

By

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(Her legal Name now)

Korythalia, early 1970's

In this waning time of the annual rainbow cycle when evening and twilight envelop the soul in invisible webs of mystery, the thoughts of sensitive Pagans turn to the awesome spheres of death and rebirth. There are some who claim adherence to Paganism as a here and now animistic humanism, who deny that death is a valid consideration for life-affirmative philosophies. I believe this attitude stems from a reaction to a sick preoccupation with the masochistic and gory aspects of dying that Christianity has foisted on Western civilization for the past two thousand years because of its denial of Eros and the organic exuberance of the feminine. But a satisfactory thanatology (knowledge about death—ed.) has always been a most important and significant concern of religion. How can it be otherwise? Death is as much a reality as Life: both are great mysteries that cannot be grasped by the intellect and need intuitive understanding. A religion that works must provide a meaningful cradle of reference that allows an individual to experience mystic rapport with cosmos, which affirms his existence as an immortal being.

I don't believe that anyone wants cessation of his existential self. Some people want to die because they cannot stand their present life, and many of them do commit suicide. But that is not equivalent to a desire for total and complete annihilation of one's essence. As W.H. Keith indicated in one of his essays, life is tragic because of death and subsequent separation between loved ones; but life would be totally cruel and absurd if these souls did not meet again somewhere, sometime. It seems to me that those who intellectually reject immortality are repressing the problems that death poses. Our entire culture conspires more and more to negate the reality of death: the dying are parceled off to hospitals so that their passing can be anonymous and removed from the attention of the family, especially the young ones. The dead are ludicrously dolled up to imitate the living. There are hardly any rituals of transition and mourning left, especially in Anglo-Saxon strongholds where control of weeping is admired, e.g., witness Jacqueline Kennedy ten years ago.

Of course there are nihilistic existentialists like Jean Paul Sartre who, indeed, affirms that life is absurd and who, supposedly, accept such a fate. Philosophically, this is a logical result of the secularisation of culture that has reached its odious epitome in the 20th century. It is the outcome of masculine usurpation of rule through physical might that goes back at least as far as the Age of Ares/Aries. I think it goes back to Paleolithic times, thousands of years ago; but this patriarchal dominance was not total till the rise of Hebraic monotheism, which took the Goddess and values stemming from her away from us entirely.

In a species such as ours where manipulative ability of the hand, erect posture, and highly developed frontal lobes, together with a potential for sensitivity resulting from paedomorphosis, are placed in the service of brute force, the inevitable condition can only be of spiritual deterioration and social chaos. Then the cerebrum begins to attribute moral value to power and clever uses of it. The deity becomes a mighty tyrants-like Jehovah; "law and order" become necessary to punish those who threaten this power structure so the god alas is hailed as the "lawgiver". Dominion becomes the chief characteristic of human society: Father God over Mother Goddess, man over woman, father over children, master over slave, ruler over subject. Eventually the Goddess disappears entirely and all feminine qualities are considered inferior. This sense of domination generalizes into subjugation of nature and leads to all of our commonly accepted dualisms where one of the elements predominates over the other: will over instinct, mind over matter, light over dark, spirit over body, high over low, up over down, "good" over "evil", etc.

The energy to uphold this repressive structure is channeled from the life force at the expense of erotic fulfillment. It is never completely released. The damned-up vitality creates cruelty, crime, sexual aberration, and all the other terrors that make up human history. Gradually all the personal factors are removed: God becomes an abstraction such as First Cause, Prime Mover, Universal Spirit, till nothing tangible is left: a cold "religious" universe of spiritual energy or a cold, scientific universe of atomic energy – mechanical mysticism or mechanical materialism. What's in a name? Truly both are equally indifferent not only to the human condition but to all sentient creatures. Such a universe can be said to be psychopathic and, indeed, such a view of the universe does breed psychopathy in the human community.

When life had meaning and the human being related to the greater entities of cosmos we could also comprehend, to varying degrees, the significance of Death. But with repression of Sex and alienation from the organic and the feminine, Death is felt as a mechanism that terminates once and for all the biological processes which are congruent with the individual. This interpretation of existence is contrary to knowledge of the collective unconsciousness of humanity. Pagans believe that all elements in the universe are interrelated; hence the deepest intuitions of our

race regarding ultimate consummations are comprehensions of Reality. Only the modern era is so deranged to assume annihilation as scientifically natural. Thus, repression of Thanatos is as inevitable as repression of Eros since both are opposite sides of the same coin.

Our modern society is probably the only one to take away the sense of the sacred and with it, reassurance of meaning for both life and death. Each person is left to solve this problem for himself. For the majority the existential quest is not an actuality: repression is superficially successful even though psychological and social problems that lead to environmental destruction multiply to an alarming degree. But those few who seek the depths of Earth and the heights of Heaven undergo much suffering. In our earthly realm it is the collective milieu that creates a sense of sacred space and time, and provides a bridge for recollecting and recognizing past lives and other dimensions of being. It is very difficult to gain access to other realms by one's self. Sometimes, it is easier for the simple-minded, for they can accept a clue on face value as verification of other realities. Many mediums fall into this category, but their revelations regarding the dead are usually rather trivial.

More complicated souls face the confrontation with the "alone", alone. There are many records of persons who finally achieved ecstatic union with the great beyond after undergoing horrible experiences of mystic dread and anxiety. Of course the "alone" is really a multiplicity of dimensions, containing many deities and other entities. But the tortured soul feels solipsistic before it breaks through the barriers of this realm. So our secular civilization has taken away our birthright; a reassuring guide to eternity. What could be worse?

The new Paganism must restore this birthright and give it new impetus. It is not enough to live in the "here and now"; we want to live in the "here and beyond". The mysteries of the Goddess can reassure us that our "sun" will turn north again after the winter solstice and that Spring will come again to each of her unique creatures. The ancient ones want Eros to play fully in this life and send Thanatos to take us for rejuvenation to the realm of Persephone when our erotic powers are depleted.

Only if we can experience these mysteries can we create a beautiful, paradisaal life on this planet...

Evoe Persephone! Evoe Rhea!