

Essay

“WELL? ARE YOU COMING?”

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Crones Counsel IV, San Diego, October 16, 1997. I am standing in a circle of women, drumming and dancing around a huge central bonfire. The night is young. We await the rising moon.

Suddenly one woman's dance spirals into a frenzy, her feet pounding, staccato, as she erupts into a wild, soul-rending cry. I sense the energy of her Celtic ancestors surging up through the soles of her feet, to her heart, her brain. Susan is joyous, ecstatic, electric, at one with her tribal roots, releasing and expressing that mystical pagan exuberance which has been damped down for centuries.

I turn, walk from the fire down to the ocean's edge. Witnessing Susan's epiphany has made me feel oddly alone, separated — from Susan especially who, I think, is fortunate that her ancestors are Celtic. In coming into her original self she is handed an inheritance of power and beauty and mystery. Implicit in this thought is the idea that I do *not* have Celtic in my background. Nor do I have Afro-American, or Native American, or any of the usual ancestries which women proudly proclaim in re-remembering themselves. This negation of my own heritage, or what I should call this *void*, this *blank*,

this *absence*, this *numbness* — is not a conscious thought. Had what occurred next not happened, I probably would not have noticed how fully this peculiar and habitual disconnection from my own heritage has been woven into the lifetime texture of my awareness.

Later that evening. I am sitting cross-legged on a bed across from Tasha in her hotel room. We are casual, at ease. Suddenly Tasha seeks my eyes, says she wants to give me a short reading. I am surprised, but willing. Why not? Looking at me full in the face, Tasha intones, in a solemn voice: “There is something of great value which you would gain by investigating your Teutonic ancestry.”

I am stunned, slack-jawed. Both that this information should so suddenly come in out of the blue, and that this information is precisely what fills the void that I mentioned above. Yes, my ancestry is German, on both sides, Teutonic. I think back to the fire, and to my own sense of alienation from those whose pride in their ancestry has made them strong. The thought that my ancestors are German strikes me to the core. I am both gladdened — that I am now to consciously acknowledge my ancestors — and revolted, physically nauseated — at the fact that I am German, that my ancestors are German. I shudder to recognize why I have not come into conscious contact with my German roots until now. Being German leads back to Hitler, to the Nazis. One cannot think of one without the other. In order to go back and reclaim my Teutonic inheritance I must, somehow, encounter and integrate my Nazi heritage and press through to what lies below.

For over 30 years now my motto has been, “What I am most afraid of, that is what I must do.” And clearly, here, I am shown the path ahead. Knowing that there is something I must do, something deeply unknown and ultimately, I sense, utterly transforming, excites me. Despite my horror at what I must initially encounter, the Nazi lion-at-the-gate, I realize that the information and the timing of its sudden appearance in my life makes sense.

Astrologically, I am a double Sagittarian, meaning that both my Sun (my essential self) and the Ascendant (the persona or personality) were in that sign at the moment of my birth. Sagittarius is the sign of the philosophical search for Truth, universal perspectives; when imbalanced, Sagittarius can devolve into intolerance, righteousness, judgment. In addition, the planet Mars, symbolizing action, courage, even violence, when not used with awareness, at my birth was in early Sagittarius and located in the hidden 12th house, a place haunted by karmic patterns connected to family, genetics, ancestry. Mars sits opposite two other planets, Uranus and Saturn. This conjunction of Uranus and Saturn, two slow-moving planets, occurred during World War II. All those born during that time have this conjunction in their birthcharts.

Uranus symbolizes sudden, strong and unpredictable eruptions or flashes. Saturn symbolizes restraint, control, discipline. These two planets are opposite in meaning. When fused during World War II, Saturn/Uranus symbolized both the cold efficient genocide of the holocaust as well as the controlled fission of the erupting atomic bomb. During that war the two planets traveled in tandem through late Taurus and early Gemini. At my birth, they were in Gemini, the sign of left-brain data gathering intelligence, with Uranus, signifying sudden brilliant flashes of right brain intuition.

From 1995 through 1999, the planet Pluto (associated with the hidden energy locked in the heart of the atom, and symbolizing death and rebirth, destruction and resurrection) transits through the early degrees of Sagittarius, triggering both my Mars and the planets opposite, Uranus and Saturn. In the birthchart for the U.S.A., the planet Uranus is located exactly on the position of my Saturn, so the meaning of this transit of Pluto for me and for the U.S is linked.

Along with a few other grassroots organizations, we publicized and attempted to halt the October 13, 1997 launching of the Cassini probe to the planet Saturn. This probe contains 72.3 pounds of Plutonium (Pluto-nium), the most toxic substance known. When this probe returns from its circuit of Venus to fly dangerously close to Earth on its way to Saturn in August, 1999, the planet Pluto will exactly oppose the planet Uranus in the birthchart of the U.S.A. Expect sudden, unpredictable, and possibly nuclear events.

