

joined. They meet. It is this image of Meeting that I point to as central to a religious sensitivity to the feminine. It is here that, I believe we touch on the heart of Quakerism. In the Society of Friends the meeting is the central dynamic living symbol along with that of the Inner Light.

I want to conclude this section by sharing some reflections on images of God. Insofar as we humanize God or divinize the human, God is presented as female or male. The engagement of the feminine calls for both male and female images of God. This will involve a major shift in the western religions, at least, a shift that is necessary, I believe, for us to realize the fullness of life—male and female—that is possible. In order for this to happen there are aspects of divinity that will have to come to the fore that might appear strange and unusual. It is true that there are a number of images of the nurturing God in the Bible. I affirm these and hope that they enter more dynamically into Christian and Jewish consciousness as feminine as well as masculine. However, there is another image of God that evokes the feminine in me.

From my earliest years, the name God evoked in me a vague presence. As I grew in age and especially in the midst of my meetings with the Hindu traditions and Buddhism and the Christian theology of Karl Rahner, I came to a realization of God as mystery—the unnamable, the silent one who speaks in silence, the dark as well as the light, chaos as well as order. I came to experience the divine dimension of reality as that experience of an inability to fully fence in reality, to fully define it or ourselves, to fully image a reality in which I live whose images continuously change, whose boundaries I cannot pin down. I came to realize that God is not to be symbolized merely by the order of the clockmaker but also by the boiling pot of water, not only manifest in the intricately structured Taj Mahal but also in the teeming, tumbling back streets of Calcutta, the city of Kali. In the end, we need the goddesses as well as the gods. They can point us to images of the full humanity and then beyond to the fullness of reality.

The Feminine: Receptivity and Power?

As I reflect on receptivity and the feminine, I am carried into my own training as a minister which is training to be a servant. It seems to me that this experience has parallels in the lives of women

who are reared in our culture to be women which is to be a servant, and in the lives of men and women in the corporate world. There is both limitation and power in this training to be a servant and this is the limitation and power of being receptive. It also is a process that involves much risk and trust.

Many Christian people, ordained and unordained ministers have been trained to follow in the footsteps of Christ and to be for others. A fundamental element of my own training involved serving others, not on my own terms or on the terms of those being served but rather on the terms of the church. From the age of 13, in the seminary, as well as in my homelife, a style of life was given to me and I was constrained to form myself according to its form and patterns. That form was called the "will of God." Often it was the will of a human director.

As a teenager I struggled with that will as I struggled for my own identity. In the end I succumbed to the form, at least externally. All along, however, I did feel a unique soul pressing itself forward.

A central element in my training was the development of the virtue of obedience. Such obedience involved doing the will of another and, again, shaping ourselves according to the terms of another. Gradually, I began to realize that obedience meant to listen, to take in, to receive. And I began to listen to many voices. Not only did I hear the voices of our directors but I also began to hear my own voice and to hear murmurs from the many people I was reading, novelists and philosophers such as Tolstoy and Camus, Sartre and Marcel, Buber and Carl Rogers. I began to realize that there were other shapes and forms and that I had a hand in the creation, a very small hand at first and a hand that I continue to struggle to discover.

In 1963 I was deeply touched by Carl Rogers who gave to me a very personal way to relate with others. In his client-centered therapy, I found a way to center myself on the other and to reflect their side to the other. I had not yet found a solid side of my own. Rather I tried to enter the side of the other, to imagine it and to search out with that other opening ways beyond their own struggle and pain. Such hearing is quite powerful. Yet there is something missing from it.

The question was posed to me: Where do you stand? What are your terms? Where is your ground? I had a difficult time responding

to those questions which are really the same question: Where are you in all this? And that continues to be my major question. I was experiencing what Buber calls the experience of the other side. I was and am weak in the experience of my own side. I could receive but I had a difficult time asking for what I wanted (not in an ego-centric way). I could give on the terms of the other but not as easily on my own terms.

The power of receptivity, in the Buberian sense, is a power that is not isolated but rather is joined with the power of having a side of one's own. To receive only on the terms of another is unfair to both the giver and the receiver. Rather a fair and full receptivity is one in which I can hear the other side and hear my own side. Then I can choose to give and to receive in accordance with a balance of give and take. Hopefully, that would be more satisfying to all involved over the long run.

Two images come to me with regard to this kind of receptivity. The first is a mutual embrace where energy moves in both directions. Trust and risk are involved in both receiving and giving. The power is not simply in one or the other but in the exchange between them.

