



SpiralHeart

A Reclaiming Tradition

CoCreationism by Donald Engstrom

We choose to recognize and to embrace the work that we have done individually and collectively for the past eleven years. We choose to exercise our sacred obligations to laugh, sing, dance, and love together as if our lives depend upon it—for they do. We choose to thrive, not merely survive.

After many years of working with this concept, I use the following basic definition;

Co-creation - All beings of all kinds; rocks, rivers, plants, animals, planets, stars, Mysterious Ones, ancestors, etc., eternally creating the Multiverse together every instant of every second.



Of course, within this definition are embedded implications of all kinds.

It implies that on some core levels we are all co-equals, peers if you will. It implies that none of us; Mysterious Ones, ancestors, humans, whoever, are all powerful, all knowing, all seeing, etc., beings. It implies that the multiverse is in constant flux just like any other living thing and that this

growth is fueled by choice. It also implies that we are all woven together in a fine fabric of relationship within which we are each responsible for our own specific delightful obligations.

For me, co-creationism is yet another name for the never ending grand symphony of existence. But unlike a score that is fully notated and set, co-creationism is *(cont. on next page)*

The Year Ahead in Tarot by Beth Owl's Daughter

As you may know, the numerology of dates, such as one's date of birth or the numbers of a particular year, can be used to correspond to the Tarot. In par-

ticular, the Major Arcana (the trumps) of the Tarot reveal certain traits and patterns of the human condition.

Using the generally accepted Western calendar, the year 2003 was the second in a two-year cycle that focused on creating *(cont. on page 4)*

improvisational jazz; free, flowing, yet with it's own internal coherence. Co-creation calls us to actively listen to and participate with the myriad voices that surround and fill us.

One of the most common confusions in the communities I am involved with is the difference between collaboratively designed ritual and a co-creative experiential ritual. A collaboratively designed ritual is when a group joins together to design a piece in which a larger group is invited to participate. The over all piece is built by the small group, often using the consensus process, with a rather firm idea of what will happen when and to whom. One of it's primary goals is to blend all of the designers' visions into a coherent whole which are ideally informed by the larger group they are designing for. Frankly, it is what many Witch camp teachers have been doing for years. In our recent commitment to co-creationism, we have striven to open that planning work to the larger camp communities. Yet, we still primarily retain a ritual form quite similar to the ones created by teaching teams working alone. The structure still remains such that there are primary facilitators and secondary facilitators who often devolve back into simply being participants.



Don't take me wrong, I believe that the ability to collaboratively design is a vital skill. I am quite pleased with our growth as a community in it's development and use. Most of the significantly brilliant rituals I have participated in have been the result of good strong collaborative design work. And I trust that we will continue to fine tune this

tool within the foreseeable future.

What then is the difference that I am talking about? What for me defines a co-creative experiential ritual? Basically, it is making room for the folks participating in the ritual to create immediate influences, taking actions that effect the actual body of the ritual. It is a space that is not controlled by the design team, but actively co-created by all of the folks, human and otherwise, involved in the piece. This can be quite unnerving for those of us trained in the older ways of ritual work. It calls us to radically trust that Mystery will indeed work in that empty space. It calls us to truly embrace the truth of fractal formation in a chaos field. It calls us to learn the arts of improvisation.

My current favorite expression of community co-creative ritual is based on the concepts of 'Group Spell/Prayer Poems' and 'Layered Spell Work'. In short, spell prayers are based upon an intention built by the group which inspires individual spells in mutual support of said intention. Each spell is then set, witnessed and supported by the group as a whole. Layered spell work refers to the use of multiple pieces in support a common intention enacted in groups of two or more at the same time. One possible example could be a dance that supports three spoken word pieces while others are chanting sacred sounds with the whole supported by a string quartet weaving it all together. I suspect that both of these technologies, individually and when they are blended together, hold great promise in the development of co-creative experiences.

Another technology I believe to hold great promise is 'Community Spirit Mapping'. Again, briefly put, this is when a group goes on a deep journey together with an agreed upon intention. When they come back from the journey the group maps out their individual experiences and then synthesizes the individual maps into a larger vision which then becomes a guide for the whole of the group.

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CoCreationism cont....

These last few months of contemplating just how to continue to nurture the co-creative experience has led me to at least one clear realization. When my friend Chelidon, pointed out that most folks have no real understanding of improvisational technique, it shattered one of my unexamined assumptions. My training in the arts has given me a basic understand of improv and how it works.

Most people have no such training, nor have had much experience simply observing improvisational work. I suspect that it would be a good thing to begin such training in the community at large if we really want co-creation to actually make sense beyond the more accessible concepts of collaboration. We cannot expect folks to step confidently and effectively into something without sharing some of the basic guidelines that make an improvisational piece work. The following are a few of the things I think are important to remember when working in an improvisational or co-creative manner.

