

FREE

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# Community

Winter 2010

Issue #4

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## WILL TECHNOLOGY OR THE ARTS BRING SALVATION TO THE WORLD?

By Michael Strelcheck

Today the civilized world is faced with the growing dilemma - which field of human endeavor to throw its resources behind? On one hand we find that the recent explosion of *technology* has captured the attention of the human imagination by providing new and better ways to make life easier, and on the other we have the *fine arts*, long valued and appreciated by humanity for the joy and inspiration they have bestowed upon societies. Both fields have creative merit and hold untapped potentials for the future. In a perfect world there would be enough financial support and interest for both allowing them to thrive and prosper, but as we all have recently experienced, there are limits to what societies can afford.

Today, we find our society leaning more on the value of technology than on the arts calculating (or guesstimating) that field is where future prosperity lies. Money is presently being generously routed into the concrete sciences in an effort to seed and stimulate young minds, thus setting the stage for the discovery of the next great time saving device. One certainly cannot argue that recent scientific discoveries have led to vast improvements in medicine, communication, and physical as well as energy efficiency. But unfortunately these discoveries have come at a cost to the field of the fine arts for in school systems across the nation, strapped by budget constraints; they have been forced to reduce funding for music, art, sports, and drama. Is this sacrifice worth it? Can our society afford not to support the creative arts?

Perhaps if we approach this 'choice' from a psychological perspective we could argue that the modern world's captivation with technology reflects a deep need in human psyche. Humanity, throughout its long struggle to survive, has longed for supernatural help in the form of a *savior* that would appear to ensure its future survival. The present holiday season is a good example of this deep seated need, for the Christmas holiday symbolically represents an event where a mythical figure (Santa

Claus) magically arrives and makes things better. In fact, every World Religion also has such an individual (referred to as an Avatar) who, it is believed, will someday arrive and put the chaos of the world to order, heralding a great new age for the faithful. This is not to say that that won't happen but the point is that the human psyche may unknowingly see the "miracles of technology" as being that savior! In other words, individuals are feeling subconsciously compelled to obtain the newest device with the next great technological advancement in order to assure themselves that they will reach the 'promised land.' This in itself isn't a bad thing, but if left unattended could eventually lead the human race to a doomed destiny where it forever looks to some physical manifestation as its ultimate "rescuer."

Traditional metaphysical theory suggests that the salvation of the physical world will be found through the *creative expression* of the human soul. This idea may seem redundant at first for its clear that the development of technology takes creative thought. But what if the concept points to the possibility that there are two types of creativity within the human nature? One, which is very

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familiar to the personality, that is fueled by the need for control of the physical environment, and another, less familiar, that is based on the inspiration to simply share oneself through an active expression.

Could this theory mean that humanity's eventual freedom will be secured not through what's physically built (designed to provide a significant end result) but through a form of activity? Most spiritual philosophies focus more on what an individual is trying to do, in the moment, rather than what is actually accomplished - believing that it's the effort that counts. To this end then we find that the fine arts are a better vehicle for making a 'spirited' effort - that doesn't need to be perfect. If you have ever felt the spontaneous fun of singing along with your favorite song (even knowing you may be a little off key) or the unbridled joy of shaping a ball of *Play-dough* (or even taking a taste of it if you have a mind to), then you know the sense of freedom the creative expression of your spirit can bring.

Perhaps it would be wise for our society not to forget the Arts, focusing a little more on the value of a creative experience than on creating technological forms that cannot feel or realize.

Please support your local community's Fine Arts activities, for within those expressions participants get a chance to share their 'soul' and experience a freedom that can be transformative to their consciousness as well as their community!

## Politics

# Final Thoughts on 2010

by Dale Lucht

What happened? The hope of the Diet Soda Party has fizzled out. The Party should have been a forum of ideals on where society can go, the "Undiscovered Country." The recent election has vitiated my hope. Are we, as Americans burning off some vast karma? Are we really that stupid that we'll reelect the foxes to guard the hen houses?

