

## COMMENTS ON SPIRITUALITY

I had a difficult childhood, I can't say that it was necessarily unhappy, but there were undercurrents of depression and negative conditioning that finally resulted in a nervous breakdown at the age of thirteen. Living in a somewhat removed state from the rest of my peers, a situation not least aided by the amount of valium and antidepressants I was subscribed, I started to question the apparent nature of reality with which I found myself. Finding that no-one in my immediate surroundings could give me any answers that made sense I began looking at psychology, especially the work of Jung and the behaviourist Desmond Morris, also on a more personal level the research of Kinsey, as this was the area of my life that seemed the most scarred. It was also at this time that I developed a passion for music, slipping into involuntary trance states and raptures, which to begin with, were a source of pure escapism but later became honed into a valuable spiritual tool.

I had been brought up in a strong fundamentalist Christian Cult and married early, however, by the time I had reached my mid-twenties, doubts as to the validity of many of the religion's teachings culminated in a printed statement which, to my mind was the final humiliation I could comprehend. So strong was my repugnance that on the night I read it I walked out on my marriage, my family, my Church, my God and everything I had been taught to believe since the age of three. Belief, however, is difficult to diminish and when I finally stood alone atop a small local hill and asked 'whatever' basically, 'what the hell's going on?' I had no idea how the answer would present itself.

It is true that Jung states that the journey to the self begins in darkness, a deep exploration of the inner psyche that throws up all manner of repressed sub-personalities, complexes and behavioural patterns. Given my religious background it should also be of no surprise that these rejected 'parts' manifested themselves symbolically with teeth, claws and the standard leather wings and tails scenario. Indeed, to say that my home resembled something akin to the 'Exorcist part III' at this time would have been putting it mildly.

My initial contact with Occultism brought me into contact with the archetype of Lilith, which given her legend, particularly the Judaic one<sup>1</sup>, and the fact that I had recently re-enacted it in my life, comes as no surprise in retrospect. However, despite all the ensuing madness and power play, there was an undercurrent of awareness that there was something else going on in my psyche other than a mere sorting out of neuroses. My whole centre of awareness had changed at least twice and there was a pattern emerging of the various stages leading to it.

It was during this time that I met and became friends with two people who helped me continue this work in a slightly less manic fashion. One, a shaman, who taught me to use the archetypal symbols more appropriately in a controlled environment, through

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<sup>1</sup> The Book of Lilith, Koltuv Barbara. Nicolas-Hayes, Inc.

meditation and pathworkings and a Magician, who introduced me to Kabbalah and The Golden Dawn Initiatory System, and Psychosynthesis, a form of psychology developed by Assigioli that incorporates spirituality into its system whilst utilising the work of Jung and Gestalt therapy, developed by Fritz Perls. He was also using a great deal of Christian symbology in his personal work which, because of my background I found easy to recognise and work with. My work became more formalised although still quite crazy at times, but the trance states and raptures I used to have subsided and I was able to access whatever information I needed without having to practically lose consciousness to do so. I noticed at this point that any pictorial symbols I did receive always seemed to be slightly cartoon-like in nature as if humour had put in there deliberately. At first I reacted by refusing to talk or write anything down, but later I discovered that the humour, nearly always cynical, was a safeguard to my losing my sanity completely. If one can stand back and see the irony of any given situation, no matter how dire, all is never lost.

During this stage I really did need a sense of humour as most of the people around me were not to pleased to have their unquestioned beliefs thrown in their faces especially by someone whose whole life now seemed centred around challenging everything around her. It was true that I cared little what people thought of me and still don't' in essence but I now had a two year old son to think of and whilst I could take care of myself I didn't think it fair on my child to have to grow up with all this hostile prejudice of his Mother. So I moved, I moved completely away from my home city to a small village in the North East and changed my name to one that had 'been given' to me in the vain hope of trying to become more like it's meaning.

