

The lion and the lamb

by [Gordon Atkinson](#)

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The lion's roar came out of the Age of Enlightenment. It was the roar of freedom. It was the roar of truth. It was the roar of the victor standing over the body of his vanquished foe. It was an angry roar, and the lion had good reason to be angry.

But now this roar has grown louder and more powerful until it's almost the only thing we can hear. The sound of it rings in our ears, and the smell of the lion is on our breath and oozing from our pores.

The lamb used to think it was a lion. What a tragic irony. In its day it roared and painted its image on chain mail and shields. It left its mark on every witch that was burned. It laid claim to a new world, and you could hear its mournful wailing all through the Scopes Monkey Trial. But when the real lion came fully awake, the lamb was defeated and forced to wander in the wilderness. The lamb learned what it had long forgotten—what it means to be a lamb.

The lion is a clumsy ruler, like one new to power, while the lamb has its hooves pressed over its ears. It speaks in strange tongues that communicate nothing but prevent it from hearing anything. It has been a long journey for the lamb.

I'm tired of scientists and religionists and other "ists" fighting and belittling and pushing and shoving and blaming and hating. I'm tired of conceited scorn hurled with malice and in the name of truth. I'm tired of narrow vision and one-dimensional thinking. I'm tired of arrogance and polarization.

I'm tired of people who think reality will fit into the narrow confines of human vision, as if three dimensions and the speed of light are ideas big enough to hold everything, as if the poems of our hearts and the wind of our spirits can be crammed into the perfect cubes of empiricism. As if the aging myths of our mothers and fathers, the ones that nourished our souls, are outdated and shopworn and fit only to be sacrificed on the altar of modernity. This altar is made of polished steel, and the knife is a scalpel, and the look in the lion's eyes is the cold stare of a mechanized reality.

I'm tired of people who think deep truths are found only in prayer and scripture, as if we are not made of this earth and these stars, as if we are not driven by forces unseen to sink our hands into the clay at our feet and marvel at the tiny creatures who squirm before our eyes. As if the knowledge won by the rigorous and disciplined work of science is a threatening beast that must be sacrificed on the altar of spirituality. This altar is a bible. Its knife is a sharpened cross, and the look in the lamb's eyes is the haunted look of a species on the brink of extinction.

But it's just the two of us here, two who have cast aside every label and refuse to be branded with any word that ends in "ist." So I ask you, "Do you think these two twins of humanity, separated violently at birth, will ever come together in a Jungian collision that will shake the foundations of humanity?"

I do. Not in our day and not in our time. But the day will come.

On that day the scientist will take the arm of Mother Myth and the hand of Father Dream and help them across the road like a boy scout would. And the religionist will wander through an observatory for the first time, gasping and pointing at the ceiling with the wonder and delight of a child.

On that day, the lion will finally lie down with the lamb.