

## ***On the „Mother Goddess,“ and related subjects***

Tue, 06 Oct 98

A.P. wrote:

*I recently read Demian. Can anybody explain what happens towards the end of the book. I really enjoyed the first 70%, but I found the last part very confusing. Your views will be appreciated but please keep it simple: I'm an engineer.*

*Can I interpret the telepathy between Sinclair and Frau Eva literally? What happens to Demian at the end? What is the meaning of the ending? Is Demian a symbol for some part of Sinclair's psyche that dies so that he can live on.*

A.P.

Dear A..

The following are answers to your questions, some of which are interrelated. They are complex, so relax and go with the flow. I tend to give more information than is needed, i.e., I tend to go off on tangents, but in the end they provide a richer answer.

In general, to understand Hesse, you need to understand romanticism; and to understand romanticism, you need to superficially understand the history of Europe and Germany from the 1300s forward. Also, a basic understanding of psychotherapy is essential - read Herbert Marcuse's Eros and Civilization - it explains the relation of the Mother to psychotherapy and indirectly to Hesse.

It also helps to understand what Hesse's contemporary artists were doing. Romanticism, in a nut shell, is about the sensitive individual (the Mother Goddess ) against dominating society (The Father). Usually, the sensitive individual is represented by an idealistic and intuitive female married to a bourgeois man whose life is defined by middle class values and whose ultimate goal is staying a step or two ahead of his peers for the sake of respect and status.

The husband rarely is motivated by anything noble or ideal. The society is often characterized by the non spiritual Christian Church and the bureaucratic military of the period. In most romances, the sensitive female dies - she can't buck society. Tolstoy's Anna Karenina is the only

classical romance that provides a happy balanced reconciliation of the Mother and the Father in Levin's marriage to Kitty. Read Allan Bloom's Love and Friendship.

The history of Europe prior to the entry of romanticism was terrible and required great social discipline. As a result, city and family fathers were domineering, and vertical social mobility was often limited to arranged marriages. All of this tended to repress the free pleasure orientation of the Mother in everyone. When the subconscious senses that the danger has passed, it wants to express itself. When the conscious continues to repress it, then it breaks out in unexpected ways. Its first social appearance is usually in art. Hesse for example.

Hesse's contemporaries were getting into surrealism. Consider Camus and Dali. One of Hesse's favorite writers was E.T.A. Hoffmann, a master of the transition from the real to the surreal. Most people who have difficulty with Demian become confused in the latter third of the book when Hesse moves from the real to the surreal. The same is true with the Steppenwolf, although Hesse manages the transition much better in this case.

His contemporaries were also experimenting with psychotherapy. Hesse had an advantage in that area because he was the first [major ED.] writer to undergo psychotherapy, and he naturally used his new set of symbols in his work.

*AP Question:*

*Where can I get more information about the early Germans worshipping the Mother Goddess?*

*BAS Response:*

As far as understanding Hesse goes, don't waste your time trying to learn about GERMAN WORSHIP of the Mother Goddess. On the other hand, the concept of the Mother Goddess with respect to the development of society and its implied association with the development of the individual is important in understanding Hesse. I recommend you read the following book by Bachofen. It is available at Amazon.com:

Ralph Manheim (Translator)

J.J.Bachofen "Myth, Religion, and Mother Right :  
Selected Writings of J.J. Bachofen.

*AP Question:*

*What does the Mother Goddess have to do with women?*

*BAS response:*

In a sense - nothing. What do ships and hurricanes have to do with women? They are referred to with feminine pronouns.

The Mother Goddess is a symbol that naturally came to be in ancient societies where sexuality was unregulated, marriage did not exist as we know it today, paternity was unclear while maternity was obvious. During those times Women had a political ascendancy over men by virtue of the fact that children could trace their ancestry only through their maternal lines; therefore, they had property rights. All of this is thoroughly discussed and supported in Myth, Religion, and Mother Right: Selected Writings of J.J. Bachofen, which I recommended above. Hesse built off of this image adding psychotherapy concepts of the pleasure principle.

The Mother Goddess represents pleasure, which includes life, that comes from the dark unknown, the womb, the depths of the sea, and the earth, and the eventual return to the dark unknown - death. It sees death as a natural cycle not to be feared.

Mother Goddess worshippers practiced orgies and had temple prostitutes. The babies of these temple prostitutes were often burned alive as sacrifices to the Mother Goddess. Mother Goddess worship is principally characterized by pleasure and death. Eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die. It appears that prostitution came into practice first in temples of the Mother Goddess.