Another image that is pertinent to me recently is that of a doorway. To stand actively on a doorway is to stand in the "between," a place of intense trust, a quite auspicious place. I stood on a doorway in 1976 in a Shiva temple in Madras. Someone requested that I go in or out. I did not understand. I respectfully went out. Now I choose to stand in the doorway. For to bring myself to the doorway is an act of trust in the past and the future. To stand between, giving and receiving is to be a different kind of servant than one who lives only on the terms of another. Rather the servant who lives in the "between" is formed by self and other, is formed in the relation, in the meeting. My center then is not in myself, or in the other, but rather in the realm between or among us. The movement is not simply toward an eternal Thou but rather in the eternal between. This is the power of a receptivity that is a part of a process rather than one in which I live on the terms of another solely. It is a receptivity that is part of an exchange.

Thus the primary image that I offer as an image of the engagement of the feminine is the image of a meeting. To enter a meeting

with openness and receptivity, as well as with ones own power, is to trust and to risk and to engage all the elements of the present reality in an exchange that grows and changes shape and rests in the confidence of the processes of meeting.

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ENGAGING THE FEMININE: REFLECTIONS

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As I search for words with which to communicate my sense of the feminine, my mind whirls, circles, intertwines, and that which is uppermost gives way to that which rises. It turns, as the symbol for the Yin and the Yang seems to turn on itself. In the Introduction to his translation of the *I Ching*¹, Richard Wilhelm helps to clarify our concepts of feminine and masculine. He reminds us that when the

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Chinese devised the circle divided into dark and light to symbolize the duality in the world of female and male, they did not mean to imply physical, sexual characteristics. Yin here means cloudy, dark, yielding; Yang brings images of banners in the sun, brightness, the firm. We now use these terms to identify the duality within a person, recognizing feminine and masculine aspects within one being.

Some of the things which, for me, seem to relate to the feminine are:

The sense of deep places, secret, powerful
The struggles of relationship
Connection with the earth, seeds, growing green things
A sense of power which rises in me unannounced
The Goddess
The sudden, nearly irresistible need to be a separate
being, which sweeps over me, regardless of other
relationships
The deep intimacy with myself

Being an introvert, as well as deeply subjective in my approach to the world, my strongest attraction is for the intimacy with myself, with the inner spaces. I find one of the most fascinating aspects of my life to be the ongoing dialogue which I have with dreams—my dreams, dreams of my clients, of my friends, dreams which I read in books. When I was younger and beginning to read Jungian and Humanistic psychology, whenever I came upon a dream I read it with a guilty feeling. It was always so utterly wonderful that I secretly felt I was treading on forbidden ground, that I might somehow be punished for enjoying it so much. Odd though that may seem, the feeling persisted until I returned to college to continue my interrupted education, this time with the study of dream, myth, art, and the psyche as the central network. At last I felt ⁴⁴“legitimate.”

My fantasy about the unconscious is that of an enormous warehouse, vast beyond my imagining, where every image I have ever seen is filed in some incredibly complex manner. This enables the maker of dreams, to find precisely the combination of visual forms required to create the symbolic representation of a psychic state or process. There is nothing random about this choosing. Careful and imaginative investigation by the dreamer, winding through a trail of associations and memories, arrives, sometimes with an intuitive leap, sometimes by a massing of understood images, at the mes-

sage of the dream. Then the seemingly meaningless succession of fantastical images resolves giving the dreamer a deep sense of Tightness, and the knowledge that this dream has been comprehended.

Exploring dreams in this way is a feminine process, a moving within the darkness, making use of a diffuse sense of awareness, yielding to the unknown, while trusting in the creative power of the psyche. I can image moving into inner spaces as walking through trees standing in sunlit grass, to a huge fir, spreading its branches low to the ground. Moving within those reaching green arms, I find myself close to the enormous trunk. Pitch oozes out, bubbles against the shaggy bark. There is an opening in the wood. I step inside. The passageway leads down, winding through the roots into the earth. I sense the darkness, rich smells, rough texture. A rush of air sweeps past me opening into a larger cave, a resting place—Ali Baba's treasure trove, perhaps? The bedroom of a nymph? The great god Pan's secret hideout? Whispers of all these marvels—and more—rustle in my ears. Here the Goddess shines, an iridescent gleam defines her. Here seeds await their time, dreams lie a-borning, children snuggle their heads into their pillows. Wings of poetry ready their shadows for flight into words, music draws a quiet breath, colors shimmer and tremble in anticipation. I wait. There is no need to move, to act, to decide. This is the place which precedes birth, when time .and the act are together ripe. The bud will open.

Sometimes a dream or fantasy image is so visual that it seems to compel some actualization, as though the unconscious were asking for a chance to be seen. Painting, drawing, sculpting, poetry, all are ways to facilitate the emergence of the image. Struggling to paint my sense of the inner quality of the feminine, I find pictures of a mountain with deep dark rivers running beneath it, a womb full of flames, a crystal bowl containing fire. Each succeeding painting reaches further into the reality I am experiencing, none seems to get there. At last I paint a silver center; silver is the moon metal, cold relating to the implacable heart of the deep feminine places. This center is guarded by pointed crystals which shine in colors of violet, blue, magenta. They guard the secret depth, and they pierce the heart; the deep feminine follows its ultimate rhythm regardless of personal desires. A spiral rises out of the center, growing larger as it reaches out, touching all parts of the picture, leaving the page to

move beyond, giving me some sense that the absoluteness of this deepest truth is merged with all life.