1. Listen. Look around you. Feel the energy that is present. In other words, pay attention, be in the present. This is an incredibly important guideline for me personally, when I am engaged in improvisational work with others or working alone.

2. Co-creation is not about the individual voice, image, etc. It is about a common experience, a weaving to-

gether of the many threads into a single tapestry. It embraces the mystery that the whole is greater than the sum of it's parts. It is a good thing when an individual voice highlights or perhaps even adds a bit of spice to the piece. It is not such a good thing when an individual voice become the star of the show.

3. Am I truly called to do whatever it is that I want to do?

4. What ego investment do I have in doing whatever it is?

5. How can I do this to support and enhance the larger work?

6. Always remember that it takes practice to make this work. It is not unlike learning to play a musical instrument or any other skill. Practice makes perfect ... more or less. I am not actually that interested in perfection, I just want the piece to work effectively, at least empowering all involved. Of course, it is always a plus in my book, if it is an expression of beauty, balance and delight.

I hope you find this somewhat helpful. What do you think? I hope that there will be continued discussion of our explorations of co-creation. It will take all of our voices to take it from theory to functional application. Please feel free to ask me any questions that come to mind.

May we all dare to dwell in beauty, balance and delight.



The Emerging Cultures

and wielding power, starting with 2002, the year of the Emperor. Last year was the year of The Hierophant -- an archetype whose identity is about tradition, institutions, religious orthodoxy, and formal educational systems. Get ready, because the focus on autocracy and power now gives way to relating to others, as well as making big changes and choices. This year ushers in Major Arcana Card VI - The Lovers. In individual readings, the Lovers card is often exactly what you would assume - relationships, sexual attraction, and creating union with someone. But there are deeper energies when the Lover comes up, energies about how we make the choices that empower relationships in the first place. And, typically, those choices hinge on how we perceive ourselves and our place in the bigger scheme of things.

The Lovers card says that the people we associate with, to whom we give our love, attention, and devotion are a direct reflection of our own self-image. When we are needy, immature, or selfish, we draw people into our lives that feed and are fed by those attitudes. When we are in balance with our highest, most courageous and loving path, we attract and appreciate others whose lights also shine brightly.

In other words, the healthier and happier we are, the healthier and happier those with whom we choose to be intimate.

So on a global level, the Lovers year will be about making choices that echo our desires, common values, and how we, as a people, see ourselves. The most obvious choice

before us, as a nation, is the election this fall. Who will we choose to represent us? Who resonates most truly with what we believe about the identity and soul of the American people?

Naturally, every election year is about making choices. But the Lovers year does not come every 2 or 4 years. In fact, the last time that we had a presidential election in a Lovers year was when Richard Nixon was elected for his first term. I am old enough to remember how explosive that 1968 election was, and how it deeply divided the American people for many years to come. The results of that choice created enormous political, cultural, and even spiritual upheaval in our national identity.

Similarly, this coming Lovers year points to changes that are going to be deeply tied to our ultimate destiny. The Lovers indicates a moral or ethical crossroads - a decision point where we must choose between the high road or the low road. The fact that this is a Lovers year, during such a pivotal election in the United States, seems to be a powerful act of synchronicity and an opportunity for enormous good or sorrow.

Let Love, not fear, be our guide for choosing wisely.

Amaterasu - Light from the Cave

*adapted from sources by: Carolyn
McVickar Edwards and Gwydion O'Hara*

No one is alive anymore who can remember the time Amaterasu, the great sun goddess, took herself into the cave of heaven and refused to come out. But to those who know the story, every mirror on earth is a reminder of that time and of the glorious moment she stepped again into the open sky, sending her surge of strength and will again through all of life.

In those beginning times, the spirit of every living thing was called its kami. The kami of the mountain was lavender and long. The kami of the trees was great and green. Animals had kami, fish and flowers had kami. The kami of the rocks and rivers were silent and calm. All the strength of these kami poured forth from the great mother sun, Amaterasu; she was a vision of bright beauty and strength. Her black hair hung down, bound with strands of five hundred sparkling jewels. This is as it was in the earliest days, and how it is today.

Amaterasu's brother, Susanowo, ruled the ocean. But he was jealous of the greater power of his sister. Because she knew of his ill feeling, she was suspicious when one day he sent word that he was coming to visit. But Susanowo came bearing gifts and speaking of trust and loyalty. Amaterasu and Susanowo ate together, and after the meal had been

cleared away, Amaterasu bowed to her brother. "How glad I am you've come in friendship," she said, her eyes shining. "I was worried you'd come in anger and in bitterness."

Susanowo bowed in return. "Amaterasu," he said. "Let us forget the past. I have nothing but respect and admiration for you."

Late into the night they talked of their love for each other, their plans for the future, and the joy of their renewed relationship. Finally Amaterasu bid her brother farewell and went to the Celestial Weaving House to work with her women in the weaving of sacred tapestries and celestial garments for all the divine realm.

