Mapping your worldview

This exercise is designed to stimulate the artistically creative side of your personality—some of that Sumari intent that nestles within each of us. At the same time, it will hopefully bring some clarity to your personal worldview, and expand it to one that encompasses not only your ego-self’s objective view of physical reality, but also your inner self’s intuitive sensing of the spiritual aspects of your Self. Your worldview work of art is an ongoing project for the rest of the course and perhaps longer, depending on where you would like to take it.

This picture is of the Hereford Mappa Mundi, created around the year 1300, now housed in Hereford Cathedral, UK. It constitutes the medieval worldview, a map of the world—as much of it as was known then. But it contains far more than a modern map that restricts itself to geographical features. “It was packed with information; history, legend, the wonders of nature, stories from the Bible; everything was there, set out within the map in words and pictures, an encyclopedic study of the world.

An ‘estoire’ was a description sometimes used, which translates as a story, the story of the world.” This artistic exercise will have you create a picture of the story of your Self and your world.

Origins of the Mappa Mundi

Map makers in the middle ages made use of ancient learning, redefining and reinterpreting what they could from often fragmented scripts and drawings. They adapted their conclusions to a Christian perspective.
Typically, maps would have East (Asia) at the top, with Europe bottom left and Africa bottom right. These were the three known continents at the time, although a fourth (Antipodes) would figure in some maps of the time, this was heresy to the Christian view.

This was known as the Tripartite map, the world within a circle divided by a T-shape to represent the crucifixion. At the beginning of the 12th Century mappa mundi were produced as wall maps on a larger scale. The size allowed for more detail—and more illustrations of mysterious creatures and beasts gleaned through word of mouth. Geography was a matter of guesswork. Not even the learned of that time would question the manipulation of geographical features so that they would fit into the circle. It was more important to set out the world in Christian terms. God would usually sit above the world, in Paradise. In the case of the now destroyed Ebstorf Map, God would completely surround the world—leaving no doubt that it was of his creation. In later maps, Jerusalem, the city of God, would be placed at the center of the world. The Hereford Mappa Mundi has a figure of Christ at the apex.

Only the aristocracy and educational institutions owned wall maps as they were prestigious objects. Often the designer would be asked to decorate the border to suit the owner—with pictures representing his life and achievements.

The Hereford Mappa Mundi is the only complete wall map of the world known to have survived from the Middle Ages. Its durability may be due to it being drawn on vellum, a type of leather, from a single skin—thus no seams or joins. It measures 64 inches from top to bottom and 54 inches across.

Creating your own mappa mundi

In this exercise you will be creating your own map of your own world. A depiction of your life and achievements that, rather than confined to the borders, spreads out from a figure of you (the God of you) at the center.

To help you construct your mappa mundi there are some template designs at the end of this document for you to work with. The template of the center figure of you is loosely based on the drawing of the Vitruvian Man by Leonardo da Vinci. You don’t have to stick to this image, feel free to embellish the figure in any way you feel drawn (sorry) to do. An example of an embellished figure features in the templates. You might want to keep the figure naked (do what you will with the genitalia—remembering that it would be good, although not compulsory to eventually share your art with others in the Forum!), or have some fun dressing the figure with all-time favorite items of clothing. There is no “right way” of going about this, but do try to begin with this figure at the center of your canvas. Remember that you are always at the center of your world, your reality, and this piece of art will come to represent a depiction of your unique worldview.
**What you will need:**

I suggest you use a slightly oblong canvas with minimum dimensions of around 16x20 inches (40x50 cms). I don’t suggest you go any larger than 32x40 inches (80x100 cms) as finishing the work may take another lifetime. But go with what feels right for you when choosing your canvas.

You can use whatever medium takes your fancy—paints (I suggest acrylics or water colors—less mess to clear up!); pen and ink; pastels; crayons—or a combination (mixed media) would be my preference. (I shall use an italic pen nib for my text in honor of the mappa mundi scribes of yore.) If you are to use water colors, then your ‘canvas’ will need to be a good quality water color paper rather than a prepared canvas. In short, visit an arts and crafts shop and have a chat with someone there if you are not used to doing this kind of thing. You’ll be amazed at what’s available these days compared to the stuff you were given in art classes at school.

It is also possible to do this as a computer aided design (CAD software), however, I would strongly suggest you will get the most benefit from this exercise by getting your hands dirty—or rather, painty and inky.

**Preparation and ideas for inclusion:**

Like the Hereford Mappa Mundi, place a circle within the canvas that nearly spans its width, but leave a decent amount of border area. The border area is importantly an area that encompasses your physical world. It is an area beyond the physical, where you can depict your ideas and understandings of the spiritual you and the spiritual realm. Here lie aspects of your Essence self (e.g. Family of Belonging) and other lifetimes closely related to the current one. All of which is surrounded by the dimensions of Consciousness and All That Is—depictions and messages to be added later on in the course. Here’s an idea of what to begin with:

When you have these basic structure guidelines set up begin embellishing and adding little drawings and text around the figure of you in the center. I suggest that the square around the figure contains elements of you that are strictly objective, ego-based, space-time declarations of yourself and who you are. If you haven’t bothered with the square, just begin embellishing your figure and surrounding it with “factual” information about yourself.

For example, I would draw a pair of spectacles on my head, put some text next to my left hand that mentions my dislocated little finger, draw an outline of Africa behind me (as I was born there), and perhaps draw or write some text on important childhood objects or experiences.

As you move away from the objective ego-based you (outside of the square) begin drawing/painting/writing
little pieces of information about your life and achievements. Begin to fill in the circle of your world, but feel free to become more and more subjective in your renditions the further you are from the center (i.e. draw something perhaps from a significant dream you can always remember). The circle’s perimeter signifies the transition from the physical objective you to the non-physical subjective you.

Some detail from the Hereford Mappa Mundi for inspiration:

The figure of Christ at the top (in heaven).

Babylon and the tower of Babel

Sodom and Gomorrah

A people who eat other people, somewhere near the Black Sea – beware!
Templates:

However you create your “map of your world” is good! These outlines are to get you started. You can add any features you feel are important, such as a face or favorite clothing. You can add people, places, pets, and objects of importance, gradually building a type of mandala of your life and its significant elements. You may want to include depictions of your challenges, areas of tension, areas of flow—anything to express what your world looks and feels like in and around you. Any spiritual depictions—God/Consciousness/All That Is/Essence self, your family of intent colors, are good for the border outside of the main circle.

For the center figure, print or copy one of the templates on these pages and transfer to your canvas—you could trace or freehand the transfer, it doesn’t have to be extremely accurate. For the larger circle, you will need a pencil, eraser, ruler, long straight edge, a compass or push pin and string.
An example embellishment of the central figure. Be as creative with it as you like, but leave plenty of room around it for your personal mappa mundi.
Remember that there is no right or best way of creating a work of art. It is not about technical skill or life-like depictions. Simple line drawings are just as fine as colorful fine art renditions. There is no time pressure to get this done, but do schedule two or three hours each month to work on it. You will likely find that the time will fly by as you become absorbed in the process. Keep your canvas readily accessible so that when you receive an inspiration you can quickly add it to the masterpiece. Above all, have fun!

*Desire does not focus in only one direction—it moves in one whole picture, an all-encompassing whole view—and therefore it moves out in an entire circle around you, rather than one beam.* (Elias, Mary Ennis.)

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1 Worldview – A worldview is the entire collection of an individual’s or a society’s beliefs and values held about the world and how we interact with it. You can regard worldviews as the frameworks on which we build our realities. Your own worldview is a unique interpretation of reality, a dynamic phenomenon that interacts and combines with other worldviews.