The attention span of Americans has shortened. The popular shows are cartoons, game shows and reality shows. Storylines and themes are minimal at best, requiring little concentration. Americans can now be proud of their lack of concentration. Thanks to TV educators

from fifty years ago have now been proven correct; we have raised a generation of idiots.

Professional sports now provide the heroes for our youth. My heroes were fake cowboys like Gene Autry and Roy Rogers. Wear a gun, sing a song, and kiss the girl. Of course I couldn't sing, and I spent more time kissing my horse. In a purely platonic way of course.

Is this where our puerile love of the gun started? More people were killed in the movies than were killed in the "Real West." If you tote a gun does that make you a real man? No matter how much the Constitution is trampled on, as long as they don't touch the Second Amendment, it is okay with you.

I'm upset that the government can tap my phone. I am upset that President Bush suspended habeas corpus, and President Obama hasn't reinstated it. I'm upset that apparently the government has whitewashed the "Gulf Spill." I believe more damage was done. When a country lies to you, it doesn't deserve your respect, and it's politicians don't deserve your vote.

I support the Constitution, but I would like to change it by changing our electoral process. Direct elections of our representatives, as we have now, usually mean either a republican or democrat is elected. I suggest a multi-party system. To make things easy let's assume that there are ten seats to be filled. Five parties are seeking the seats. The Democrats get 30% of the vote, the Republicans get 30% of the vote, the Diet Soda Party gets 20%, The Tea Party gets 10%, and the Green Party gets 10%.

In the Multi-Party system democrats would get 3 seats, republicans would get 3 seats, the rising star of politics, the Diet Soda party, would get 2 seats and the Tea Party and Green Party would each get 1 seat. Chances are that no one party would control congress. Coalitions would have to be formed. Different issues might have different coalitions. Brazil, Canada, Israel and Sweden are examples of countries that use a multi-party system in their democracies.

### Final Thought

On December 7, 2010, Elizabeth Edwards died. Her openness and courage throughout her battle were honorable. On December 3, 2010, Ron Santo died from bladder cancer. Santo found out he had diabetes after signing with the Cubs. For fifty years Santo battled the effects of diabetes. He had numerous operations, and ended up losing both legs. Santo never lost his optimism or his joy for life. You see it in many Obits, so-and-so succumbed after a courageous battle with cancer or some other disease. Illness can be a real growth experience for the patient and the caregivers. All of that experience and learning should not be wasted. That is one reason why I believe in reincarnation.

### Really, the Last Final Thought of 2010

You will see signs saying to "Put Christ back into Christmas", and "Remember the Reason for the Season." I could argue for an hour why December 25 was not Christ's birthday, but let's not. The Spirit of Christmas is hope and

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joy and good will toward all, even the republicans. It is not what you get or what you give, but what you feel. So, Merry Christmas to All, and to All a Good Night!

## Dear Republicans, Why Now ? After The 8 Years Of The Bush/Cheney Disaster, Now You Get Mad?

By Bill Collett

You didn't get mad when the Supreme Court stopped a legal recount and appointed a President.

You didn't get mad when Cheney allowed Energy company officials to dictate Energy policy and push us to invade Iraq.

You didn't get mad when a covert CIA operative got outed.

You didn't get mad when the Patriot Act got passed.

You didn't get mad when we illegally invaded a country that posed no threat to us.

You didn't get mad when we spent over 800 billion (and counting) on said illegal war.

You didn't get mad when Bush borrowed more money from foreign sources than the previous 42 presidents combined.

You didn't get mad when over 10 billion dollars in cash just disappeared in Iraq.

You didn't get mad when you found out we were torturing people.

You didn't get mad when Bush embraced trade and outsourcing policies that shipped 6 million American jobs out of the country.

You didn't get mad when the government was illegally wiretapping Americans.

You didn't get mad when we didn't catch Bin Laden.

You didn't get mad when Bush rang up 10 trillion dollars in combined budget and current account deficits.