When I sit in Meeting for Worship this same spiral sometimes appears, making a connection between the individual me and the greater Spirit. The Spirit has always been masculine in character for me—I experience it as a penetrating light which enters from above, expanding within me, filling me with a sensation of space, an openness wherein the Spirit may work upon me. With an increasing awareness of the depths of the feminine, I am receptive in a different way. The image is not so much that of a bride as of a priestess—an active participant in the mystery. I find that she is more interested in ritual, in some activity, that sitting in silent waiting is not her preference.

These things are still emerging into my awareness. The sense of the Goddess present within me comes more frequently, and I begin to recognize certain qualities. She is that part of me which is at home in the dark, luminous with mystery, nurturing, circular in awareness. She waits at my left side, a little behind me, coming up from below. She does not enter until invited. When I sense her presence, or I am in need of her, I silently request her help, opening, in image, an area in my body around my left lower ribs and kidney. How she manifests, or what direction her intervention will take, I never know until it has happened.

This process which I have been describing, of attending to dreams, to fantasy, of change, of ritual and being open to the entrance of the Goddess, is also the process which attenders of the Friends Conference on Religion and Psychology have come to expect will take place at our annual gathering. Many times I have described this conference to potential newcomers: This is a place where people come expecting change—and it happens! Over the thirty-nine years of our existence the blend of the Quaker religion and Jungian psychology has allowed us to open our minds and hearts to the mysterious depths of myth, dream, fantasy, silence, and the Gods. And though many of us tried all year to do just that, we found, as we met again in a group, that the power of our multiple spirits and souls worked its magic on each individual. We experienced the shaking reality of the Gathered Meeting when a whole room of silent worshipers seemed to be linked in one Spirit. We were caught in the excitement of creating our images in clay, paint, words, or dance. We formed lasting friendships, deep ones, open to

soul communication, renewable without effort year after year. And when we said goodbye we wept with joy for the sharing which we held with so many.

In May 1982, however, we did something different. In previous years we had a topic, a focus for our attention, around which our diffuse awarenesses were gathered, something which challenged us, inspired us, threatened us, saddened us. This year we had the feminine as the topic, our title, "Engaging the Feminine," led us straight back into ourselves, into our corporate feminine being. There was no escape, for our speakers refused to allow us to stray out of the personal experience into the intellectual discussion. Colors in hand, we drew our way through lectures, small groups, even Meeting for Worship. Some of us got angry, some were frustrated. That which we had been engaging unconsciously through the years was now coming into our conscious awareness. And the elements cooperated. The rain seemed determined to melt us all into primordial mud. Never had so many machines broken down, beginning with the steam table for breakfast and ending with innumerable tape recorders. To anyone who has tried to write or talk about the feminine, this disintegration of logical reality will be familiar. She is elusive, she manifests in images, and when the masculine word-power of Logos is brought to bear she slips away, running like water through the fingers, leaving a strong sense of her presence but few words to taste.

Feminine awareness has a circular quality. The mind travels around the terrain, absorbing information, gathering images, sensing nuances. The beginning of such a process is frequently confusing, and much trust is needed to persevere, to allow the emerging image its own time and space. To engage the feminine Conference in a feminine manner brought two diffuse awarenesses together, two women, as it were, meeting to know each other. I dreamed of such a situation shortly before the Conference:

I am in the front seat of a car with a man and woman—she is between us, we are tickling her playfully. He says, "I know what," and carefully ties together a pubic hair of hers and mine, joining us. He leaves. She and I are delighted. She says, "This is the best of all." I agree. We embrace closely—then separate, smiling at the tiny pain of the hair pulling out. I get out of the car, it is time for class and I gather my books. I stand for a moment in the morning to clear my eyes.

