ACT SIX

NATURE AND OTHER SACRED SPACES

Spider, Spider

I've never been especially fond of spiders. And if you asked me a few years ago if I would consider a relationship with a spider, (assuming you would be odd enough to actually ask this particular question) I would think you were loony.

Spiders are about the nastiest looking things on the planet. Ugly, hairy, scary things with eight legs and beady eyes. Yuck. And probably the most vicious and sociopathic creepy crawlers that ever existed. Imagine the callousness one would need to make an artful, sticky silk web with the sole purpose of ensnaring another living being – to wait patiently in anticipation for the twitch, the tell-tale sign that something vibrant and juicy has been trapped – then tripping over your eight hairy legs in a rush to your victim to jab it into unconsciousness so you can wrap it up at your own leisurely pace. Once nicely packaged you lustfully wait for it to die from exhaustion trying to get free. Then you carry it to hang in your pantry, until you have a craving for that particular kind of meal. Never once caring about how you're meal might have felt.

It was a good summer for spiders. The big orby ones were especially noticeable. By the end of summer, three had received my specific attention, most likely because they forced me to make a few very difficult choices. For some inexplicable reason, two planted themselves on my shed doors. They attached one end of their silk line to the shed door and the other to whatever was in wafting distance. Each shed stored various gardening accoutrement, so every four or five days I had the unenviable task of trying to open the shed doors without causing too much damage to the spiders' webs. I tried not to swing the doors open too fast, and even tried opening them just enough to squeeze in and out. But, it was all for naught. Each time, their webs were ruined. And of course, I fretted each time too. After about four or five home wreckings, the spiders found their senses and moved on. One spider simply moved to the edge of the shed and latched his or her web to a nice potentilla I had planted the year before. I was quite pleased with this spider. I only had to be moderately careful when I watered my shrubs. The other spider simply went away. Maybe a bird ate it.

The third spider is the grandmother of all spiders, I'm sure. Humongous, hairy, spotted and pot bellied. Her beady little eyes follow my every move. Her home is under the power meter on the side of my house. Unfortunately, she anchored one end of her web to the gate. And even more unfortunately, I need to go in and out of this gate quite regularly, especially to water the assorted flowers and shrubs in my exceptionally beautiful front yard. I peaked in on her and noticed she had an assortment of hanging meals, a good supply. So, for the first couple of waterings I just swung the gate open, knowing I wasn't placing the spider's life in peril, but hoping she would get the hint and move. But, of course, if you know spiders, it takes a lot to get them to move. She kept rebuilding her web, and I kept destroying it.

For the spider's sake, I knew this couldn't go on. So, I tried to minimize the damage by squeezing through the gate as tightly as possible. Sometimes I just damaged her web a little bit, but sometimes I damaged it a lot. Over time, I

noticed that her food supply was dwindling. My empathetic attempts were obviously not successful. Her spinnerets were working too much overtime. So, I started to open the gate just enough to get the hose through and then I would walk around the back of the house, through the garage and around the front of the house to pull the hose from the other side. This worked out quite well. She only loses her web about once a week when visitors ignorantly decide to use the gate for no other reason than to get to the other side.

I am happy with my choice. I have become even happier as I peak in on her from time to time. I noticed her munching on a hornet the other day. And I saw another one nicely bundled up. I remembered the hornets' nest in my shed at the lake and the nasty bites I received each time I opened the door to get something. Then I remembered the horrible guilt I felt when my Uncle took a can of raid one night and sprayed the hornet's nest, put it in a plastic bag, and tossed it in the campfire. A mass murderer for sure. It became even more dreadful when it occurred to me that he had wasted the potential food source for many spiders.

Then I thought, there certainly seems to be a lot of spiders around this year. Plenty enough hornets I guess. Then my brain started to do some thinking. Lots of hornets equals lots of spiders, lots of spiders equals lots of bird. And I love birds. My Uncle does too, except for magpies and crows. These are bad birds.

