

Aboriginal Spirituality linked to place

Transcript of a Talk on Aboriginal Spirituality, to the Swedenborg church group in Ainslie, Canberra, Sunday Feb 29th 2004 by Steven Guth

One of the things about Aborigines - that people don't seem to realize - is that there were lots of languages, quite different languages around Australia. This was because each language reflected the energy, the music, the wind, the sound and the feeling of the place where people lived.

I know a little German, so I'll say, "Guten Morgen" and Katherine here, can say "....." in Chinese. Now you can hear there is a very different tonal quality in that ... the Guten Morgen is heavily onto the earth, (waves his hands) in Chinese the sound reaches up into the sky - how is it in Danish? (Member of audience speaks) "....." It sort of floats in the water! And in Dutch? "....." - I'm almost swimming in the water, and French Bon Jour" - you see, I'm floating up in the air with the French waftiness, if you want.

And the languages and way in which Australian aborigines talk are remarkably different. You hear people from Central Australia talking, and it's like the sound of the wind - whispering through the sand dunes, it's incredible sound. The area that I'm familiar with, the north coast of NSW, they had an almost Germanic language. These people didn't draw, because they lived in dense forests, something a bit like outside the door here, and they danced. They were incredible at dance and mime. Nobody knows what the people around here were like (Canberra), but let's assume they danced and mimed. This is a way that we will get in touch with this location, particularly [Mt. Ainslie](#).

Mt Ainslie is the spirit of place that relates to Corroborree Park. These are things I collected from Mt Ainslie a few days ago - a piece of wattle tree, some gum leaves, and some rocks. Now those two aborigines as they moved through their land, would have been their sacred objects that tied them to that site, to Mt Ainslie. They called this their Charinga Stone and they actually put symbols on them and these are the sacred objects that they hid away in places, because these are gateways to that area, to the god that lives on that hill. Later on, we'll look at the concept of Jehovah and how much this relates to the Aboriginal concept of spirit of place.

So these are actually links to that hill. And just by being here, we're in the energy of that hill. Later, we'll burn some of these leaves and so the smoke of that hill, the essence of the hill will actually be in our bodies. As we smell the smoke, we will become part of that energy, or that energy will become part of us. And if we carry the rocks home, we can paint little symbols on them. We will also have something that if we look at, we unwrap, we can say we now have access to the Mt Ainslie spirit. A spirit somewhat similar to the concept of Jehovah.

But each of these hills, in each language group, in each place has a different personality. The Swedenborgian concept David told me about is correspondences, that, when you have a physical object, there is a spiritual truth, a spiritual reality behind it. This can be represented - in different cultures it can be represented in different ways. The Chinese, when they look at a large hill, e.g. this is Mt Majura this is Mt Ainslie, this is the link between heaven and earth. And that the people who

modify the hill and live around it, are the links, the creators between the balance between heaven and earth.

This is a bit like the [Yin Yang](#) symbol of course - ie as one aspect grows, the other aspect shrinks. That's the Chinese way of looking at it. The westerners have lost a lot of this, we've lost the relationship to the environment, but we'll go into that again later.

How do we look at that being that lives on Mt Ainslie? The Chinese would have drawn a dragon. Dragon and worm are actually the same word in German! And this is pretty good, because this is a St Michaels hill. This is a hill which has the energy we in the Christian/European conceptualisation would call a St Michael hill - leading to Christ, and protective. So that's the energy we're dealing with today.

Canberra has two other hills of significance - Red Hill, and Black Mountain tower. And again, they have different personalities, they have different ways of looking at them. Red Hill is about power, personal power, the diplomats, the politicians. Black Mountain hill is about power and mechanisation, money, communal, holding things in things. Ahriman is a good word for that, maybe Lucifer is a good word for that, and maybe Christ is a good word for that. Now they're words you probably don't understand. Ahriman is sort of the God of Materialism, but also the mother earth - a complicated one. Lucifer is about personal pride and having wisdom. These come from Anthroposophical and other terminologies [see [Three Streams of Evolution](#)]. Let's leave that and look at the kids at the moment ...

Aborigines did the dance because the dance linked the past to the future. It made possible the correspondence between heaven and earth. Without dancing, we wouldn't be here, without talking, making sound, we'd be different too. But dancing is very important, so the aborigines took an animal and were part of that animal (needs expanding).

Understanding the Dreamtime

To begin - where did you sleep last night? You slept on a bed, you probably had pyjamas on, you probably had a bed sheet over you. So you're insulated from the ground, you were in a box (the room) and then the bigger box (the house) then of course there's the bigger box. ie our civilisation. So we're not really in touch with the environment.