In my own chart I ponder the meaning of transit Pluto conjunct the Mars/Uranus/Saturn karmic pattern. And I realize that the explosiveness of my own character, the rage which I am only rarely in touch with, is usually smoothed out, one might say blanked out, so that I only experience it mentally — as harsh, severe judgments, against myself and others. (How German!) In this way I separate out — from others, from my own body. And because I judged Nazism, I could not see through it, to the Teutonic ancestry below, and deeper, to the more ancient nature religion. According to C.G. Jung, World War II broke out when the Teutonic war god Wotan was aroused in the unconscious of the German people. And because they remained unconscious of its energy, Wotan did what it willed with them. From a Jungian point of view, Hitler was a projection of the mass mind. If Hitler had not existed, the Germans would have had to invent him.

Wotan exists in me. Wotan is my rage. Hitler is my rage projected. What lives below that? As my favorite Teutonic philosopher, Ludwig Wittgenstein, put it: “It’s hard to go back to the beginning, and not go further back.”

I think back to a dream, about a year ago, of being in the presence of an enormous white Pig. The dream haunted me for months. Now I discover the sacred animal of Freya, the Great Mother Goddess of northern European lands, was the Pig.

It would be nice to just skip Nazism, skip Wotan, go right back to Freya. To identify with what I know I will love, rather than with what I certainly do hate. But this is not to be. Again, a dream shows me the way.

November 25, 1997: on the one night of the year that the Sun transits my natal Mars (still being pummeled, remember, by the extremely slow-moving transit of Pluto); the Sun illumines that karmic pattern in my chart with this dream:

I am with a man whom I want to impress so that he will be attracted to me. We go to his family’s large rustic log house, which is in the mountains. There are lots of people, and lots of activity. A little girl, around two years of age, with coppery red hair

*and a round face, attracts me. She shines from within, is luminous, numinous. The man and I leave the house, begin to walk away. I turn around, to see this child walk down the lawn to a pond below – and fall in! **As she falls, she hovers in the air, long enough for her eyes to meet mine, knowingly, as if to say, “Well? Are you coming?”***

Instantly, I rush to her rescue, assuming that I will be able to easily pluck her out with my hands. But as I dive into the water, it is murky, and I struggle to remove my gloves so that I will be able to feel her. I feel for her body in the muck, and do not find her.

I awaken from this dream feeling a terrible sense of failure for not having saved the little girl. I am judging myself as usual. The little girl, I assumed in the dream, and from the dream, when awake, must be dead. But then, in processing this dream with my psychologically astute friend Claudia, she notes: “The dream is inconclusive; her body was not found. You don’t know if she’s dead . . . Besides,” she murmurs, “she is numinous, divine. *She is not dead.*”

The divine child is calling me, beckoning me; she is urging me to leave my mind behind, and follow her down, to dive into the water, descend into the muck of feeling....

Meanwhile, fortuitously, I happen to be reading a book by Ursula Hegi, *Stones in the River*, about the experience of a female dwarf in a German village during the first half of this century. The book is riveting in its portrayal of the extremely difficult choices people encountered during the gradual, insidious emergence of Nazism. How ethically murky the situation was. How, in the daily context of events, it was so easy to fall out of integrity, so simple to lose one’s sense of discernment between right and wrong. Over and over again, the book moves me to tears.

December 5, 1997. I hear about a weekend celebration in a town three hours from Jackson, put on by the northwest chapter of an organization called “Dances of Universal Peace.” Instantly, on hearing about it, I am alerted from within to attend.

I drop everything to spend three days with 100 strangers, participating in sacred songs and dances from the world's religions — Islam, Sufi, Christian, Goddess, Hindu, Judaic, Buddhist . . . Hour after hour, circling with and around each other, holding hands, meeting eyes. Over and over, I burst into tears, and attempt to stop myself from doing so, so much do I want to keep on singing. Never have I felt so at home as while participating in these beautiful timeless dances, some of which are more than an hour long, involving small ritualized movements, all of us at once, nodding back and forth, over and over chanting the name of God in many languages — Ali . . . Allah . . . Allaha — one long sustained prayer. One hundred beings moving and singing and breathing as one.

On the drive home from this weekend, I am filled with joy and warmth. So grateful to have been able to participate in such a beautiful event! I am looking forward to the next one, at Eastertime. Oh, if only the world's peoples everywhere could participate in such simple and universal ceremony, honoring all religions, partaking of the mystical communion of souls . . . If only we would surrender to our union, let go of what divides us, let go of war . . .

In the midst of euphoria, another darker thought worms its way in: I recall, a few years ago, attending a local performance of *Cabaret*. During this musical, a chorus of beautiful, uniformed young men sings the Hitler Youth Song. As the sweet, yearning idealism of what had been a German folk song filled the air, I was shocked to feel an arousal in my whole body, as if the cells in my very blood were awakening. The shock of recognition of that song, of my blood connection to it, filled me with shame — a shame so murky, so profound, that I instantly tried to push it back down into the unconscious.

Yet even as I was pushing down that hot blood in me, I was struck by the fact that I, an educated American several generations away from her German roots, could be so taken over by Nazi propaganda music. Had shame not overcome me, I would have

realized then that what I loved of that song was the music, that Hitler had hijacked a beautiful old folk song and given it new lyrics.

