

A three-week initiation journey in the Ecuadorian Andes: birthing ourselves to what?

Before sticking our feet into the almost unbearably hot volcano-heated pool, for our rebirth ceremony, while our bodies are freezing in the 5 am, 8000 feet temperature, we had slept 2 hours. But the next day, we got to sleep at least four hours. Most of the time, we didn't know how long we would sleep; we would just find out when it happen. In private, we asked: what is the point?

Well, recently, I found out that one of the shamanic tools for accessing other realities is prolonged sleep deprivation.

In truth, I don't know how deprived we really were, as we slept through lectures, in buses, and...



through parts of overnight ceremonies...



...or, for that matter, through anything that did not require direct action. The only persons who really slept very little, if at all, were our guide and teacher, Medicine Woman Dr. Liliana Navarrette, referred to as Lily, and her tireless translator, multilingual Claudia Manzini-Egger.



Claudia's role was to insure that the Europeans, the Central, South and North Americans were in unison regardless of language.

So what was the point? Was there a particular reality we were supposed to transcend, and another we were supposed to access?

There is a curious magnetic phenomenon that might point us in the direction of an answer. Did you know that, South of the equator, water twirls clockwise, and North of the equator, counter-clockwise.

Lily tells us that Ecuadorians, owing to the fact that they are a plant that grows on the center of the earth (la mitad del mundo), have a special duty at this point of our evolution. Being between North and South, they live in that space between that which turns clockwise and that which turns counter-clockwise. Consequently, they play out the subtle role of Hermes sitting on the hinges of the doorway, or with one foot in each reality.

What are these realities?

To answer this question at this point in time, I can only proceed symbolically.

Symbolically, then, take the Four Directions. While the same pattern exists worldwide, including in the Celtic world or the Native American traditions, among the Tibetan Buddhists or the Australian Aborigines, it is not interpreted everywhere in the same way.

For instance, while all traditions take us through four seasons, four stages of life, or four psychic evolutionary processes, and they all start with East where the sun rises, the meaning of these processes varies. The Celts attribute to East the element of Air, or intellect and mental processes. They see South as Fire, the drive or action energy, West as water or feeling, emotions, and North as Earth, completion into manifestation in concrete

reality (Ref.: Judy Gardner). In other words, evolving through life means starting with the mind and ending up with materialization, manifestation.

Native Americans, however, attribute to East the element of Fire, or drive or action energy. They see South as Water or feeling and emotions, West as Earth and manifestation in matter, and North as Air, or ascent to Spirit. In other words, evolving through life implies starting with drive and ending with Spirit, away from matter.

So, while, as Jungian analyst Robert Johnson used to say, the European based shamanic tradition sees evolution as a “growing down”, Native Americans see evolution as a “growing up”.

Likewise, different feeling hues are associated with these processes. In the Northern-Western European traditions, death (see Kurzweil’s “The Singularity is Near”) is seen as failure to transcend the degrading prison of biology through scientific control. But in the East, Hinduism and Buddhism, it is living on earth that is regarded as a passing necessity to be transcended into spirit through increased enlightenment (see Grof’s “The Ultimate Journey”).

Lily labels the difference between Western/European thinking (including the United States and North America) and South America, Native America, and perhaps also Eastern traditions, as Arian and Indian, respectively. She also distinguishes between Lunar reality (equalitarian, symbolic, matriarchal) and Solar reality (competitive and warrior, hierarchical, patriarchal) both among Arian and Indian traditions.

In other words, according to Lily’s theory, you can live in an Indian or an Arian

reality, and you can adopt the Lunar or the Solar perspective in either one.

So what reality were we supposed to transcend, and what new one were we supposed to access, thanks to our extended sleep deprivation?

.Again, symbolically, sixteenth century alchemy may have the perfect image to illustrate the answer. This image (right) represents the Royal Mercurial Eagle in its perpetual cycle of ascending and descending between heaven and earth. The Eagle plucks a feather from its wing and drops it onto the earth each time it prepares to ascend again. Consequently, the earth is becoming increasingly spiritual and spirit is becoming increasingly earthy (no, not a Bald Eagle). The ultimate product should be the Great Cuniunctio, or the great union or marriage of opposites, the Hierogamus.

This image suggests that there is not one reality superior to the other, nor one direction more valuable than the other. Instead, the two directions are mutually complementary, and act as mutually transformative.

That means that the reality to be transcended is neither the Arian nor the Indian one but, rather, the sense that they are opposed or incompatible. Instead, they must **both** be embraced to access this potential of mutual



transformation. The resulting cuniunctio is a creative process that, at this point in time, can only be seen in an altered state of consciousness when the Transcending Function comes into play. This is also called Magic! Perhaps it can be induced through extended sleep deprivation?

Here is a peek at what the struggle towards this conjunction might look like:



Lily playing Trickster (Mercurius) at Claudine's expense by stating:

- Arian/Solar: nature is NOT intelligent. It is instinctual. Only mankind is intelligent.

Claudine protesting:

- Arian/Lunar: nature IS intelligent. Science has demonstrated that plants and animals are able to solve problems, to adapt to change, to express feeling such as attraction or fear.

Native American tradition:

- Indian/Lunar: Animals and Plants are our relatives. Great Spirit speaks through them.
- Can you imagine what the Indian/Solar would say---???

Lily playing Trickster on Claudine, again:

- Indian/Lunar: People from the North separate too much. It is more important to unite, not separate! For instance, when you think that black is black, it may actually be white; what seems empty may actually be full. Opposites mean nothing!

Claudine protesting:

- Arian/Solar: But differentiation is important BEFORE uniting! Uniting

must happen in differentiated consciousness, otherwise it is called pre-conscious, not trans-conscious! Take for instance falling in love. Hearing the voice of a singer, I imagine him as a tall dark and handsome prince on a black horse. When I see him, he turns out to be a short, fat, old man riding a mule. My first image was a projection! It is important that I know the difference between my projection and objective reality!

Lily laughing:

- No it is not: there is no "objective reality"! It is in your power to restore the prince's beauty. You can make him tall dark and handsome. This is the power of the feminine. Just use Magic!

Having fun with the Middle of the World's teasing? If so, you have potential for being an Indian. Otherwise, you are condemned for the rest of your life to being an Arian!