

Wind on the Water

A Viewsletter To Encourage
Unitarian Universalist
Theology and Spirituality

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Ariadne

Theseus arrived at Athens and was united with his father just before the Athenian youths were to be sent to be fed to the Minotaur, a monster with the head of a bull and the body of a man that King Minos of Crete kept in a labyrinth. He demanded to be one of them so he could destroy the Minotaur and free Athens of this obligation.

When the Athenian youths arrived in Crete, Ariadne, daughter of King Minos saw Theseus and fell in love with him. She told him that she would provide him with a way to get out of the labyrinth if he would take her with him. He promised, and she gave him a ball of thread. Theseus tied one end to the doorway and unrolled the thread as he went into the labyrinth. In the center he found the Minotaur and killed it with his bare hands. Then he followed the thread to find his way out.

Ariadne fled Crete with Theseus and the rest of the Athenian youths. The next night they spent on the island of Naxos. The next morning Theseus and the Athenians left Ariadne and sailed away. (There are several different stories telling why.) That evening the god Dionysos sailed into the harbor at

Naxos where he wed Ariadne and was faithful to her all her life.

The Minotaur symbolizes power corrupted by the desire to hold it and to be identified with it. The labyrinth symbolizes the mind, particularly the unconscious. Viewed alone, they can be interpreted as the power monster within King Minos' mind. When viewed with Theseus, they serve double duty: they represent an outer monstrousness that Theseus combatted, and they represent the power monster within the mind of Theseus himself. Theseus, destined to become king, would have the same temptations as Minos to go from using power, to having power, to identifying with power.

Theseus had to go within himself and defeat his power monster bare-handed. Ariadne is a soul figure, who connected Theseus to sanity by a thread. Theseus was successful in defeating his power monster; after becoming king, Theseus created the Athenian democracy, retaining the position of commander-in-chief and supreme judge.

Having done his inner work, Theseus again turned to action in the outer world, and so left his soul-guide behind. And Ariadne was needed by Dionysos. What better companion for the god of ecstasy and madness than she who can lead us back to sanity again?

The Child

Rebecca Armstrong writes:

At the Sacred Stories conference I spent an entire day with the radical Catholic theologian, Matthew Fox, who asked the large assembly, "How many of you are recovering Catholics?", and a third of the group raised their hands. "And how many are recovering from some other religion?", and most of the rest raised their hands. "You see," said Fox, "we go to church as children full of eagerness, asking for spiritual bread. Instead we are given stones. There is a lot of talk of abuse these days, but don't you see the spiritual abuse of children? We have named racism and sexism and ageism, but there is another evil of our time which I call adultism. Adultism is the repression of the child within, which results in the oppression of the child-like without."

The great Jungian analyst, James Hillman, spoke recently on Myths of the Family. At one point he charged that we have forgotten how to be good citizens because we are all inside of ourselves nursing our wounded child, and that it's high time to find our healing and move on to the critical task of becoming responsible adults. There was a moment of stunned silence in the auditorium and then a spontaneous burst of applause. I think Hillman is right on target. But with things spiritual and psychological, there are no shortcuts. If the inner

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The Child, from page 1

wounds of childhood are not healed, they will go on enfeebling our efforts at maturity, and possibly lead to Matthew Fox's dread sin of adultism. I confess that I'm not ready to take on the mantle of being a whole adult. I feel that I still "see as through a glass darkly" at some of these issues. But I am now convinced that silencing or segregating the child-like because it seems messy, disturbing, or unimportant to adult affairs is not the solution.

We live in a culture which is very hard on the child-like nature. It takes great spiritual stamina to resist the pressures of rampant adultism all around us. What does it really mean to befriend the inner child, to feed it bread and not stones? It is not primarily for our children that we need to find these answers, but for ourselves, that we might become whole as adults and as religious beings in troubled times.

For Reflection

When Hermes was newly born, he stole cattle from his half-brother Apollo and when Apollo found him, he first pretended to be an innocent babe and then brazenly denied the theft. Dragged before Zeus for judgment, Hermes finally confessed. Zeus warned him thereafter to respect property and not tell lies. Hermes promised, but added that although he would never lie, he could not promise always to tell the whole truth. Zeus assented and appointed Hermes his herald. Hades too appointed Hermes to summon the dying. Thus Hermes became the guide of travelers and the guide of souls, and the bringer of messages from the gods.

Notice that he who brings the gods'

messages, the insights, inspirations, and powerful dreams, is also a prankster who is not sworn to tell all the truth. In this fashion the Greeks said that these messages are not totally reliable.

What plays the role of Hermes in your life? What brings you important messages? Is it reason or poetry or dreams or discussions with other people or what? How reliable is this source of insight? Does it make sense to you to view this as a trickster which may not directly lie, but does not always tell the whole truth?

Libation To Hermes

To that which the Greeks knew as Hermes: a god of many names; the guide of souls; protector on journeys both physical and spiritual; messenger of the gods; bringer of dreams; god of chance encounters, finds and losses; both truth-telling and a trickster; both young and old; ithyphallic and creative.

To insight. To our journey. To serendipity. To dreams.

Spiritual Intensives

Mary-Allen Walden tells this story: In one week she had lunch with two friends, one on each of two days. Both conversations carried the same message for her: both friends viewed the psychological distress she had been going through as a spiritual crisis, a dark night of the soul. They both respected the crisis, and they both were nervous, a little bit afraid of having one themselves. They both wished her well wherever it led her.

That was to her the voice of God speaking through others' mouths. She

had not identified her pain as a spiritual crisis before, but that did fit, that was right. And their concern, respect, and fear were honest, and affirmed her, and affirmed her suffering.

That, she thinks, is the essence of a holy community. We aid each other in our spiritual work without intending to, without deliberation or effort.

Rooms

A technologist who was preoccupied with honing his skills dreamt of living in a large apartment with twisty corridors and many rooms, only a few of which he lived in and the rest he left empty. "My dreams are laughing at me," he said, and he began to play a musical instrument, to read poetry, and to get involved in social clubs.

A man dreamt he lived in a large apartment whose manager would let himself in whenever he wished. He never saw the manager, but the manager's messiness and cigars reminded the man of his father. In his dream, the man was petting on the bed with his girl friend, when suddenly he remembered the manager and got up to lock the three or four doors that connected the bedroom to the rest of the apartment. When he returned to bed, his girl friend was sitting up smoking a cigarette (though she never smoked in life), and he knew the opportunity for sex had past. "I'm locking most of my life to her," he realized, "and that's why she's bored with me."

A woman who was a consummate extrovert, said, "There's a house that I dream about. It's by a lake with large rocks on the shore. I know every room of it. Oh, and it has a basement, but I've never been down there."