You didn't get mad when you saw the horrible conditions at Walter Reed.

You didn't get mad when we let a major US city, New Orleans, drown.

You didn't get mad when we gave people who had more money than they could spend, the filthy rich, over a trillion dollars in tax breaks.

You didn't get mad with the worst 8 years of job creations in several decades.

You didn't get mad when over 200,000 US Citizens lost their lives because they had no health insurance.

You didn't get mad when lack of oversight and regulations from the Bush Administration caused US Citizens to lose 12 trillion dollars in investments, retirement, and home values.

No.....You finally got mad

When a black man was elected President and decided that people in America deserved the right to see a doctor if they are sick.

Yes, illegal wars, lies, corruption, torture, job losses by the millions, stealing your tax dollars to make the rich richer, and the worst economic disaster since 1929 are all okay with you, but helping fellow Americans who are sick...Oh, Hell No!!

## Health & Healing

### New True You

By Mary Summerbell

As we welcome a new year, many of us embrace the tradition of making New Year's resolutions. Whatever our motivation, we look to ourselves and our lifestyles to see where there might be room for improvement. We decide to try to overcome old bad habits and/or develop new good ones. Health, finances, time management, work and relationship concerns compete for priority as we find fresh incentive to diet, exercise, save money, be on time, be patient with family, reconnect with friends, etc., etc., etc.... Whether we choose personal issues, or focus on ways we can change our environment, or both, the idea is to make a willing self-help effort that maybe, just maybe, will also make the world a better place. We set ourselves to do our little part to improve the universe we live in.

It's hard to argue against such fine intentions. So many good souls with such noble goals. And yet, according to my personal research, (based on experience and a multitude of magazine articles perused over a multitude of years), by February or March most of us have lost our momentum. We're given up or greatly strayed from our initial objectives, our determination diminished by life's realities. The reasons for our lack of endurance are as many and varied as each one of us who makes an attempt, and as simple as the intrinsic fickleness of our human nature. We are left with feelings of failure and disappointment, but no less desire to do better, as proven by our perennial renewed enthusiasm.

My question is - without over-analysis, is there a way we can change this self-defeating pattern? I think so. I have an idea of how we might turn our good intentions toward options that afford us more of a sense of accomplishment. I'm trying something new this year, and I invite you to join me. It's simple, easy enough to do, yet with potential to affect any, and every, aspect of our lives to which we choose to apply it. The object is not lofty goals or ambitious action, but to get some real, perhaps immediate, satisfaction from whatever effort we make, no matter how minimal.

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I suggest we all try, right now, this minute, just a little, to be more who we truly are. More real. More genuine. More sincere. It doesn't have to be for the whole year, or a month, or a week, or even a day. Let's make this a super-achievable. I challenge you to try it – once. Just once. Do it. See what happens. If you want to, do it again. If not, then stop. No pressure. Give yourself permission to do as little or as much as you please, whenever, and however you please. Start, and stop, and start again, spontaneously or as planned. Like the old-fashioned candy, have some now, save some for later. Do it your way. Make it fun.

Sounds easy, you say. But what's the catch? What do I mean by being more me, being more you? Only this – to consciously shift, internally, in whatever way we are inspired to, out of a usual, comfortable, common, reflexive response and more toward authentic center, into true self.

It's about getting in touch with our own insides – our likes and dislikes, our moods, our thoughts, our, (gasp, not that!), feelings. Sadness. Happiness. Anger. Excitement. Fatigue. Wonder. Confusion. Peace. Curiosity. It's about being aware, simultaneously, of our humanity and our individuality. All those little tugs and pulls and twitches and twinges we feel inside us all the time, but usually override, in the name of necessity or efficiency, on our way to something urgent or important.

If you've pushed these things aside for so long you've lost them, then maybe it's time to take yourself to lunch and invite some of that stuff back into your life. Let your fingers find the pulse of your present personality. Let mind and heart find identity in current reality. Reintroduce yourself to you. Get to know yourself. Again. Better.