The Aborigines in this area would've laid on the ground, naked, maybe with tribal scars. Now tribal scars are an interesting thing - they're actually markings on the body like the markings I put on the stones that relate to the energies of the location. So he would have, if he was here, markings on him that would remind him of Mt Ainslie. So no matter where he goes, he is a part of Mt Ainslie, and his body reflects it - to other people - that's his clothing. So he'd be lying on the ground, there'd be a fire on either side and other people would be here, so there would be a pattern: people, naked, mosquitoes, possibly hostile people around. He would be having a very light sleep. Now all of you who have had children know just what it's like to wake up sleep-deprived the next morning. And if you're living in this, you're living in "[The Dreaming](#)" already. So their whole consciousness was half in the real world, half in the dream world. That's one aspect of the dreaming.

But the really important part of the dreaming is - one of the major concepts that we use to frame our lives, is a thing called time. Time as we understand it, really isn't quite so. There's the past,

there's the present, there's the future, OK? But the future is already the past by the minute it's lived, you know, the whole concept of time doesn't work.

I had quite a few mentors and one of my mentors was a guy called Eric Wilmington - he was actually the Professor of Geography at ADFA, occasionally he got parcels of money; once he sent off a research assistant to do six months study into time. And hundreds of papers later, she came to the conclusion that time doesn't exist. Well, the aborigines lived in this timelessness. The state the Buddhist meditator tries to achieve by being asleep while he's awake - which is what meditation is about.

The best way I've come across explaining this is - I've developed an interest in oriental carpets, and they're hand-tied, and tribal carpets are the tribe's pattern - much like the aborigines. These were nomads, they moved around, but they had a pattern that belonged to their group. The Bakhara Pattern was this sort of octagonal thing and inside this, they had a family pattern, and they always made the same carpet. As carpet is in the process of being made, and they were always making carpet, you were standing where the sheep and you were spinning the wool. Spinning wool was actually incorporating the present and the past - that's another story.

But the kids tied the knots. A hundred years ago the kids were taught embroidery. Every girl had to embroider. Even Katherine had to embroider, and that's only 50 years ago. That is a link, so when the kid does it and the knots are like that, it's tying the knot between the past, the pattern that's been made and the future, the pattern that's being created. It also goes to the next step, the children are tying the knot between the ancestors who made the pattern and the future pattern, which is in them.

Question from the audience, but undecipherable.

We in our culture are also aware of the ancestor thing that goes through the children, although we've lost it to a large extent. We call marriage 'tying the knot' and it's interesting the knots used in carpets ie there's a double knot around each thread, so our culture is aware of this carrying the ancestors from the past into the future.

The aborigines are totally aware of it all the time. Their next dilemma is that each of these sacred sites need to be carried from the past into the future by Aboriginal doing, by Aboriginal dancing, by Aboriginal corroboree, by Aboriginal being. So there is no future unless the sacred sites are danced to, are revered, the ceremonies are done. So you lock off the sacred sites, or you destroy them, and the apocalypses happen. And they are totally ruthless, because they are no longer linked into the land that is part of theirs. It's like taking away the warp and the weft of the carpet, so you're just left with knots floating on air. That's part of the Aboriginal reason for this huge amount of aggro that comes out now - this huge inability to cope with the current culture and situation. They have lost the warp and weft of their lives, because the sites are becoming inaccessible.

Questions on the dreaming

Also, we live in a scientific culture ie there's a cause and effect for everything - the past leads to the future, slamming the door creates a noise; electricity makes the lights go on. This isn't really so. You have associative things, and so myth as a description of what is real, is a very good way of describing - a myth is an associative idea that links itself around the concept. 'Tying the knot' is a statement

about the myth of marriage, the carrying of the past into the future through the genetic stream of the parents.

Reply to a question

This the human being reduced to the bare essentials: you have a skull and you have a spine. Now there are actually two quite different brains in us. One is the skull brain and the other is the spine brain. Now the spine brain is an antenna that relates, like nearly all the animals to everything on the planet. It's our way we contact the energies of the planet. You've got the concept of chakras which are energy focuses that related to different vibrations in different places.

The skull is sky. It's like an antenna dish that links to the stars, and we can't use it consciously, yet. We're working on understanding how we're part of the total cosmos. There's been a massive change in that in the last hundred years. It's moved from 'the earth is everything and man is God's only gift of creation' to 'my God, there's billions of galaxies out there. And in those billions, there's billions upon billions of star systems and undoubtedly billions of planets and undoubtedly, billions of things happening on those planets'. What does that mean about our concept of the God that sits on the throne and watches us; the concept of Jehovah. Because the concept of Jehovah grew out of the idea of the spirit of place. It was the Jewish spirit of place that may well be the spirit that's in Jerusalem now. The personality of that particular God is difficult.

