

## VI. Conclusion

A few remarks at the conclusion of this course may be helpful.

First, because it is a "short course", it has been necessary to omit a great deal of Barfield's thought and theories, and to simplify others. After all, he spent a lifetime (almost 100 years) researching and developing them. It is hoped therefore that having been presented with his core ideas in this course, you will feel compelled to read many of Barfield's own writings. (You can find them listed elsewhere on this website). They will guide you to a deeper, more comprehensive understanding of Barfield.

Second, it must be admitted that Barfield's ideas are unusual, at least in Western culture in our modern age. They constitute (as T.S. Eliot once remarked) "a journey into seas of thought very far from ordinary routes of intellectual shipping". They are unusual because they deal with areas of life that most of us are unaware of: the pre-phenomenal world; human consciousness. We don't wake up each the morning and think we are going to use our consciousness to fashion the world we will live in that day. And yet Barfield submits that this is almost precisely what we do. Each day. We fashion the world by our consciousness configuring what our senses present to us. That's what we do. It's just that we do it unconsciously. We unconsciously accept the habits of our prevailing culture, its "common sense", and go out into the fragmented world it has bequeathed us and try to deal with its quotidian banalities with our wits and not much else.

Barfield challenges us to alter this protocol, individually and collectively. He challenges us, first to become aware of our consciousness... then to infuse it with the Imagination... and finally to 'put it on' each morning as we would put on our clothes, and experience the world as 'participated', unified. If our consciousness is truly "the inside of everything", as Barfield has shown us, then everything will be altered, changed, when we utilize it – willfully, intentionally. It just needs to be fed. Daily. Simply agreeing with Barfield's ideas is not enough. "Mere acceptance of a proposition is almost nothing", he once remarked. "The *heart* should have *fed* upon the *truth*", he goes on (quoting Coleridge), "as insects on a leaf, till it be tinged with the colour and show its food in every the minutest fibre".

Human consciousness is evolving, as Barfield has so compelling demonstrated. And so is the phenomenal world that is correlative to it. It is evolving as you read this, as you change those squiggles into words. And it will continue to evolve whether we know it or not, like it or not. Presently it is

evolving in a non-participatory way, resulting in a world more and more fragmented, "cut off", alienated. What the world obviously needs – perhaps desperately needs – is a different way, a new unifying way. One such 'way' is offered here. The Way of Owen Barfield.