That's all there is to it. Anytime, any place, in any situation – your choice – just ask yourself, "What's really going on in here?" And give yourself an honest answer. Take any appealing, available opportunity to connect to who you really are. Your true self. Pick something small. Break through a little denial. Admit to yourself that you hate green beans, or love fried chicken. Feel how annoyed you get when the puppy pees on the carpet. How delighted you feel to get an e-mail from a friend. And what about the messy blessing of a sticky kiss from your kid? What happens inside you then? What's happening inside you at any given moment? Who are you? How's that feel?

If you can, allow yourself to be open to whatever comes. Without

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judgment. Without criticism. With compassion. Give yourself permission to be you. Give yourself a chance to explore and enjoy your internal terrain. Be all right with yourself, whoever you are. You don't have to do anything about it, or with it, unless you want to. Just observe. And acknowledge. Let it be. Whatever "it" is. Information and insights may or may not find expression in action. That's up to you.

Maybe you'll wear those two bright colors you like together, even though you wonder how good it looks. Maybe you won't. Maybe you'll wear a wild print tie with a striped shirt. Maybe you won't. But at least you'll know that you like that combination; it pleases your eye. Maybe you'll put catsup on your macaroni and cheese, in public, risk being teased by whoever is with you. Maybe not.

But at least, giving yourself adequate opportunity, you will know yourself, your own unique taste, and perspective, your own unique responses to life. You can connect with your own preferences, weaknesses, strengths, priorities and potential. You can be in communication with your own mind, and heart, and soul. Be in a relationship, a healthy relationship, with yourself. Wow. What a concept.

Taking this to the next level is looking for ways – healthy, constructive ways – to share this self – perception, this true self, with whoever we choose to trust. And accepting and relating to other people's true selves. I mention this as fodder to ponder for you uber-achievers out there who need a greater challenge, and as a peek at the road map for us slower travelers. But I promised you simple, and fairly easy, and I aim to keep my word.

So most of us, with perfectly clear conscience, can hang out here for quite a while, somewhere between self awareness and self acceptance. All of us knowing, (yes?), no matter where we're at in the game, that the first step toward anyone else accepting us is self-acceptance. By working on ourselves we are automatically working on our relationships with others.

In closing, my greatest hope for a Happy New Year is that if each of us can be a little bit more true to who we really are, then maybe, just maybe, life will be a little bit more true – and richer and brighter and better – for us all, right now, this minute, this hour, this day, this week, this month, this year. And maybe, just maybe, for all our future new years. I think it's worth a try. Do you?

## **Emotions: A Human Mystery?**

**By Arline Rowden**

Have you ever wondered where emotions really come from, and what are they good for anyway? Has anyone ever accused you of being a Drama Queen, or King, or of being "COLD" emotionally? Have you ever started to cry, felt afraid or experienced another strong emotion when watching a movie even though you knew it was not "REAL"? Have you ever started to feel emotionally upset about something that happened years ago? So many questions, but are there some answers?

For most of my life, I've been puzzled by my emotional nature. When I was growing up, I would cry at the drop of a hat. I was told that I was too sensitive. When I got into the business world, I didn't feel that crying was acceptable. So I tried to suck it up and if I couldn't stop myself from crying at work I'd go cry in the rest room. Anger would pop up, too, throughout my life. Even though it was more acceptable for men to be angry in the business world, it definitely wasn't okay for women back then.

Over the years that I spent in the business world, I managed to suppress many of what "they" considered to be "unacceptable" feelings. After awhile, I became so stressed, anxious and unable to get enough sleep many nights that I decided to try meditation for stress relief. I remember thinking that I not only wanted to feel less stress but I wondered if this was all there was to life. So I also went into therapy to try to discover why I was so unhappy. I was in my early 30's then.