Each night before dusk, at my Uncle's lake lot, we'd watch the hummingbirds feed, then we'd sit around the fire, and watch the dragonflies dive bomb the mosquitoes. Hmmm, I thought, birds eat dragonflies. Fish do too. It's quite exhilarating to see a fish snap up a dragonfly in mid-air. And I know lots of animals who eat fish. Then I wondered at my Uncle's tearful description of a hawk (another bad bird) swooping in and snatching up a robin. Then the next week he told us nonchalantly that the robins who had made a nest in the hitch of his trailer, had decided to have a second batch of babies. More food for the hawk?

Now, I sit in my backyard with the magpies, the crows, the bluebirds and the squirrels. I observe the bees dipping in and out of the pink and yellow blossoms on my shrubs. Then Jake, my Shitzu, Maltese, Pomeranian puppy, backs up to fertilize my healthy potentilla (he won't crap without a bush or a tree to crap against - its like he's found his purpose or something), and I watch the mosquitoes. Sometimes one will land on my arm or leg. I watch it insert its stinger, then I see its stomach redden as it grows. I watch it pull out its stinger and awkwardly fly off, all plump and heavy with my blood. And I think, maybe she'll go on now and make lots of babies. And then I think, how nice it would be if she ended up in my spider's web? And then I suddenly have one of those astounding, gut shot, God struck moments. And I feel truly grateful. Truly, truly grateful to this mosquito for locking me in to this miraculous web of life.

When most people think about nature they usually think of it as something 'out there', separate from the 'unnatural' human world. This 'unnatural' separation is of course an illusion. As homo-sapiens, we are in the family of hominids within the primate order, and we are classed as mammals within the phylum of animals that have spinal cords. As animals, we are as much a

part of nature as any other living thing in this universe. As children of the universe, where size doesn't matter, we are as much a part of the universe as is a grain of sand or the enormous Milky Way Galaxy. Perhaps the illusion of separation was created by the size of our egos, and as such many of us will continue to believe we are above and beyond nature, and separate from it.

For many people, the concept that we are connected to nature is very foreign indeed. Yet, by virtue of our existence, the connection is there, whether we believe it or not. At the present moment we are the Earth's keystone species. Like the beaver or the buffalo used to do, we significantly alter habitat and thereby affect most, if not all, life on earth. As a predatory keystone species our effect is magnified exponentially. Life on Earth is currently experiencing an extinction level event, and we are the cause. We most certainly and significantly affect life around us – and perhaps this is where we get most of our ego. However, contrary to popular belief, there is no 'top' to the food chain. A circle does not have a top or a bottom. Life is a system and we are a part of this system. Whether we choose to believe it or not, life affects us, and it affects us quite significantly.

Connecting to nature is as natural as breathing. In fact, the oxygen we breathe is a gift of life. As the greens in our world breathe out, we breathe in. We are in sync with nature in many ways. The process of synchronization is a natural function of a system. For the system to survive, its component parts must operate together in the most effective and efficient way possible. Rabbits, squirrels, magpies, crows and other birds, for example, have learned to synchronize their lifestyles with humans. Although many rabbits die on our roads, they thrive in our suburbs because they have no natural predators. Squirrels thrive in our suburbs because of the ample supply of pine cones from our spruce trees and insulated cubby holes in which to survive the winter. The rabbits and squirrels that become road kill provide carrion for the crows and magpies. A synchronized system has evolved to adapt to our presence, and these animals live comfortably and more proliferate in our towns and cities, just as humans have learned to synchronize their lifestyles with dogs and cats and winters that last forever.

One of the major ways that nature facilitates creativity is through the inspiring awe that its beauty and majesty creates. The beauty of our natural world provides a creative 'sacred' space where more seemingly random information is available, but also where our conscious mind can be distracted. Exposure to nature facilitates the 'filling of the well' that is the primary source of inspiration.

