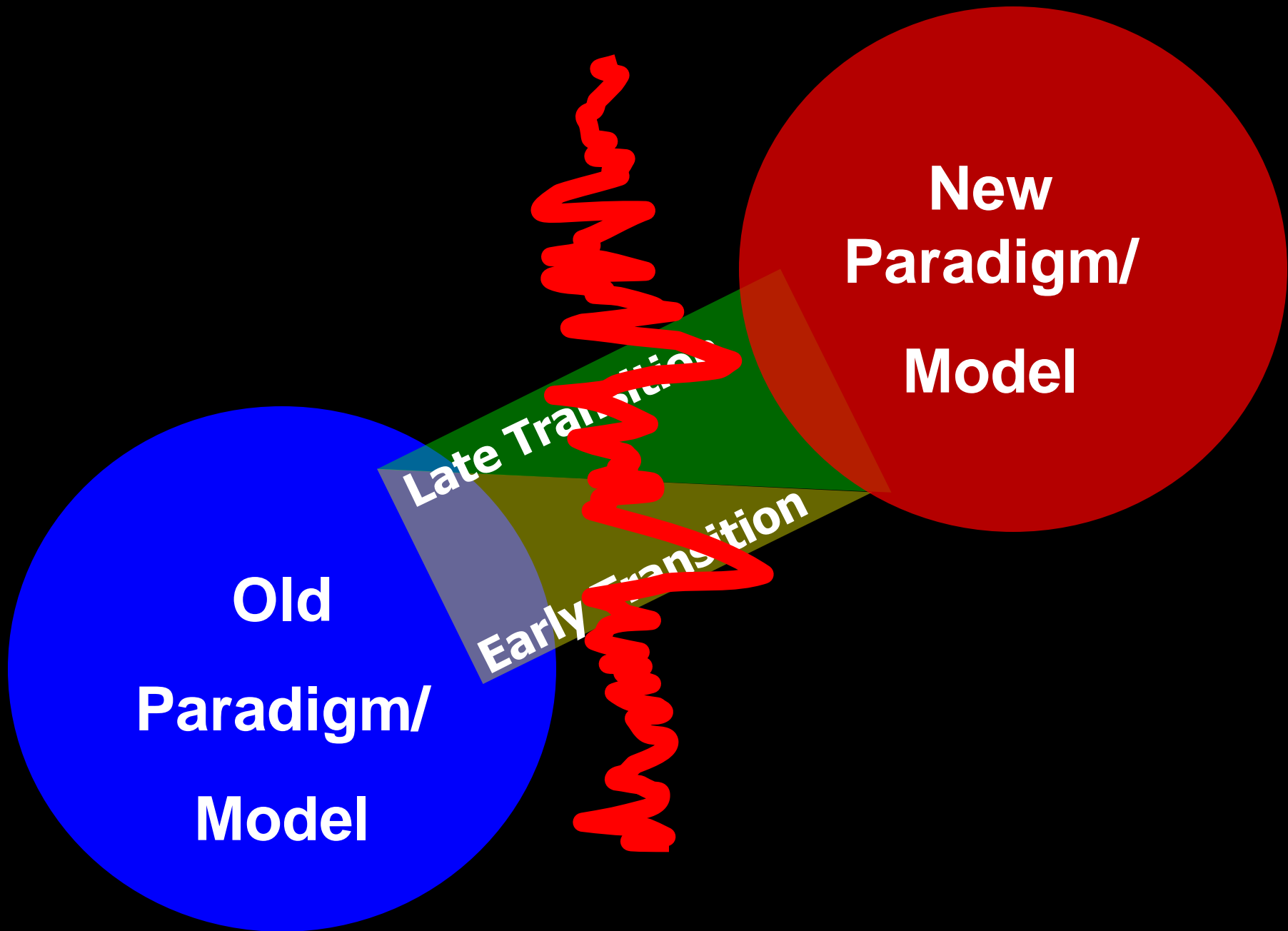
- | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 8. Individualism ... | community, tradition, tribe |
| 9. Protestant/polemical ... | Post-protestant |
| 10. Consumerism ... | Sustainability |
| 11. Print literacy ... | layered fluency |
| 12. National ... | global/migratory |