Interruption from audience.

The aborigines were quite clear of this division. We've lost it in our culture - it's hidden in our culture everywhere. Now the aborigines said that when a child is conceptualised in its mother's womb, now that doesn't mean sex. It means that the soul entered into the being that's there - always happens in a location. And that location has a totem in it. Be it a fish, a bird, your favourite animal - all of us have these totems, even now, we have a link to where we were born or conceived into the womb. We actually had that, and you can orientate your body in such a way and find that's your strongest direction. So that's the earth being.

The other is the star being. In Aboriginal corroborees, which we will be sort of re-enacting here in Corroboree Park, they not only represented people as earth beings, but the men of high degree, the ones who could meditate, the ones that were in touch with meditation energies, also became sky beings. They actually had a link to spiritual beings, and they brought those down as if they were channels, or they brought the consciousness and awareness of them down.

So when people died, the aborigines went to extreme trouble, and this was pretty well universal for the 256 language groups to go back to where it was - we're talking hologram and the time of the hologram of course, and that was what the job of the priest was. The first thing after the person had died was to send this ghost back, otherwise if you didn't, it would hang around and bother everyone. So they had very strong ways of doing this and they did it reasonably effectively, and again now you see, the sacred paths are lost they can't send the ghosts back - they've lost the link to where they came from. This ties in with the whole ecological structure of their society, so if I was a kangaroo, I had a relationship to the possums and the other beings that were inside the other people that were in the tribe. They worked the ecological web of the land through the personalities of the people that were on the land - the aborigine.

Commented [S1]:

The whole culture and their laws and their regulations about behaviour were related to the animals they were, and how they were in the people that were around them. Take that away, and you have the collapse of society, which is what you are seeing in aborigines now. And the other part - well they made quite distinct, as far as one can tell from the ethnological evidence, separations between men of high degree and just normal people, or children. Children had very little conscious, focussed, higher-self spirit. Men of high degree had a lot. So they went through rituals like drying the bones and carrying them around them, so they would have their ancestors with them to guide and help them, the people that were their guides when they were alive, became their guides when they were dead. And remember they were living in a dream state, so the border between the here and now, and the past and the present, the awake and the asleep, were much less. They had ready access to the dream totem, and we can involve them in the room here too.

Question from the audience.

Put it this way, the modern kid that walks around on drugs man, is in much the same state. And that says something about the human condition. We really all want to get back into the dream state which is why we come here on Sundays to have ceremonies, because those ceremonies and rituals are about separating our daily working life, flow of things back into the spiritual world which is our real home, if you want.

Question from the audience.

We're talking about the spirit that relates to the spine, the earth being. (*Interruption again*)..... There's the animal personality and the spirit personality and we struggle tremendously to keep these working together. This is called the double and the higher self in the terminology that we've devised to cope with it. Our daily consciousness is the interaction of these two pressures. If something spurs us on, and we see a beautiful girl, or an attractive man, our body leaves our mind, our consciousness that's in our body expands! And the one that's in our head is pushed back a bit. So we move toward something. If we hear a beautiful piece of music, like some Mozart, we're brought into the spheres that are the sounds of the heavens, and so that expands. This expansion and contraction between different aspects of our personality is what we get in the landscape, too.

Question from the audience.

I would liken the spirit to the lighter area and it goes off to the stars, and the soul is somewhat heavier and can experience things like hell, because it lives in that heavier, darker world. It's has that energy which is closer to the earth and can keep radiating to be a ghost.

It's really very universal. The Catholic church would say that everyone has a guardian angel and a devil attached. In any culture you'll find it. The aboriginal culture had the most sophisticated way of handling this. The whole problem of the double getting out of control and running amuck. In our culture, we do it by putting guilt into the children. In Moslem culture, you put it by putting physical restrictions around the people.

Q: When the elders meditated, they were trying to bypass the soul and go straight to the spirit.....

They were trying to move their consciousness very much into their skulls, so they could go out into this sphere. That's what high-level Buddhism is about, too. Certainly Theravada Buddhism.

Harmonic dance is about bringing the higher consciousness into the body and giving it to each other which is quite a pleasant experience, and to the environment. And the environment responds, it talks back, it's the Aboriginal dilemma - the people are the link. It's the Chinese dilemma, the people are the link between heaven and earth, and by their actions, they create heaven or earth!