The Mother Goddess in Europe was eventually subjugated to the Father with the advent of Christianity during the dark ages. The last strong holds of the Mother Goddess were in India and they were wiped out by the British East Indies Trading Company.

*AP Question:*

*What is the process of the subconscious?*

The process of the subconscious is recognizing personal wants and needs. Every individual wants to do what he wants to do. This is his wants and needs. Whenever the individual does things differently from what he wants to do, then he is either reconciling himself to the real world and or the wants and needs of others. One living on the South Pole may wish to sunbathe, but reality says 'no way Jose.' One may wish to drive thru Johannesburg at sixty miles per hour without stops, but the wants and needs of others makes that impossible. As I said before, there is a continuum with doing only what we want at one end and doing only what others want at the other end.

All forms of life are designed to survive and reproduce, and this is all ultimately related to happiness. Animals have special features for survival, the brain being the most important. Advanced animals leverage their strengths with tools. Man's most important tool is symbols. Read Jung's Symbols of Man [Man and his Symbols, ED]. His most powerful symbols are words. Symbols are tools because they help people put their feelings on the table so that they can begin to work on them with the problem solving techniques they have developed over their lives.

Man's brain has two special elements: the cerebrum, sometimes called the old brain, i.e., it evolved first, and the cerebral cortex. later.

The cerebrum is where the brain creates sensory images which are experienced as feelings (and are symbols) based on sensory input, and stores these images so that we can quickly access them to identify potential sources of pleasure and pain; so that we can fight or take flight. Generally, these images gives us the power to recognize what we need in order to survive.

You can easily think of situations where the painful is life supporting (any form of discipline) and the pleasurable is deadly (any form of addictive behavior). The images formed in the cerebrum arise from personal experiences and they tend to form slowly; however, under very emotional circumstances, images can form quickly.

The two most powerful images (keep in mind these images are feelings) are the mother and the father. All other images are colored by these two images. Consider the romantic languages and their use of gender for non sexual things; mother earth, the father land, etc. Why do we normally give female names to hurricanes? Why are ships referred to as 'she'? Because they feel feminine.

As I mentioned above, images form slowly in the cerebrum, but can be changed quickly under highly emotional situations; that's because the flow of hormones picks up during emotional situations.

A very important aspect of the image making / symbol making process is that the cerebrum cannot differentiate between real events and simulated events, such as a real murder or a television murder. To the cerebrum, they are equal.

Since the cerebrum cannot differentiate real and virtual, virtual experiences do produce adrenaline flow and stimulate sexual hormones. These virtual experiences influence our images. This is why parents must be responsible and regu-

late what their children watch on TV and at the movies. The repetitive gratuitous violence and sexuality absolutely influences our youth, as well as ourselves creating unreal, untruthful images of men and women.

This is why premarital sex should be discouraged - much premarital sex has little to do with love and respect, and much to do with sport, conquest and experimentation. Powerful emotional, hormone laden experiences factor our images and the way we respond to the opposite sex for the rest of our lives.

Experiences lose the power to stimulate the flow of hormones as we become used to them; as we become desensitized. Desensitization defeats the purpose of our mind which is to promote life and reproduction (which includes getting offspring to a point where they can take care of themselves) through being sensitive to our environments.

The cerebral cortex is where the brain converts intuitions to ideas, and is where the brain thinks, implying the exercise of logic. It determines to a large extent what information will be recognized by the conscious mind. The cerebral cortex is where the brain makes decisions to exercise discipline or follow the quick responses of the cerebrum.

All ideas start out as feelings or intuitions which the mind eventually gives form to, such forms as doodles, a stories, a carvings, tunes, etc. These forms are symbols. All great stories (think of the myths) are symbols of our hopes and fears. Think about the feelings you have when you listen to Handel, Wagner, Brahms, etc.

The most common symbols are, of course, words.

The soul longs for a better world while the ego simply longs for the satisfaction of ego centric needs. The ego does not recognize the functionality of the cerebellum or old brain which is to develop images which provide an early warning to the body of potential pleasures and pains. The old brain can not differentiate between itself and others; therefore, any threat is recognized as a threat to its body; the same when potential pleasures. Therefore, the ego can prompt an individual to do harmful things to others in order to satisfy its own body needs, but the old brain senses the threat as a potential threat to itself. That's why children who observe their fathers beating up their mothers feel and behave as though they were beat up. When you are mean to another, you hurt yourself. This is one of the great paradoxes found in most religions.