I interpreted this at the time to be my own connection with my feminine self, brought about by a male figure, my animus, who first, in previous dreams, had attracted me to himself. When I felt drawn to his presence, he then brought his wife into the group, then gradually arranged the connection with her which culminated in the dream which I related. Sharing my responses to these events at the Conference, I spoke of my personal delight in feeling so connected with the woman within, as well as in increasingly close relationships with women in my outer life. Coming near to my own feminine aspect in this way I found I was also entering into a personally intimate experience of the Goddess, beginning to explore into the range of her power. But, as most of our speakers discover, the Conference is a powerful entity in its own right, and we are often moved far beyond our original intent, as individuals respond and group dynamics develop. I discovered that the dream woman from the unconscious was not only my own personal feminine but also the Conference feminine, married to the masculine, functioning but unaware of herself. Now, in a new emergence, she moves up to be connected with the conscious woman, represented in the dream as myself, which is also the consciousness of the Conference. Choosing to address the title, "Engaging the Feminine," we brought her to our collective diffuse awareness, engaged in active relationship with her, and tied a link between ourselves. I am not surprised, with such a challenge, that we had to undergo some melting at the start, that the rain was so uninhibitedly coming through our shoes, into our luggage and through the roof. Allowing the components first to dissolve is an initial step in the alchemical process; this permits them then to recombine into new forms. By making use of the colors of Cray-pas we had the opportunity to shape images, helping to bring the diffuse into the concrete. Sharing these images, talking about our experiences as they emerged, allowed Logos an opportunity to clarify our evolving awareness. As the time passed, we became familiar with a variety of egg-shaped containers, vulva shaped openings, flowers, vases, wombs containing new life, and the inverted triangle used in ancient times as a feminine symbol. When Mary Hopkins was inspired, Monday morning, to create a new symbol, ^ # ensuing roar of laughter and delight expressed how familiar we had become with our new language. Perhaps it was also explosion of relief that now the two women had truly been joined in consciousness. Our delight was compounded when, as we finally subsided, a male voice from the rear of the room said, quietly, "Ouch!"

And what of the masculine? Again and again, as men told of their encounters with their feminine selves, of their struggles to be in the feminine, that question arose, staying with many as a quest still to be undertaken. I spoke of the feminine as being many things: a sense of a deep place of power, a crystal, silver veined in rock under the mountain, the Eros of relationship, nurturance, connection with the earth. All these are recognized also by men, sometimes as very basic qualities in their being—does that, they then ask, make me less male? Am I, I respond, any less female when I settle on a course of action and move with determination and clarity towards a goal? The answers to these questions must come, ultimately, from the men. In my dreams I find the beginning of an answer to what my own masculinity might encompass, an awareness of the strengths and abilities of my body and mind, a focus of attention, a pleasure in challenge, an ability to order time and space. These things I recognize.

But I am compelled away from these questions. An unrest grips me, a sense of imminent arrival, yet no image arrives, no presentiment stirs. I paint and draw huge pictures divided always between water and fire. Blue, green, purple, lavender swirl on one side; orange, red and yellow leap up on the other. They do not mix. Guardians of a cave appear—within it I lie, in a variety of postures, waiting for I know not what.

I dream I am on a roof, having climbed up with my son. He has gone down the other side. But I am afraid and sit on the peak. The only way down is to slide. I ask for a rope, but when I've tied it to my waist there is nowhere to tie the other end. I can't go down the way I came up. I must slide, catching myself a little by holding the edge of the roof in places. I wonder, wildly, if a helicopter might carry me away, but realize I must go, now.

The next day, in session with a client, the sensation of the Goddess came within me so powerfully that I nearly lost my breath. I felt completely possessed, my body sensations changed, I became an archetype and, recognizing it, I spoke in her voice to my client. The sensations persisted, a small part of me watched in awe. This was the slide down the roof, the dream image accurately presaged the emotional necessity. Not knowing how it would end, no more than I could have predicted how I would hit the ground, I seemed to have no choice but to continue, to commit myself to the Goddess and the archetype with which she had invested me, until we came to an

end, which was, I believe, mutually agreed upon. When she and I separated the knot was still there, again the image of the pubic hair leaps to consciousness. That knot of hair, pulled by common consent from our two bodies, becomes the link, the tool which enables me to make use of both originators. To work with the dream and image, it is necessary to keep awareness in both the unconscious, (following the myth and its development), and in the present reality, (everyday conscious life), into which we must all return from our excursions within. The water and the fire in my paintings stay separate—a preponderance of either extinguishes or vaporizes the other.

The world of dream and fantasy tempts me to remain there, to see all things as symbolic, to live within the mystery, in constant communion with the goddesses and gods. So also, as each conference nears its end, we are loathe to leave such warmth and excitement which, to some, seem far more real than life "out there." Entering fully into that world, we may become lost. Allowing it to enter us, keeping our conscious selves present, we may find the connection we require to stay human while becoming channels for the divine.

A recent dream offered a balance.

I am in Italy, racks of spaghetti dry in the sun. Peasant women are packing boxes and I help. Into each box go some bright marigolds, some spaghetti, and some silverware.

The flowers are beauty, sweetness, color, fantasy. The spaghetti is peasant made, dried in the sun, a staple of life. The silver is moon metal from the earth, the deep feminine, here shaped into practical form. What a nice package: fantasy, color, food, and tools with which to eat. Dreams are indeed remarkable!



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