I did a lot of emoting about past issues. Therapists and books said I was releasing my emotions. And when I emoted over and over about the same issues, it was explained as more layers of the emotional onion being released. After a while, I began to wonder if I'd ever get to the core of the onion and complete my emotional healing. Needless to say, my emotional issues spilled out into my relationships and created more issues. It seemed that I was experiencing neverending grief, guilt and fear. I felt like a MESS!

Even though I began to meditate to release stress, it wasn't long before I began to use meditation as a way to focus on my spiritual life, which I had ignored for years. My family and I attended a church when I was growing up and I believed that God was this old man in the sky that would punish you if you did something naughty. At 21 years old, I decided that God was a myth that the establishment made up to keep the masses in line and I was having none of that. It was the 60s!

With the help of meditation, spiritual study, and after a while Reiki, I began to develop a new theory for myself about the Divine. Now I feel that the Divine is an intelligent energy that is within everyone and everything. I feel a connection to the Divine when I meditate and while running Reiki energy for myself and others. I feel that this intelligent energy is impersonal and accepts all equally. To me free will choice means that we are all allowed to experience life in our own way. There are consequences to our actions but we are free to experience as we choose.

Spiritual practices and study and life style changes made a huge difference in my life. And even though I started to have some success with identifying my feelings, I was still mostly confused about my mysterious emotional nature. I would often look back on a situation where I became upset and realized that I had not been thinking about what to say or do during that time. At other times, I would wonder why I was so upset by something that, when I thought about it later, I realized that it wasn't such a big deal. There was something going on that I didn't understand.

Then in 2004, I began to take a series of classes from my spiritual teacher, Michael Strelcheck, called the Emotional Processing Technique (EPT). Over the course of the 10 class days (over several months) in the two levels of EPT, we learned about emotional patterns and why we react without thinking. And we were taught processes to discover how emotions served us and how to identify defensive patterns in ourselves and others. It was so helpful but so much information to absorb, so I took the two EPT series twice.

Finally with EPT, my emotional nature began to make some sense to me. But most importantly, I began to be able to actually release some emotions rather than just emoting about the same issues over and over and over again. There was one session where I released a ton of suppressed grief. I actually felt physically lighter after that session. In another session, I realized a defensive pattern where I refused to acknowledge failure and how that had adversely affected my life.

So I began to share the EPT info with others and offer EPT sessions, too. I had struggled emotionally for so long and I wanted to pass along

what I learned to others. Then in 2010, Michael wrote a 12 part series about healing and evolving the emotional nature and identifying and working with emotional behaviors which he presented to a group in Madison.

In this body of work, feelings are considered to be sensations in the body and they are called emotions when the mind names them. Feelings in the body are messages from the body to the mind. These messages are the way the body lets the mind know how it's doing. When the mind receives these messages, it can then decide if some action needs to be taken and direct the needed action. But if the mind ignores the feelings in the body, then they stay in the nervous system of the body. Over time these messages can create stress and even pain in the body. That helped to explain why I became so stressed when I was not acknowledging and understanding my feelings.

I discovered that it takes some quiet time each day for me to become aware of the sensations and feelings in the body. Then I can notice how my body feels about what it is experiencing in life. I began to realize when I needed more rest and relaxation or more play time or more exercise or needed to take time to discover what I had learned from a life experience, etc. I also learned that it takes an attitude of acceptance and a willingness to not judge any feeling as right or wrong. Some words or actions based on feelings might not be appropriate but the feeling is always okay and we'll want to recognize it.

So after years of being submerged in the emotional patterns in my life, I began to come up for air out of the watery emotional nature. I slowly developed an ability to think in many situations where I would have just reacted in the past. I still have times that I am caught in the spin of a pattern, but it doesn't happen as often anymore and I recognize what's happening much sooner. I've been working hard towards emotional stability which could be thought of as the ability to roll with the punches of life. In other words, I might get a little wobbly at times from life experiences, but I can come back to a stable place more easily now. I'm beginning to solve the mystery of my emotional nature.