That memory, counterpoint to my euphoria, serves as a warning. I realize that this hunger for mystical union can be manipulated by good (as in the Dances of Universal Peace) or by evil. *That to my body, it doesn't matter. That either way, my body responds.* What does this mean? I wonder. *Does this mean I cannot trust my instincts?*

I awaken the next morning with a cloggy, mucousy, respiratory infection. Forewarned by the dream, I now descend into the murky watery depths, and remain there, stuck inside the misery of my body, unable to think, for 12 days. And what I am feeling is grief, overwhelming, incomprehensible grief.

The situation reminds me of when I was 26 and danced all night long, only to fall sick the next day and almost die. That event marked my personal transformation from socially-conditioned nice girl to a more original and courageous sense of Self. What will this dance and this illness, this new turn of the spiral, bring?

While ill I continue to weep, absorbing Hegi's tale of how good and evil seem to be inextricably connected, how difficult it is to separate them, to know for sure about anything.

Seven days into my illness, another dream: *I am returning to Jackson from a far-flung Wyoming town. There is a baby in the back seat. It appears to be mine, and has just come into my life. The road gets more and more clogged with mud, potholes, abrupt edges. Men are working on the road. I am slowed to a crawl, and wonder how long this is going to continue. Now traffic is channeled to the south — but I don't want to go south, I want to go west. I get off the road on an artery leading to a long muddy construction site of a town, which is under an interstate, also being repaired. I see a line of women, and ask one of them how far I must go through the town to reach a place where I can get back on the interstate. She gives the location of the next exit, which is only a few miles away. Relieved, I turn to the baby, who is fussing. I worry,*

*oh no, did I pack diapers, bottles of milk? I look in my bags and see that I do have diapers, and I have bottles of water, not milk. Facing her with my head only a few inches away, I hold the bottle to her mouth, and she drinks, looking surprised at the taste, but accepting. **Then she reaches her little hand around my neck to the back of my head, and holds it there, in a sweet embrace. She gazes into my eyes. I am so filled with her love that everything else disappears.***

I awaken from this dream knowing that no matter how murky things get, no matter how much mud and mucus I have to slog through, that I am loved. That the divine child warms my dreams, opens my heart.

This process of going back to the beginning has just begun. I do not know what awaits me. Something is beginning to seep in, something important. Indeed, I feel that it may signal the eventual deconstruction (transit of Pluto) of my seemingly hard-wired (Saturnine) habit of judgment. For judgment is only possible when a situation is clear; when good and evil are separate, discernable, rather than subtly woven one with the other as yin to yang.

The grief, overwhelming at times, still accompanies. I know it has personal roots, and I sense those roots plug me into our collective story. That our grief is being encountered in his/story now. The grief of all that we have done to one another in betrayal, in vengeance, in the name of “God.” Of all the wars we have fought in the name of someone’s good and another’s evil. Of all Earth has suffered as a result of our much-vaunted “intelligence.”

I think back on my life, noting the prodigious amount of intellectual energy I have given over to describing, evaluating, analyzing the stuff of daily life. How I have assumed that sooner or later, everything becomes clear, that there is a bottom line which, if I just search deeply enough, I will fathom. That there is one overall perspective, which, if I just ascend high enough, my mind will encompass. Though for years I have called myself a “relativist” — sensing an infinite number of perspectives, all of them limited — still, I am Sagittarius, and it seems I cannot help but search for the one, the

One Truth which will give me what I “think” I need. To establish my “point of view.” To stop the flow.

What seeps into me now seems to be all-encompassing. Through it I feel the music, the dance of the universe. Beyond all judgments, or even discernments — beyond good, beyond evil, is this sense, this — what shall I call it?—this ISNESS. This glue that binds the whole, this Love. So that there is nothing, really, to discuss. Nothing to understand, evaluate or shape.

The divine child of the second dream held my head in her hand as she gazed lovingly into my eyes. No matter what I may “think,” no matter what choices I make, leading to good or evil, I am loved, beyond all measure.

January 2, 1998. I have just seen the movie “Titanic.” Our collective myth of the 20th century brought to extraordinary life at century’s end for us to process and integrate. So that we don’t have to repeat ourselves. So that we no longer need to separate ourselves into richer and poorer. So that we learn to slow down, and trust. As the colossal, state-of-the-art “unsinkable” ship went down with lifeboats for only half its passengers, we were faced with another impossible situation — good and evil all mixed up, and survival instincts overwhelming even the best intentions. As the divine child calls me down into the murky depths to encounter the feelings that bind my spirit into matter — all the shame, all the wonder, all the connection — so are we as a people faced with our murky depths.

At the movie’s end, the crone figure whose memories frame this vividly recalled story from our collective memory bank intones, “In the heart of woman there are secrets as deep as the ocean.” Yes. And even *Time Magazine*, in its year-end recap of 1997, called it The Year When the News Turned Emotional.