Paradigm Shifts

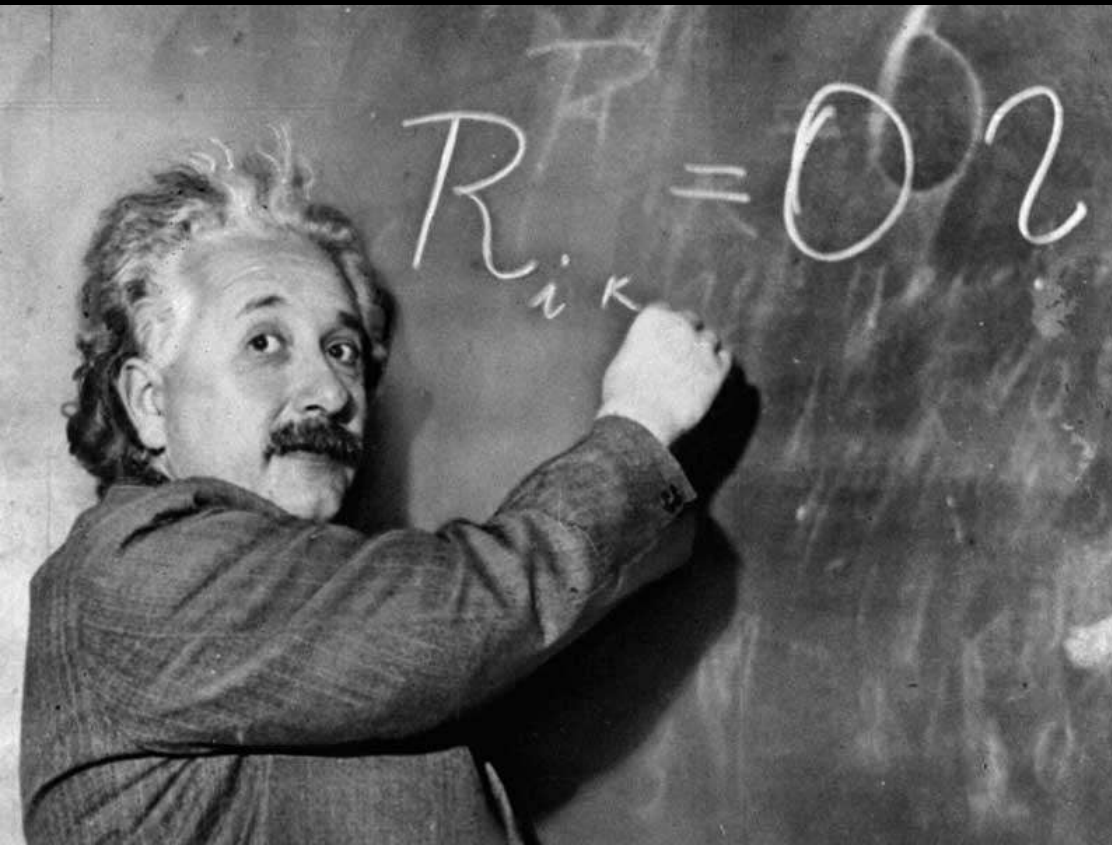
Almost always the [people] who achieve these fundamental inventions of a new paradigm have been either very young or very new to the field whose paradigm they change.

Thomas S. Kuhn

The Structure of Scientific Revolutions

"I remember discussions with Bohr which went through many hours till very late at night and ended almost in despair; and when at the end of the discussion I went alone for a walk in the neighboring park I repeated to myself again and again the question: Can nature possibly be so absurd as it seemed to us in these atomic experiments?... here the foundations of physics have started moving; and ... this motion has caused the feeling that the ground would be cut from science." **Werner Heisenberg**

“It was as if the ground had been pulled out from under one, with no firm foundation to be seen anywhere, upon which one could have built.”



Albert Einstein
On his
paradigm shift



“A new scientific truth does not triumph by convincing its opponents and making them see the light, but rather because its opponents eventually die, and a new generation grows up that is familiar with it.”
Max Planck, *Scientific Autobiography*





A Poem by Edna St. Vincent Millay

Upon this age that never speaks its
mind

This furtive age, this age endowed
with power to wake the moon with
footsteps,

To fit an oar into the rowlocks of the
wind and find what swims before his
prow

And what swirls behind,

A Poem by Edna St. Vincent Millay

Upon this gifted age in this dark hour
Rains from the sky a meteoric shower
of facts.

They lie unquestioned, uncombined.
Wisdom enough to leach us of our ill
is daily spun
But there exists no loom to weave it
into fabric.

Edna St. Vincent Millay (from "Hunstman, What Quarry?")

So ... what's next?

**The answer is ... not
one response, but
many creative and
synergistic responses.**

So ... what's next?

The answer is ...

**What will you and I
believe, become, and
create?**

APARTHEID MUSEUM

DEMOCRACY
RECONCILIATION

DIVERSITY

RESPONSIBILITY

RESPECT

FREEDOM