## Readers Respond

### Reply to "Lies" By Joel S Matthews

I must admit my first reaction to the article "*Is It Okay To Lie To The Public?*" was what does the Public have to do with it? Is it okay to lie, is the basis of it all. Which is worse lying to your friend (probably for their own good - I'll get back to that momentarily) or to 100 strangers? Intended or planned deceit is viewed as wrong in all the religions, published moral codes, laws that I have ever read. Any that allow it are

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certainly a minority. Now that probably puts a real challenge to the traditional surprise party, (is that for their own good? or is that the "white lie"?) Degrees of lying only seem to come into play when the perpetrator is justifying their lie to a third, unaffected party. Who am I to determine what is best for someone else by lying to them? They should be given the opportunity to determine their own fate based on all the knowledge available. Lying "in their best interests" is playing god over their life.

Lying has flourished because it is an accepted practice of all life pursuits of the icons of our society. Sports, when did a player of the benefiting team ever tell an umpire or official that, no, I felt the tag before I got to the base or, no, I dropped the ball before my knee touched the ground? Now that would really cause a national discussion; deceit for the sake of winning (more money) is okay. Hollywood stars make a living portraying complete fiction on the screen. As entertainment for the public this is fine; we know that it is fiction. But how many carry that to their private lives, deceiving all around them? An entire media industry arises from uncovering their personal deceptions. It also seems that the same media industry has no qualms with "creating" a story where none apparently exists for the sake of winning the ratings/sales (more money) numbers. Even our "news media" in the past were praised for impartiality; now they are rewarded for telling us what we want to hear. The most successful business tycoons brag about winning negotiations, by "bluffing" across the table, misleading investors, government officials and the public. The leaders of many of the world's religions? No need to single out the Catholic faith here or radical Islamics who both have lied in entirely different ways; they just get the most publicity. (See ratings/sales above) not too long ago it was a string of TV evangelists. Poker players make a living at it. Politicians for the most part just haven't been very good at concealing their lies for an extended period of time and why should they?

In many of the above examples there can be (though rarely enforced) consequences, sometimes financial and legal, not just public opinion. Though it would be interesting if we stopped watching a movie or TV show because of the personal deceptions of one of the actors/actress. Stop going to church services due to the actions (or failure to act) of its leaders. STOPPED following your favorite team because they won a game by cheating? (National discussion? See above) In many ways those who are most affected by the deceit are the most supportive of the liar; they can't believe that they have been deceived. "It is all a conspiracy of those against him/her". Which applies to the politicians. The worst they are likely to suffer is to not be elected the next time (which is still not a given). So they still get paid in full with the retirement, connections and favors they piled up while in office. Its the "American Way". Another Constitutional Amendment? I don't think so, Michael. You cannot legislate morality; it doesn't stop people from "sinning". The only way to change behavior in general society is to "hit them in the pocket book". As for the steps we as individuals can take? We each must become the person we think the rest of the world should be. If you think lying is wrong then act like it. Sometimes telling the truth is uncomfortable, even painful. But in most cases doing the right thing is not the easiest. If it were, everyone would always do the right thing instead of looking for an easier ("it was for their own good", "it was only little a white lie") way, usually a way out.

**Conscious Community Mission Statement:**  
*Provide a platform for opinions, innovation  
and inspiration for community*

## Metaphysical

# Is Human Life a Stepping Stone or Good in Itself?

By Frank Conerton

Do you believe that being human is good of itself? Were we created to be strictly human or are we something else just vacationing or temporarily working, within humanity? Do you believe that being human is only a test or a proving ground or a school to learn to become an angel or soul or spirit, not just human?

My own Catholic upbringing taught me that my soul was the important thing. A bible verse asked "what does it profit a man to inherit the entire world if he loses his immortal soul?" I was taught that life is a test, a threshing floor to separate "good" souls from evil souls which will receive eternal torment.

New Age thought says that we are spiritual beings in a physical body. I understand this to mean that once our spiritual part learns enough or releases enough attachments, then we will be released from this physical bondage. The physical body is a method of teaching or a problem or test, depending on how you look at it.