Csikszentmihalyi explains that the right place, or the right environment is important for creativity to flourish (p. 128). He reminds us that "Nietzsche chose to write *Thus Spake Zarathustra* in the coolness of the nearby Engadine; Wagner loved to write his music in a villa in Ravello overlooking the hypnotic blue Tyrrhenian Sea….the European physicists of the early part of this century seem to have had their most profound ideas while climbing mountains or looking at stars from the peaks" (p. 135). He also points out to us that many places of worship, learning and creativity are located in "most beautiful natural spots" (p. 135). Some think "such a setting will stimulate thought and refresh the mind, and thus bring forth novel and creative ideas" (p. 135). Csikszentmihalyi explains that "what seems to happen is that when persons with prepared minds find themselves in beautiful settings, they are more likely to find new connections among ideas, new perspectives on issues they are dealing with" (p. 136). He agrees that "the evidence does suggest that unusual and beautiful surroundings—stimulating, serene, majestic views imbued with natural and historical suggestions—may in fact help us see situations more holistically and from novel viewpoints" (p. 137). I believe it is more than this. Such settings establish 'sacred' spaces where synchronicity and creativity flourish.

To enhance creativity, artist and writer Julia Cameron encourages everyone to adopt a regular routine she calls the 'Artist Date'. She says that "Doing your artist date, you are receiving—opening yourself to insight, inspiration, guidance" (p. 18). The artist date is time you set aside each week to commit to "nurturing your creative consciousness, your inner artist" (p. 18). Your inner artist might enjoy a "long country walk, a solitary expedition to the beach for a sunrise or sunset, a sortie out to a strange church to hear gospel music, to an ethnic

neighbourhood to taste foreign sights and sounds". These dates nourish the creative process, but they also fill the well – an artist's reservoir of images that provide the seeds for creativity.

Spaces and Time – a Synchronicity

This spring a wasp decided to build its nest on the roof over my balcony. This distressed me, but I decided to let it be – and maybe, if I was nice to it, it would be nice to me. Unfortunately, I have a frequent visitor who is allergic to wasps and bees, and he needs to sit on the balcony to smoke. I was severely conflicted. I didn't want to kill the wasp – maybe I could just throw the nest away – but I worried that the nest now likely had babies inside it. My friend said he would take a stick to it and throw it over the balcony. I told my friend not to and that I would figure something out. A few days later, as I sat on my couch looking out my window, a magpie landed on the railing of the balcony. Then she squawked, and swooped up and away – "Did she fly into the corner where the wasp nest was?" I thought to myself. A few minutes later I decided to take a look. And lo and behold, the nest had a large hole in it and the contents were gone. I then saw the wasp return, enter the normal doorway to her nest and through the large hole created by the magpie I could see her circling the inside, obviously wondering what had happened. Then she flew away and I never saw her again. Nature had 'magically' solved my dilemma for me.

I often wonder about other ways we might synchronize with nature without being consciously aware of it. Our circadian clock most certainly synchronizes us with nature, and this for me is significant – I cannot nap during the day, and I cannot sleep unless it is dark. I wake up with the sun regardless of what time of year it is – a major problem in the summer in central Alberta. What about my reverence for life – is this a synchronization too? And my sense of wholeness and connection when I gaze at the Milky Way on a crisp fall night? And my love of nature and the positive energy I get from it? And the ideas and answers that come to me during my runs and walks through Edmonton and Vermilion creek valleys? And what about my sense of

awe and re-birth when spring arrives? And my desire to watch a thunder storm approach and the urge to run out into it? And what about the moon? Are we in sinc with it too?

As physicists have proven, synchronicity exists on many levels. In the quantum world, we get spooky action at a distance, entanglement, and a haze of probability that can only be explained by invisible connections.