Susanowo sat alone at the huge table, sipping sake and growing increasingly angry as he surveyed the beauty of his sister's palace. The memory of Amaterasu's graciousness grew ugly in his mind. The liquor he drank slowly heated his resolve to show his sister who was really more powerful. Indulging his violent rage, Susanowo destroyed the rice fields, and brought chaos to wherever he passed. Finally, in an attempt to gain his sister's attention, Susanowo broke through the wall of the room where the Sun Goddess was tending to the weaving of garments for all the gods and goddesses. Amaterasu and the divine maidens that were working with her were terrified. Amaterasu rose to



her full height to protect the maidens from the violence of her brother.

"Susanowo!"

Amaterasu's voice was like a light that suddenly fills a dark room, but deep within her heart ached with sadness.

"Susanowo, where are the words of last night? You wrong me. But I ask only that you sleep. Leave off, brother. Sleep."

Instead, Susanowo went to the palace where his sister lived and desecrated her private temple. For Amaterasu, this final act was more than she could endure. Ashamed by her brother's violent actions, and deeply wounded by the hurt he had directed at her personally, the Sun Goddess sought to retreat from the world of the gods. She went to her cave, the Heavenly Rock Dwelling, and shut herself tightly inside it. When she did, her radiance was withheld from the world, and all the lands became dark. The kami of the rice withered. The kami of

birds and animals, mountains and trees turned to gray ghosts. Life without Amaterasu was impossible.

The eight hundred deities called a great council at the River of Heaven. How could they restore their precious Amaterasu, how could they convince her to return to her shining work?

"We must moan and grieve outside her cave. We must shout to her of our dead," said some of the deities.

"No," said the Dread Celestial Woman, Amanouzume, "We must remind her of the joy she brings. We must dance for her."

And so it was the dance of mirrors was planned. All of the ghostly kami of the world gathered up what little strength they had left and brought together pieces of shiny mirror. Together they crafted a great mirror of polished iron. They wove a strand of five hundred jewels like the

ones that the goddess wore in her hair. They hung the mirror, a symbol of the radiance of Amaterasu, along with the strand of jewels and many offerings on a sacred tree outside the cave. Finally, they joined together in song to try and coax Amaterasu from the Heavenly Rock Dwelling. The kami began to take strength from each other, a dance bloomed, and deep inside the cave of heaven Amaterasu heard the voices of the world joined together in song.

It seems that it was inspiration, rather than well-made plans, however that finally lured the Sun Goddess from her cave. As the dance and song continued, Amanouzume, Goddess of the Heavens -- the Night Sky and Stars, began to dance to the great delight of the gathered company, and encouraged by her antics, the other gods and goddesses began to laugh. From within her cave, Amaterasu heard the sounds of those gath-

Into the Cave

*Your destruction in these temples
of trust and creation, dreams and beauty
is too much*

What I offered you is withdrawn

*We will both dwell in the darkness
of your destruction
and my defeat*

Without the balance of rebirth or delight

*This is not the infinity we were meant to
draw*

*The walls of this cave are smooth and warm
I will paint on them stories of the past
but I will live in the poet's present
with offerings to the Muse
on altars of green stone*

I refuse your patterns, blind to light or will

*With wire and clay, blood and gold
I will make a double sided mirror.
and I will wear it over my heart*

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Amaterasu cont....

ered outside. She had heard their songs of praise, and understood the loss her absence would be for the world, but still she had no intention of leaving her cave. When the sounds outside turned to those of laughter, she became puzzled. She opened the entrance to the cave just a little, and a slit of her brilliant light lit up the night. When the kami felt the surge of life they had longed for, the dance became jubilant. Amaterasu opened up her hiding place and emerged from the darkness. When she did, the mirrors of all the kami reflected back to Amaterasu her own stunning beauty so that the Sun Goddess was met with her own reflection. Fascinated with the bright vision of her own beauty, the goddess came forth from the Heavenly Rock Dwelling. As she did, Amanou-zume pulled her forward, while other deities blocked the cave entrance. The Sun Goddess was welcomed back amongst the gods and goddesses.

Once again the kami of the mountain grew lavender and long. The kami of the trees soared once again great and green. The animals and the flowers, and the fish and the rivers, and the rocks swelled alive. On that day Her brother, Susanowo, became the god of the underworld, and as the God of Darkness, he was well suited to his mission. Amaterasu resumed her place in the heavens, and continues to shine her light upon the world of the gods, and the world of the mortals. On that day the strength of all kami poured forth from the great Amaterasu, and in her honor was woven the great pattern of the seasons and of the planting and the harvesting. And so it is to this very day.



SpiralHeart '04 Paths

Elements of Magic

Living Divinity

Art as Divine Embodiment

Sacred Sex

Oracle Theatre

Mysteries and the Muse

Our intention is to depart the solitary cave daring to reemerge into the joy, celebration and beauty of community life.

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