There is another way to look at this question. We can choose to believe that we are created to be human; that we are not going anywhere else and not becoming anything else.

Most mystical traditions have a central truth, that All is One. To the Sufi, there is only One Being. To the Taoist there is only the indescribable Tao. Even in the bible, God names himself "I am that I am" a claim that God's very nature is existence; everything that exists is God. This Unity means that no place in creation is better or more holy or more spiritual than the place we hold right now. With unity, we are exactly where we were meant to be in creation. We are God being human!

In the creation scene in the bible, God forms clay into the shape of a man and then breathes life into his nostrils. It is important to notice that God did not reach up and grab an angel to animate Adam. He did not create some soul which then animated Adam. God breathed life directly into Adam.

In the end days described in the bible, humans will live on Earth in God's kingdom. All of these ideas suggest that we are created to be humans.

Why does this question matter? This might seem like some arcane debate about how we describe ourselves. Actually, it is very important for this reason. Every journey can be defined in terms of starting point and destination. The journey I might take from Chicago to New York would be very different from a journey from Quebec to Anchorage. The starting point and the destination define the journey.

Our journeys as human beings are very different if we define ourselves as spirit in a body with a destination of

being a non-corporeal spirit in some ascended state or as simply being human. The first journey is about discovering about spirit and how to free it from physical. The second journey is about discovering what it means to be human. What are we? What is the depth of our being? How do all of our parts function together? What is the extent of our power and ability?

Which journey do you choose?

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## Environmental

### *Dreaming the Winter Dark*

by **Jeanie Johnson - Janesville**

I've been thinking about winter as the days shorten and my drive to work is now mostly in the dark. What is it about this cocoon of darkness that makes such an impact? And what is it that I wish to do during this particular time of the year when the daylight does not even provoke shadows and all is either soft light or the complete absence of that light? What might I learn as the sun makes a quick, low arc across the skies each day racing from east to west so fast that I hardly know he has been here? What might I learn from the interior of my own heart?

In many stories of the distant past we hear the voices of people who had more time to contemplate the changes in their environment. They were not distracted by the constant, pervasive flicker of technology, the continual rushing from here to there, the heightened sense of something about to happen. They, for what we know of them, were most likely attuned to the skies and the movements of the planets, comets, the sun and the moon in a way we moderns have not been for many decades. The peoples of our past must have told tales that would have warned their community of the coming winter, of the need to remain close to the fires, to share their resources, to be judicious with food so all would make it through to spring. But they also told tales of the spiritual world, of the ancestors, of the sprites and elementals who came near on the winter winds. It was a time, during the cold snows, to sharpen the skills of story telling and of listening, for each tale was multi-layered with teachings for young and old alike. It was also a time of dreaming. Whatever was carried into the winter was in need of resolution so it could rise in the spring with new energy and become a gift to the community. The time of darkness when the sun slid briefly over the horizon was for dreaming, for sifting, for integrating and for making ready for birth.

I wasn't ready for the light to leave this year. The busyness, the lists, caught me off guard. Now I am trying to catch up to the edges of the darkness, construct my hut for dreaming before the Winter Solstice. The impact makes me breathless for this year it seems to have rushed over the Fall without a care for my plans. There was still heat I wished to feel, apples I didn't pick, cider I didn't drink, dancing in the fallen leaves I didn't do. Winter's languishing sun was not mindful of my warmer, lighter needs. As I accustom myself to the loss, I think I wish to make an intention to work on those things I have brought with me into this dark time. It will sound like this: I intend to dream this winter, composting those ideas, hurts, plans, irritations, close encounters, deaths that I have not harvested and eaten this past summer and which I have by my

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side at the hearth. I intend to look closely at them this winter, each one individually, turning them this way and that, in the glow of the fire, so I can see them differently as they looked so sharp, brilliant and huge in the bright summer light. I intend to allow them to wind their way through my Self, moving in tune with the long nights. I intend that in my dream time I will clean away the prickly bits and pieces, the lingering sadness and the bitter taste of some perceptions so that, when the first breath of green wafts into my winter cave and rustles the embers of my long fire, I will be ready to open my arms to the new world. What I will learn from this I cannot now know but I can trust that it is good, deeply good, and that my own green blade rising will be the way of the Earth and of me. My heart will be a new birth.

