

TAKE THE PATH WHICH LEADS DOWN....

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A relative of mine, who has Alzheimer's disease, looks in the mirror and doesn't recognize himself. Becoming angry, he says, "Who are you?" Why are you following me?"

Alzheimer's dis-ease. When we become so ill-at-ease with our self that we no longer recognize it. Or perhaps we never did. Never wondered, *Who am I?* Alzheimer's as the final end-product:: radical alienation from one's essential being. *When we forget.* We forget who we are. We forget, rather than remember. Re-member. To put ourselves back together again, whole. Entire. So that we may see ourselves for the first time. So that we may begin all over again. Over and over again, each time a new beginning, blossoming a larger awareness, in space, in time, spiraling up and down the hours, the days, the years, the centuries....

Remember your freshman year in college? Remember the ancient Greeks--Plato, Aristotle, Euripides, Sophocles? Those of us of European extraction identify with this long-ago civilization. The Parthenon, high on its hill in Athens, still stands in tribute to the philosophical foundations of western civilization. We remember Socrates, his dictum, "Know thyself." Socrates himself, however, inherited this pure and profound admonition from the Delphic Oracle, originally a female priestess, through whom the divine was said to speak.

Back in 1990, I journeyed to Greece with my friend Clarissa, seeking the Goddess. On the second day of our adventure, we caught a bus from Athens to Delphi, and along with hundreds of other tourists, walked down the road to the guarded fenced in site. Buying our tickets from the man at the ticket booth, we were surprised and upset to discover that Apollo is more prominent than the Pythia. His Treasures, marching up the hillside, echo modern times, where money substitutes for real value.

"Go down the hill a ways, and onto the other side of the road, take the path which leads down to the old sanctuary...." These words, from a young woman whom I had talked to months ago, softly push their way into my inner ear. I tell Clarissa, and we walk down to the older ruin. Unlike the crowded main event above, the sanctuary of Athena Proneia is nearly deserted, its only inhabitant a lone female guard! Immediately, we are drawn to what is obviously the ruin's central focus, despite its scattered remains. It is as if, in broad daylight, with blue sky overhead and surrounded by scruffy dusty trees, we have moved between the worlds to enter a holy presence. Gazing in wonder, we behold the *tholos*, a series of concentric rings made of gigantic stone blocks. Here, guide books would later tell us about *tholoi* we would encounter in other ruins, is the place where the god issued forth. The sacred place.

As are other places "sacred" to me. Why? What does that mean? When I was a young child my family would travel across the west by train from Idaho to Wisconsin in the summertime, to visit relatives. Always, the austere, rocky landforms of Wyoming would hold me, haunt me. Especially one type of form, what I learned later to call "the overthrust angle." This is an angle of about 36 degrees off the horizontal, making the landscape look like ocean waves caught, frozen in time. As an adult, I became conscious of this angle itself, and the way it captured my imagination, sending me into reverie.

On our 1990 journey to Greece, while touring the mountains of Crete, we came across a ruin that is just beginning to be excavated. Walking behind our host, the farmer in whose field the ruins are located, I am bent over, lost in reverie. The man stops. I look up to encounter the face of a cliff across from the field in which we are standing. The cliff juts up to about 36 degrees from the horizontal. There it is. The haunting. That place. The original? I burst into tears, my eyes devouring that singular form, that visual cue which, like some Ariadne's thread has led me down through the centuries to some original time. When? 36 degrees. My personal symbol. But of what? The tears do not stop. They flow unimpeded down my cheeks as my eyes move on to caress the hillsides. Crested with silvery olive trees and shadowed by Mount Idi behind, the hills roll down gently to meet with tranquility, the blue Aegean.

Sadness. Unbearable sadness. A sadness which I do not understand. A sadness which I do remember, I feel it thrumming within me, a

distant beat, a reminder. *Yes. Don't forget. Don't ever forget. Don't forget who you are, where you came from, what you are here for.*

When I began to read through the submissions for this issue's theme, on Re-Membering, I was surprised and troubled to notice a dominant mood, that of sadness. Not the sadness of nostalgia, though that is there, too, but of something more, something deeper. And when I connect this mood to my mood on the hillside in Crete, I feel my self re-remembering, going back in time and space, wanting to begin again. For I feel this soul-wrenching sadness as a deep well of collective pain; it is our sadness, our woman's *human* sadness at how we are, and have been.

I write this as NATO planes continue to bombard Bosnia, in retaliation. ("Let's fight! Might makes right!" Yet how does our fighting show others that they should stop fighting?) I write this as the Hiroshima exhibit at the Smithsonian continues to avoid confronting US culpability in World War II's tragic ending. As a nation, we are *not* re-remembering. Nor are we re-remembering our own genocide of Native Americans. I write this as Chinese authorities attempt to control the squirming bleeding life energies of 30,000 wilding women in Beijing. I write this as Senator Packwood becomes scapegoat for men's view of, treatment of, women. I write this as the US Congress investigates the death of Randy Weaver's wife and children. The image of this woman holding her baby on her hip behind the glass of the cabin door is etched in memory, taking its place beside the photo of the girl child running down the road in Vietnam, naked, terrorized....

A sense of unbearable sadness. Of a common oppression which, though it may be buried and concentrated inward, does not leave, but remains to haunt us, all our days long, as we attempt, over and over again, to set our lives right. To love each other. To, first, and by far most difficult, love ourselves.

We remember our mothers, our grandmothers, ourselves. We remember how they do not re-member, or how they do, and we long to hold them in memory as if they did re-member, so that we can re-member, can have that thread of memory linking us to former times. But how far back, how far do we have to reach through the veils of our unknowing to that bedrock of strength--so that their strength can be ours, so that we can go on and do what must be done at the turning of this millennium, when the whole human race is

remembering, aren't they? Will they? Them? Ha! Them is us. Will *we*. Will *I*. Will I do what I came here to do? Will I re-member myself fully enough? All the different parts of me? All the different stories of this life and others' lives which teach me, hone me to a razor edge? And those other stories? The ones of long ago, of paradise once-upon-a-time full of love and light, they illumine the way, and soften the blows, they whisper of times undone, of times to come. Yes. Yes. I am re-remembering now. Re-remembering the *tholos*, the concentric rings: of the planets in their courses, radiating outwards from our viewpoint on Earth; of how a rock, when thrown into a lake, produces those same radiating rings. As a child I always wondered when the rings would stop. I always tried to see the final one, the one which, beyond it, there was no other. And I always failed to decide which ring it was. It seemed that the rings went on and on, they kept on flowing outwards, only more and more subtle, tenuous, requiring extra-sensory perception to pick up on them, to pick up on the waves of feeling which have always connected us to ourselves and each other....

If only, once, if only once-upon-a-time all the people in Bosnia were to feel their feelings, the ones which underlie what they think they are feeling, the ones which we have in common--the sadness, the terror, the abandonment. If once we could but feel that abandonment, it would cease! All of us in feeling it are feeling each other feel. All of us in feeling it, are mirroring each others' feeling. There is no separation. There is no radical alienation from one's own being. There is only this feeling. This memory. Re-remembering our own sadness that we have forgotten how to love.

Like Isis, the Egyptian Goddess of Wisdom, we still seek to gather the dismembered parts of Osiris, to put ourselves back together again. As individuals. As a species. As creatures clinging to the broad beautiful back of this suffering planet. As radiating rings of spiritual fire. We are an ocean of love telescoping into a tear drop running down the face of the Mother Goddess, her breasts spilling the Milky Way.