Question from audience (Beithe)

I think what happens is that not many of them are really bringing much spirit into the body, so you really have a culture in decay, or a cultural period in decay, because in a sense, we are all aborigines, we're living here in these immense earth energies of Australia, which really transcends any energies in the world.....we're doing things today that can have great significance. We're sitting in this room and around us are possibly hierarchies of beings that are also listening and involved in what we're doing.

I don't know how that fits in with Swedenborg.....

We might bring up one divergence from the original pot. You see, you have spirits of place that are linked to hills, or to rivers. You also have things that are just in the astral world, that aren't linked to a physical location. So you have constructs like hell, or you have constructs like western heaven. Western heaven is Kwan Yin - the goddess of compassion has created a place where people when they die can go to experience what an English tradition calls Summerland - a place of beautiful gardens where you can recover and get the skill to move on to the next stage. So there's these places like Shambala ... being in Tibet. These are all just geographic statements because we don't understand all the languages between concepts and reality aren't all that good. So you have places outside, where your consciousness can go, so that's also relevant.

But you do definitely have spirits of place, so you have these immense energies coming through under the ground, and these hold a type of consciousness that's not human, and in many ways superior to human. It's different to human but very similar. So, in the theosophical literature these are often depicted as huge beings, maybe with eyes, hands, but with radiance. They have different shapes and forms according to the class they belong to, and again, because we're scientifically and the aborigines wouldn't, we tend to class things into Fire, Water, Air and Earth. And if you're Chinese, you'd also put in Wood. Wood is the growth force - things that are growing. So each of these spirits has a different personality.

Again we've got the three hills around Canberra - each with a different spirit, and a personality. So we had St. Michael, we have Lucifer which is Pride, and we have Ahriman, which is Machine Power.

Question from the audience.

Remember we were talking before about the earth brain, the spine brain, was pushing you when you are sexually orientated, and the high brain pushing you if you hear beautiful music? Well, in a sense, these hills are pushing each other all the time. And that's Canberra. Canberra is the interaction of these energies. Sometime one hill is stronger, the others retreat, some times another hill is stronger. The closer you are to that hill, the closer you'll be to that energy. I've been looking at this for twenty years, and I've taken people up to this hill (Mt. Ainslie) and what we talk about is about maybe Christ, balance, the coming of the possible future. Here (?) they talk about, 'gee, what sort of car have you got, what's happening down there', and over here (?) some of them get really

stropy and say 'look, why are you telling me all of this, I'm more important than you anyway!' So we reflect the energies that come through us in our environment and we can interact with these.

So, to some extent, dancing here, we're expanding these energies, we're helping this hill. Again, that's a very Aboriginal thing. By these interactions with these spirits of place, we bring the past into the future, and we can modify the future by our actions.

Questions from the audience. 49:36

Jehovah

In the bible, there's this God, Jehovah, which is the one the Jewish tribe had as their leader, as their guide, and when they went away to places like Egypt, they always wanted to go back to Jehovah. They wanted to go back to the Promised Land and where their guardian was looking after them. They developed these cultural mechanisms for relating to the, the Jewish ritual, the Jewish songs, the very language itself. I thought I'd bring up the correspondence between that in the bible, and the way the aborigines and we have been talking about spirits of place today, so the people who are more familiar with the concepts of the bible, can begin to see the Aboriginal association with the same idea. I think one of the real dilemmas we have is that the God who is in Jerusalem, if that is Jehovah, is obviously a demanding and manipulative being. So he may well be a combination of these two sorts of spirits of place.

In Canberra, we're fortunate that we have three that are fairly well-balance d and let us get on with the process of government.

Question from the audience.

Now that brings up the concept of God changing as our idea of the world changes. You see, when they were little Jewish tribes, they really didn't know what was over the hill, and the God that was up in that hill, was as far as they could extend the concept of God.

Question from the audience.

The ability to understand the world around us has changed, so that we've moved from, a tribal god, to many ways a national god, to many ways a continental god, to a whole world god, which is pretty well where we're at now, who watches over the planet as Mother Earth, or something like that - as far as we can extend our thinking. And now we've got to make this huge jump to make to a galaxy that's totally alive with billions of life forms, and we're part of that - it's going to change our concept of God. And we're nibbling at these concepts of God now.

Questions from the audience, and end of talk, moving out to Harmonic Dance.

Final comment

The energies that's in the rocks (from Mt. Ainslie) lets that sort of consciousness come. The question is, where do these beings come from, and I think they're universal to the total cosmos, and they arrive wherever they get a place to land, and the same for us. We're universal to the total cosmos, but we come into human being bodies until we disintegrate and the earth energy goes to earth, and the rest goes back to the total cosmos.

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