Several things I remember of this time: one, my struggle to leave the state I was in because I liked the sense of power it gave me and found the crazy experiences exciting. Once I was away from people who seemed only to be involved in occultism for the same reasons, however, I had time to reflect on these matters and to wonder how real these experiences were. I came to the conclusion that they had only occurred to show me that the Universe does not work the way we have been brought up to believe and, more importantly, neither do we. I remember picking up a copy of 'Magick without Tears' by Crowley and stumbling across a passage where he explained that all these so called 'gifts' ie. Seeing into the future, shape-shifting and the ability for sorcery in general, were only useful when one had doubts that the work was real and then these might act as a reminder. He also explained how people got lost in the experiences rushing from one to the next, waiting for the next 'high'. Here was what didn't want to hear, but I took it to heart and the desire to stay and the desire to move on now reached an ultimatum that resulted in what felt like the whole of my personality being shattered into fragments. I also remember awakening to the knowledge that everything I thought I knew about everything was a complete load of rubbish, including myself. One can know this intellectually, of course, but I had to live in this knowledge. I think at one point I seriously considered suicide as I knew I couldn't live the lie any more, I couldn't live asleep wearing the masks I saw most other people doing but I had no idea what to do about it.

Perhaps it was this ultimatum that finally pushed me out of the state I was in into the next, as in every other *initiation* I have gone through after this I always reach this point and it is always after this that my consciousness does whatever it needs to in

order to reach the next level. It is almost as if the mind, when faced with total destruction allows the ego to take yet another knock as it has no other choice.

It was about this time that I had an awareness of what I can now only describe, using Kabbalistic language as that of *Tiphareth* consciousness, although still dimmed as it was coming down through the veil. It is difficult to describe with words which are in themselves only symbols existing below that state, but the only thing I can say is that everything simply *was* and that I just *was*. It was the most *real* experience I had ever had, although, of course it was more than an experience, it was the truest sense of reality I had ever known. I decided to try to symbolise the state in order to gain access to it at will and pictured an angel. In the years that followed this proved invaluable as I was able to gain much information I needed from this *above ego* state.

I began working fervently with psychosynthesis, finding the ‘disassociation’ exercise<sup>2</sup> particularly beneficial at this particular point. This is a simple exercise involving the affirmation of various parts of the psyche – thoughts, emotions, imagination, body impulses etc. but also the spoken awareness that we are not any of these things and that if we are not these things then what is the ‘I’ that is? This and the angel visualisation kept me well grounded during the next phase which I can only describe as a constant questioning of everything in my head. Gurdjieff once put forward a theory that people receive shocks all the time but because of various ‘buffers’ like projection, repression, denial, suppression, distraction or many other negative thought processes, self awakening cannot emerge and therefore people stay asleep. During this period many of my buffers were removed.

Shortly after I moved I met two people who were to have the most important influence on my spirituality to date. Marcus and D, the former of which I have now married. Both worked heavily with Kabbalah and ritual, an approach I had always found to be too intellectual, but I began to understand that whatever point one started at in the psyche it will ultimately affect the others: ie. It could be argued that systems of spiritual working such as Hatha Yoga, Tantra, Kung Fu and certain aspects of Shamanism rely on a primarily *physical* body approach but eventually emotions, thought processes and spiritual levels will also be affected, likewise with systems that rely primarily on *thought* processes such as Zen Bhuddism or Kabbalah etc.

It was true that at the time my knowledge of such things was limited. A rather humorous example comes to mind when ‘D’ was endeavouring to explain what system I was using and suggested it was Bhakti Yoga. Thinking that the only yoga I had ever engaged in was for a short period to aid a back injury, I must have looked a little confused until he clarified it by explaining it was a path of devotion. “Oh,” I remember replying, “I just call it prayin’ .”

The most important things I came to realise from my discussions with both of these people was that this work wasn’t about beliefs and it wasn’t about what you do, *initiation* is the only true event that is *magickal*, a change of awareness that is permanent and constant unlike our moods and thought patterns that constantly fluctuate. Whatever events, that aid that change to occur serves only as a catalyst and

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<sup>2</sup> Psychosynthesis, Assagioli, Roberto. Turnstone Press Ltd.

is not the *thing* itself. The other point I became aware of is that initiation can be mapped.