According to David Bohm, Professor of Theoretical Physics, in *Wholeness and the Implicate Order*, (1980) there is an "undivided wholeness implied in the content of physics (primarily relativity and quantum theory)" (p. 181). Simply put, there is an implicate structure 'enfolded' within the universe – and when we examine its constituent parts, we 'cannot see the forest for the trees'. Bohm states that to understand 'observations' we need to give primary relevance to the implicate order (p. 190). To me it is simple logic – we must see the bigger picture to understand it. At a universal scale, however, we cannot see the bigger picture, and we therefore are limited to attempting to understand the universe and its laws from a non-whole perspective.

Bohm says that it "has already been seen that, in general, the movement of *light* is to be described in terms of 'the enfolding and carrying' of implicate orders that are relevant to a whole structure, in which analysis into separate and autonomous parts is not applicable" (p.193). Expanding on this he notes that we "have seen that in the 'quantum' context, the order in every immediately perceptible aspect of the world is to be regarded as coming out of a more comprehensive implicate order" (p.197).

Lanza and Berman (2016) ask that "we should face up to something that's rarely ever voiced in modern cosmology: the possibility that the true nature of the universe as a whole has *nothing* to do with the way its parts work, that it indeed lies outside the very characteristics of its components" (pp. 164-165). They say that it should be obvious "that the universe (taken as a whole) *does* lie beyond our logic" (p. 165).

The larger order, which we cannot observe and/or comprehend, is there, whether we can see it, measure it, or not. In some ways, however, it can be implicated (implied). Psychologist Carl Jung believed this order, or greater whole, was implied by an a-causal connecting principle, which he labeled 'synchronicity'. Through his study of the sub conscious, Jung observed that there are meaningful connections between the inner psychic realm and the external physical world. The term 'synchronicity' originated with Jung when he had the insight "...of a connection that is potentially present in each of us between our inner psychic realm and the external cosmos" (Coward, H., 1996, pp. 3-4). As explained by Barbara Hannah, Psychotherapist and friend to Carl Jung, synchronicity is a term describing "the coincidence between an inner image or hunch breaking into one's mind, and the occurrence of an outer event conveying the same meaning at approximately the same time" (in Bair, 2004, p. 549). Jung's insight that time, intuition and the 'in' side and the 'out' side of mind co-relate is significant. For, it is within biocentrism's spatio-temporal logic of the self where intuition is time sense, and synchronicity is an observation of the 'intuitive' bridge between internal time sense and external space sense. And, since our sense of time is the mother of consciousness, it is consciousness that provides the connection between the 'in' side and the 'out' side.

Although many believe 'synchronicity' arose from Jung's spiritual belief system, the larger weight of this concept came from the realm of physics, and specifically from Albert Einstein and Wolfgang Pauli (Nobel prize winner for physics). Jung had a strong interest in physics, and it is now widely known that Jung and Einstein met several times over dinner and lunch in the midst of the period in which Einstein was astounding the world with his theory of special relativity. Later, Jung became closely associated with physicist Wolfgang Pauli, a collaboration from which would eventually emerge Jung's concept of synchronicity. As noted in *Carl Jung and Albert Einstein: A Rare Meeting of Two Great Minds,* an online article by 'The Depth Coach', "Einstein's influence on Jung's thinking" was "significantly amplified as a result

of his relationship with Pauli who was well-versed in physics and whose understanding of Relativity was, with the exception of Einstein himself, unparalleled".

In the same article The Depth Coach includes an excerpt from one of Carl Jung's letters, dated February 25, 1953:

> I got to know Albert Einstein through one of his pupils, a Dr. Hopf if I remember correctly. Professor Einstein was my guest on several occasions at dinner, when, as you have heard, Adolf Keller was present on one of them and on others Professor Eugen Bleuler, a psychiatrist, and my former chief. These were very early days when Einstein was developing his first theory of Relativity. He tried to instill into us the elements of it, more or less successfully. As non-mathematicians we psychiatrists had difficulty in following his argument. Even so, I understood enough to form a powerful impression of him. It was above all the simplicity and directness of his genius as a thinker that impressed me mightily and exerted a lasting influence on my own intellectual work. It was Einstein who first started me off thinking about a possible Relativity of time as well as space, and their psychic conditionality. More than thirty years later this stimulus led to my relation with the physicist Professor W. Pauli and to my thesis of psychic Synchronicity. (1976, pp. 108-109) Jung, C.G. (1976). *Letters Vol. 2: 1951-1961*, selected and edited by Gerhard Adler in collaboration with Aniela Jaffe, trans. R.F.C. Hull, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul)