Hesse is about the development of the identity of the individual and the humanity of society. Humanity is in fact the sum of identities within a society. The evolution of the identity and the evolution of ideas, culture and humanity all move hand in hand; lock step.

Hesse wanted to be a 'dictor', which is often translated to mean Poet, but more accurately is a guide for the soul, and what existence is about. See Fickert's Hermann Hesse's Quest.

Since the beginning, the process of finding happiness and identity has been symbolically modeled by ancients in terms of opposites, good and evil, male and female, mother and father, etc.. The Greeks looked for the golden mean. The Buddhist thru the eight fold path. The astrologers thru their horizon lines, houses, planets and relationships. The alchemists thru their conversion of lead (fallen man) to gold (the Son of God). The Christian model is based on the relationship of the son to the father. The Taoist model seeks the balance of the yin and the yang.

The psyche is Freud's model of how the identity develops and it draws heavily on ancient symbols, particularly on the male and the female which he structures concepts around. (Carl Jung sensed the truth contained in symbols also.) Our identities develop as an interplay between being open to and accepting new ideas, exercising discipline, progressing then starting the cycle over. The symbol for the new undeveloped identity is the mother, the symbol for the disciplined identity is the father. Both are essential for development, but the father principle represented by the father symbol is defensive and fears and fights change.

Think of Arthur C. Clarks 2001 in which the 20th Century man is likened to a fetus in comparison to the knowledge of the advanced society that takes him in.

Under threatening conditions, the penal gland in the brain produces a hormone which triggers the release of adrenaline which includes ACTH which disables the cerebral cortex. In other words, it turns the logical part of the brain off so that our automatic responses can control. LSD and some other hallucinogenic simulate ACTH.

The cerebrum is oriented towards pleasure and away from pain. It is a priori (subconscious logic), not consciously logical. It expresses itself to the conscious as non verbal feelings of anxiety, dread, excitement, etc.. I emphasize the words 'non verbal'.

The conscious chooses which intuitions it is willing to deal with and then converts them to verbal images. Herein lies the power of the reality principle (the father) over the pleasure principle (the Mother Goddess); it can select or reject. Images routinely rejected become repressed.

The mother promotes pleasure. In times of scarcity, the reality principle of the psyche says 'I will die if I play rather than work.' Goldmund played and died, but he lived a life full of passion, and that deserves some merit. The \$64,000 question is 'what is the proper balance between pleasure and discipline?'

There is no single answer because life and reality are dynamic, constantly changing; and generally changing for the better over the course of history with respect to food, shelter, education, medical care, etc. In other words, as we solve the problems of scarcity.

The Mother intuitively senses scarcity and the Father exercises discipline to solve it. When scarcity is solved, the Mother says let's get back to the pleasurable activities we would have been performing if there had been no scarcity. The Father remembers the fear of scarcity and, being ever vigilant, resists returning to pleasure.

The reality principle or the Father wins because logic controls the acceptance or rejection of the Mother, the intuitive, the desire for pleasure. M. Scott Peck observes in his first book The Road Less Traveled that one of the first disciplines humans learn is to postpone pleasurable choices until after pain. i.e., discipline. We do our homework first, then we play. We eat the cake first, then we eat the icing. Most people consider what work they have to do each day. Then they do the hard stuff first and the easy stuff last.

The reason romanticism came about in Europe at the time it did was because the disciplines in practice were no longer required - by the plague cycles, scarcity and the threats posed by every powerful hungry Lord who could amass an army.

Elvira Madigan and A Village Romeo and Juliet, the latter definitely read by Hesse, are about couples who fall in love and wish to marry, but because of military requirements in the first, and scarcity in the latter, the couples can't marry and both commit suicide. These are pre-Hesse period romances where the Mother Goddess's desire for pleasure controls and leads to death in a Father society where realities of scarcity have passed, i.e., the need for defense and scarcity have passed, but the Father principle keeps them in place for fear of loss of order and death.

This is like the company that requires a periodic report because of some threat to the business. Eventually, times get better, the threat no longer exists and the need for the report disappears, but management keeps producing the report because that's what they have always done. The Mother - pleasure principle says the discipline is no longer needed, but the Father who fears death keeps the report.

Regardless of the final choice, our subconscious remembers, even when the conscious pushes (represses) the unselected option out of the mind.

The translation process which occurs after the mind selects an intuition always loses something of the quality of the non verbal intuitive experience, but it adds meaning which can be dealt with in logical ways which can be very powerful and economic in terms of life force.