Now I do a great deal of hiking and there is no way I would ascend a mountain range without a map, and whilst it is true that I am not highly proficient in the art of understanding a map in detail I have learnt how to use a compass and to understand the various symbols of the map itself. Marcus and 'D' showed me how to use the Kabbalistic Tree of Life as a map for initiation. 'D' told me to go home and learn the basic correspondences on the tree – the Hebrew letters, the tarot paths, the zodiac signs and the meanings of the seriroph, so that we had a language with which to talk. It took me about a month and when I returned I was not only able to understand most of what he was telling me but also able to pinpoint on the tree exactly where I stood initiatory wise.

I didn't take what was being told me at face value, indeed neither of them would have asked me to and for the first time since I had begun this journey I began reading; not 'how to do' books but autobiographies. Anyone that seemed to me to have got somewhere in this quest, I read, mapping out their initiatory experiences to see if they were truly the same. The books I read were about people who all used different approaches in their lives, some religious, some not. I read about Irina Tweedie, an ex-catholic who visited India in her fifties to study with a Sufi Master, Andrew Harvey, a modern literiast, Alastair Crowley, an occultist living in the early part of this century, St. Theresa d'Aville, Eckhart, and Bernadette Roberts, an ex-catholic nun in the present day, Jung's autobiography, and most of the song lyrics of Peter Gabriel and Vangelis. I came to the conclusion that, yes, although the approaches and imagery, and in some cases, the beliefs, were completely different, the points of initiatory awareness were the same and occurred in sequence.

The books that proved to be the most useful to me, however, were the two written by Bernadette Roberts; "The journey to No-self" and "The Experience of No-self". Here was a woman who had worked without a teacher or Guru, who had never entirely given up her religious faith but who had passed through and beyond it.

My next stage, which I can call the equivalent of *Practicus* in the Golden Dawn Initiatory System was preceded by a somewhat comical vision of my *Angel* fishing. There was a huge fish struggling on the end of her line which she was trying desperately to draw in. She looked at me somewhat miffed, as I recall and said words to the effect of: 'This is you, this is – for goodness sake will you stop fighting against this so much.' I stopped struggling and surrendered my will to the higher, for want of a better expression. A few weeks later the change came and I felt my awareness again shift into another place.

One of the symptoms of this was quite alarming. I kept feeling as if I were going to faint, in fact I seem to recall much of my early days living in Derbyshire sitting outside cafes in Matlock Bath with my head hanging between my knees! The fainting fits, although I never entirely lost consciousness, preceded a panic attack and the whole situation became extremely unpleasant. This kept occurring until a friend of mine suggested that the next time it happened I should sit somewhere comfortable where passing out wouldn't result in any physical harm and put my head up instead of down, after all, he mused the worst thing that can happen is that I'd actually faint. I

took his advice and to my surprise I did not pass out but rather a self reflective mechanism arose wherein it appeared that I could step back inside myself and observe, quite unattached the various parts of my mind. I would point out here that this is nothing like the *out of body* experiences I have heard people talk about, rather to use a phrase that my friend in Birmingham used when I phoned him shortly afterward, 'it's like having a video camera following you around all the time.' Or as Bernadette Roberts describes: 'It is the eye seeing itself'.

So, my self observation became commonplace and the panics and fainting fits ceased, as I realised that this was simply my body's reaction to the change that was about to take place. Indeed during this stage any other panics or depressions also ceased as although I could watch these things occur within me there was and still is a detachment that ensures that I am rarely engulfed by them and enables me to choose consciously how, or if at all, I need to express them.

During this time my spiritual life appeared very *still* as all I could do was watch. I was informed that this would be the longest initiation I would go through but that as soon as I arrived at the next one I would be almost ready for the one after that. It was a long time, six years in fact and my description, for I am not a naturally patient person, went something like this; 'The endless plod through Hod, the waiting room of God.'