The Depth Coach suggests that as a result of this intermingling of minds "The nascent seed of an idea—regarding the psychic conditioning of the categories of space and time— took root within Jung". Since the essential element for synchronicity was "an experience of space and time", and since 'space-time' was relative, Jung eventually "concluded that time is an epiphenomenon of consciousness—conditioned by the psyche—as opposed to the commonly accepted Newtonian-Cartesian view of space and time as absolute and objective categories".

Although this is a profound observation (now supported by the current theory of biocentrism), I don't believe Jung stopped there. Depth psychologist Joseph Cambray (2009) suggested that with synchronicity Jung was "attempting to embrace quantum theory and Relativity together" (p. 20). It is also known that Jung had an 'energic' view of the psyche; he believed that thoughts, ideas, inspiration, insights and the like popped into conscious awareness when there was sufficient energy applied (creative process and/or incubation), and/or when sufficient residual energy existed (helpful past experience, unresolved past issues, repressed memory). When he learned about quantum theory, and the astounding discovery that human observation affected the 'state' of the 'microphysical world', it is easy to believe that Jung then assumed that there existed an energic connection between the human psyche and the external physical world – and synchronicity was his evidence or 'observation' that this was so. Because he could not contemplate the greater order of things, he could not 'prove' this connection, and so he defined the relationship as 'a-causal'. Nonetheless, decades before biocentrism was developed, Jung had surmised that consciousness and reality were co-relative.

The Depth Coach says that, in a letter to Philip Wylie, Jung "insisted he did not propound theories but rather made discoveries, such as the world of the collective unconscious is a complete parallel to the microphysical world" (in Bair, p. 551). I don't know why I didn't learn about this 'discovery' before – perhaps my integration of it had to wait for the revelations of biocentrism – but it is simply astonishing; if this 'supra-personal'[1] sub conscious is a complete parallel to the microphysical world, then this 'sub' conscious exists in something akin to a quantum haze of probability – or an immensity of creative possibility – until such time when enough creative energy is applied and a possibility is 'observed' – and thereby collapses into reality and conscious awareness. It is what AHA! Moments are made of. If this is true, then a haze of probability exists on both the

[1] Many of the new age began to use the term 'collective unconscious' instead of ' supra-personal sub conscious', Jung's original term. This is unfortunate, because in my mind, 'collective' and 'supra-personal' have altogether different meanings and implications.

'in' side and the 'out' side, and it is our 'consciousness' that connects both of these sides together, and it is our conscious 'awareness' that collapses both of these into the internal and external realities we observe.

Synchronicity was Jung's observation that implied an order that we could not see or prove – an order where the 'in' side (our psyche) and the 'out' side were 'energically' connected. Perhaps the Mobius Strip, where the inside and outside merge with a simple twist, is a relevant analogy. Nevertheless, without an ability to see the larger order, the causal relationship was not evident – and hence it was labeled by Jung as a-causal. I believe serendipity may be another 'observation' that implies this larger order. I further suspect that there may be a very strong 'temporal' connection between intuition, inspiration, synchronicity and serendipity.

We cannot see the 'Real' with our physical senses. And we can only see 'physical' reality because we create it with our senses. The only sense that can detect a non-physical reality is a non-physical sense. For scientists, this doesn't exist because it can't be measured by our physical senses – and this makes perfect sense. However, in a bio-centric world this is senseless. The un-measurable non-physical sense is our intuition – and time, our relational 'imaginal' capacity, and synchronicity and serendipity are its triggers. Only when we see things happen outside of time do we glimpse a reality that cannot be glimpsed otherwise. The connection between the 'in' side and the 'out' side is consciousness, and our 'in' side energetically affects the 'out' side through this connection (and vice versa). Synchronicity is the observation 'outside' of time that indicates to us that an unseen reality exists, and by stepping on the path toward self-actualization and expansion of identity we can turn the 'in' side out.

