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Back to Where We Came From: Mythical consciousness and the re-enchantment of the world

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Abstract: In spite of the urgent calls to change lifestyles in order to address the issues of climate change, people are either still slow in responding through effective action or they completely ignore the calls. Various factors are involved in this stubborn psychology when it comes to environmental issues. But while green groups continue to design what are hopefully more effective campaigns, they are all perhaps dependent on a different view of the world: the world as a living being. If people are not convinced that the world is not mere materiality—a result of modernization, scientism and secularization—then none of the campaigns would be able to convince them to take on a greener life. Drawing from the insights of historian of religion, Mircea Eliade, and the insights of existential philosophers such as Martin Buber and Gabriel Marcel, as well as the spiritual evolutionary theory of Sri Aurobindo Ghose, this paper proposes to revisit the archaic “mythical attitude” and reinvigorate it in the contemporary age by recalling myths of origins that show the world to be either a divine person or the result of a divinity’s sacrifice. If the world could be contemplated as such, attitudes friendlier to nature would be made possible, and corresponding lifestyle changes would be easier to commit to.