This then brings me to last summer when a dream indicated a chance to cross over to the next level, indicated by *Netzach* on the Tree of Life. I endeavoured to warn my friends and family explaining that if I suddenly acted out of character or appeared to be going crazy some time during late autumn, early winter, there would be no cause for worry since I had a chance to do something important. By this time I recognised a familiar pattern which began during the summer, lack of sleep and little appetite that brought my system down followed by a stream of attachments being presented to me until the whole thing built up to terminal velocity. I remember picturing it like a tall pillar inside me surrounded by props that held it up. Over the weeks leading up to the event it felt as if each prop were being taken away one by one until I felt an axe being taken to the pillar itself. I said as much to my husband the night before I left, and the next day a situation caused the catalyst that sent me away for four days. No-one had listened, everyone panicked, but over the next two days it became irrelevant. Home, family and friends became unimportant; *this* was important, *this* was real.

To endeavour to explain the process would take an essay all of its own, suffice to say I survived the experience and sitting outside the small church on a hill in Hawkshead village in Southern Lake District I watched the people below as never before. It was as if I could see them sleep-walking as if I could see all the masks. But there was no pride or arrogance in this study; I understood why they couldn't see, why they couldn't look. Staring death in the face isn't something we are naturally encouraged to do, even if that *death* is only a death of what we think we are, it hurts.

I began to understand that my reasons for doing this work had changed. I knew then that the results may not necessarily make me a happier or better person in the eyes of the world, just a more real one. It is true that people may argue that all the above is mere fantasy that it is a neurosis being slowly released, but I know the difference between neurotic and real and I know the difference between real madness and

illumination and that in essence is the truth of it – you know, and this knowing cannot be taken away or nullified.

And now – adjusting to this latest phase is different from the last much more active, I am aware that the core roots of imbalanced personality traits must be integrated before I can approach the *crossing of the veil*. Many of these traits are being held in my body in much the same way that mental and emotional patterns are held within the mind. I know there is one particular scar that needs to be rectified and whilst this in itself is not particularly spiritual because it represents the core root of many experiences and has influenced many decisions in my life. It has to be dealt with now and so all the fears behind it that caused it to be there in the first place are beginning to rise. I am also aware that once this has been rectified its affect will be felt throughout my entire psyche, affecting my personality big time. So I am not sure what bits of me will be left behind. This scares me somewhat but I go ahead with the knowledge that nothing is ever lost that is necessary. Lilith has also returned, but not as the screaming thoughtform of my youth, but more as a representation of the process of initiation itself.

So, ask me how I am and I'll tell you my body is scared because it has to let go of something it feels is precious, my mind is a whirring mass of contradiction and my emotions are up and down like a yo-yo. My consciousness keeps going through time flips where for a fraction of a second, (although it feels longer), the whole of my awareness detaches itself from the present and jumps to where it was an hour ago or last week or where I will be next month. I think this is the universe's way of showing me that time doesn't work the way we have been taught either, along with everything else (my husband smiles and tells me I'll get used to it)! and yet because of this learned detachment I feel happier than ever before in my life, something I have waited for, for fifteen years now has a chance to happen.

So, what else can I say, wish me luck and watch this space and if anyone wants to talk about any of this or give support, contact me by e-mail.

I'd like to leave with the words of a song I have just been playing - one because I've just played it and two because it's kind of relevant I think.

So shine a light and shine it brightly now,  
You know it all takes its course,  
And all the many ways I've tried so hard,  
To reach this port of the source,

On the day behind time,  
Across the divide,  
Along the cord came a light out of dark,  
Now I stand amazed in this beautiful pain,  
With you still breaking the heart.

This beautiful Pain – Runrig  
The Big Wheel – Chrysalis Records Ltd. 1991

Yours in the Work

Rosie K  
Dughter of Lilith  
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