According to Simonton, in Weisberg, "serendipitous environmental events can trigger a random combination of ideas, which is critical in the production of new ideas (p. 570). It likely did not occur to him that 'serendipity' could very well be 'caused' by our 'selves'. When we connect with nature we are synchronizing with it, and we create a space where creativity is nourished and magnified. Those who are more aware of this connection are more able to take

advantage of the ‘information’ that is presented to them. Taking advantage of happy accidents, coincidence, ‘providence’ and/or synchronicity, in my mind, is more a matter of paying attention (and developing this skill) than magical happenstance. I believe that, as we can with our other senses, we can enhance our intuitive capacity, to pay attention, and to see and make connections, especially through the creative process, the practice of analogy and metaphor, and the application of creative energy. I also believe that over our life time we can expand our capacity to hold on to, or to channel, creative energy. The ability to access this energy may even be inversely related to the strength of our identity as individuals (or the strength of our ego).

There is no doubt that connecting to our natural environment significantly enhances the creative process. It does this because it involves the synchronization of the creative energy within us and the creative energy that exists in the external natural world, of which we are a part. The crossing of inter-disciplinary boundaries – quantum physics, psychology and philosophy – I believe, resulted in a significant and enduring theory that confirms an energic connection between all things that ‘synchronizes’ the system. For humans, it is primarily a sub-conscious connection through which the ‘outside’ world influences our behaviour and thought, but also through which the ‘inside’ world of our minds influences the ‘outside’ world around us. We simply are not aware of that which, through observation (or ‘awareness’), collapses the haze of probability into reality. It is sub surface to our conscious awareness.

To me, synchronicity means attaining inner peace from an external world. It means contentment while I gaze upon the stars on a warm summer night, the power I feel when I canoe down the Churchill River as it carves its way through the Canadian Shield, the awe I feel when I walk through the old growth forest of Vancouver Island’s Cathedral Grove, and the connection I experience when I write from my heart.

The illusion that we are separate from other things is a simple result of our inability to see the energy that connects us. In the physical world, the air that separates us is full of atoms and molecules we cannot see, and the energy that these atoms are is invisible to us, although it is in

fact there. Although we see the space between objects as empty, it isn't. Energy connects everything. Our brain separates energy into separate 'solid' objects and empty space – it creates an illusion for us in order for us to navigate in the physical realm. Lanza and Berman (2016) explain, for example, that when we push our finger down on the table top "it feels solid. But no solids are ever contacted, not for an instant. Rather, the outermost atoms of your skin are surrounded by negatively charged electrons, and these are repelled by the similar electrons in the table. The sense of solidity is illusory; you feel only repulsive electrical fields. Fields. Energies. Nothing solid, ever" (pp. 147-147). And this all occurs within the mind. If we take the concept of entanglement, and eliminate space and time, then the universe, and everything in it, is in fact an infinitesimal singularity of wholeness, connected by immensely significant forces.

The fact that everything is connected has taken some time to become a generally accepted fact. Alternate facts are still the flavour of the day. The concept of connectivity – of wholeness and oneness – is starting to seep into the primary theories of reality, quantum physics and biology. Wholeness was always the foundation of Buddhism, but as a philosophical concept, it was ignored and sometimes dismissed by scientists who could not measure this phenomenon. It is unfortunate that in the scientific world, if you cannot measure it, it does not exist. With quantum physics, however, and its spooky observations, connectivity, entanglement and wholeness have now become relevant explanations for universal questions – although many physicists hesitate to mention this publicly, lest they suffer public humiliation – much like Copernicus when he postulated the fact that the Earth revolved around the Sun.