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## All Rise!

by Janet Zimborski

"All Rise" is the call of the bailiff in the court room before the judge enters. The words, and the tone of the bailiff will gather together the thoughts and attention of all those in the room. Everyone stands at attention and all conversation is silenced. They are now all gathered for one unified purpose, justice.

There is a feeling of power and order attached to those two words. Each person in the courtroom is already unconsciously responding to those words. Those words will evoke or call forth a feeling, which then sets off other thoughts and feelings, just by triggering the person's memory. For some, the words give a feeling of shame, others pride, or possibly guilt. Yet others will feel betrayal, and to those just doing their jobs, maybe a feeling of neutrality. Depending on what those two words mean to you, your thoughts and feelings will start to program your reactions before the judge and jury even enter the room. You have already set the outcome in motion. This is an example of how life unfolds. You have the power to make or break your life (spirit) based on how you define your world. Using the power of words, mental pictures and sincerity, you can create a new reality or outcome. It is as easy or as hard as you make it. Break free of the words, mental pictures and feelings that have controlled and limited your life. They keep you going around in circles and recreating the same things you have already experienced. It is up to you to take control of your personality (your thoughts, words and feelings) as to your reaction to what you are experiencing and therefore the outcome.

It is most important to remember when you start anything new you will need to cultivate patience, compassion, and a sense of ease. If you get caught up in your failures you can feel like you are not making progress. And you will create more negativity. Stop what you are doing, deep breathe, listen to music, or take a walk in nature. Sit back and reflect on your progress and begin again. Start by setting a goal to live your life by being true to yourself and you will continue to make progress, even though it isn't visually apparent to you right away.

Winter is the ideal time to begin to work on the inner workings of our minds. Think about winter in a new way. When the days shorten and the temperatures fall it is winter saying "all rise". Winter is gathering our

focus and attention. How will you rise to the occasion? What is it that you focus your energy on? Do you get caught up in activities that could potentially be hazardous to your health. Do you partake in events because that's what everybody else does? Is everybody else right? Could you inspire others instead of settling for status quo? What activity or thought seems to take over your life and create exhaustion, anger, depression, or anxiety? Let it go. Create health.

The success of the new year begins now. We can create resilience with our words, thoughts, and feelings right now. We can set ourselves up to breeze through winter without sickness, depression, and poverty. Are you feeling skeptical or cynical just hearing those words? What will you create? What is it that YOU really believe you are capable of?

I speak from personal experience, but I hear stories of other's that validate what I know to be true. One such story came from a Chilean miner. There was a picture of him taken during their captivity underground. He had tied a rope around his waist and he was pulling what looked like a very heavy pallet. This was his physical exercise, and at the same time he was reciting in his mind that he was stronger than the earth that "held him prisoner". He saw in his mind the earth having to "surrender him back out of the mine". He used his will, courage, sincerity and compassion to come to keep up his strength and resolve. Certainly it could have ended differently, but he was the one responsible to keep his mind open and clear to the best possible outcome. He did not give up.

It is Winter. What does the thought of winter do "TO" you? Now look at how it can work "FOR" you. Winter offers a time to gather with others, spend time alone, enjoy the arts and the beauty of nature, and enjoy simple home cooked and nutritious meals, I myself no longer enjoy the business (busy - ness) of supporting ideals that take me away from my core truths of personal freedom, cooperation, and sharing. I would like all of humanity to understand it is within their reach to create the kind of world they want to see. Using resources they already have. All it takes is a little creativity and ingenuity. All Rise!

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