Translating the non verbal to the verbal means translating into words. Words which are symbols which have more preciseness than cerebral images. The translation of a first order intuitive image to a second order artifact such as a doodle, a story, a carving, tune, etc. is the first half of the creative process and is a function of the Mother. The translation from a second order image to a definitive formalistic statement is the second half. The second half can not occur until the first half happens.

It should be clear by now that man lives in a world of symbols. Mystics realize that there is a loss in the translation of intuitions to well defined thoughts, and they work, i.e., practice discipline, to return to the intuitive. Hesse realized that both the intuitive and the disciplined were necessary as set forth in N&G and in Steppenwolf.

*AP Question:*

*What are the personal wants and needs?*

*BAS Response:*

They are what ever your soul/heart longs for. Whenever Hesse starts really getting heavy, he almost always uses the word 'longs'. We 'feel' longing, and our conscious acts to satisfy our longing. We don't really know what we want, however, so we have to keep trying and we learn through experiencing the bitter and the sweet.

Since the beginning of time, the purpose of every act of every man and woman has been to accomplish Happiness. Because happiness has not been an easy thing for most folks to achieve, it has become the greatest of all mysteries.



A person's identity is ultimately the product of his choices. Our friends usually describe us in terms of our jobs (he's an engineer, she's a salesperson, they are cyclist, he's a Hesse enthusiast, etc.). We ourselves identify ourselves in terms of what we know and can do. A person who makes no choices has no identity for all practical purposes.

The keys to the value of our choices with respect to our identity and personal happiness(which are the same thing) are whether or not we make decisions as a result of our free agency or free will; whatever phrase you prefer. Also, do the choices result in enlightenment which is growth.

Hesse hated social and religious conventions which judge people. He once said: 'I only needed to hear the "Thou shalt," and everything inside me was transformed, and I became intractable.'; he felt social and religious conventions restricted agency both directly and indirectly: directly by teaching what he believed were false values, and indirectly by pressuring individuals to behave as Nietzsche's herds of cattle. Thus he was a romantic in the classical sense - the individual against society.

At this time, I think it is important to recognize that the Christian Church in the 17th thru 19th century had generally forgotten its mission of bringing all unto Christ and teaching the way of eternal life. Instead, it was more about power and politics. Most romantics, excluding Tolstoy, attacked Christianity with a passion because of the damage it did to the human spirit.

Since we are all motivated to be happy, the path of decisions we chose to lead us to happiness pretty much defines our identities and draws the Biblical tree of life, each decision being a branch in that tree.

If you think about it, most people think they have an idea of what happiness is, but the fact that they do not find it indicates that they really don't know what it is.

Most have to reach a point of deep frustration: to the point that they absolutely know that they don't have a glimmer as to what happiness really is, before they begin to find it. The Christian world calls this state a broken heart and a contrite spirit.

So the process of discovering our happiness becomes paramount to understanding existence, which is another way of saying ourselves, our identity.

*Love, Self and Ego*

Loving yourself is the opposite of loving your ego. In fact the ego is a road block of fear which blocks the way to our identity. As Buddha said: the self is like a many petaled lotus flower that slowly opens, each petal represents an aspect of ourselves, eventually we are everything. This is because everything we experience is defined in terms of ourselves. The bigger we are, the bigger things we can describe. The ego is not who we are but the parts of ourselves we fear the most.

To me the ego is the fear we feel when we experience change and we manifest the ego when we resist change by digging in with our heels and fingernails. All resistance to life is the ego.

We define ourselves falsely when we make our happiness a condition of the way someone else treats or responds to us. Covey talks about a Christ Centered or principle centered life versus a spouse centered life, family centered life or job centered life. His point is happiness can only come from inside, and we manage what is on the inside by living true principles. True principles never rely on others, but they are the only way possible for us to appreciate and love others.

The Tao says that all is determined by Teh, the laws of nature, and the Tao, the ways of righteousness. When we go contrary to either, we confuse ourselves and experience fear.

I like Frank Herbert's Dune where the Bene Gesserit mother of Muad Dib teaches him to not resist fear, but to relax and embrace it. Then it moves on and for the first time you can comprehend and conquer it. This is Hinduism in a nutshell.

Well, now that you understand existence, what do you do next? You relax and dance with life like the wuwei masters. When life steps on your foot, instead of becoming angry and frightened (the same thing), imagine you are a master jade worker and you just found a color variation in a beautiful piece of jade and you are thrilled and excited about figuring out how to work your design with it. You will probably have to change your original design, but that is OK, because the new design is real.

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