

Being rooted in the dark

Wim Bonis

We are all drawn towards the light. The warmth and brightness of the summer sun appeals to our senses. We enjoy its warmth on our skin and the way it brightens up the environment. We concentrate most of our activities – whether it is work or play – during the daytime; and after the sun has gone down, we extend our daily activities by switching on some lights – in the office, on the street, in the cinema, in the concert hall, on the playing field, or at home.

Entranced by the power of the light during the day, and particularly in summertime, it is not strange that most people have come to believe that going towards the light is all what we should be striving for. In this mindset, we tend to avoid the cold and dark of the wintertime as much as we can, and strive to expose ourselves as long as possible to the light and the warmth of the summertime: we go on holidays to even warmer countries than our own, with the promise of cloudless blue skies above us – to feel the sun on our skin, to cool down for a while in the sea or ocean, to relax on a terrace with a nice drink in between. Then we want to avoid the heavier, sorrowful worries about money, warfare, disease and death – and focus as much as we can on the lighter, joyful and pleasurable side of life; we want spend as little time as possible in solitude, being engrossed with self-reflection. Instead, we strive to spend as much time as possible in the company of lots of people, who are equally cheerful and are clearly enjoying life.

Understandably, after two years of suffering and limitation during the corona crisis, people started to yearn badly for a life that is basically consisting of having a good time. But hadn't this crisis, in relationship with other even larger crises like climate change, been a global awakening experience for everyone, a mental and spiritual transformation that reopened everyone's heart to a new way of relating to life? Of course, life is here to be enjoyed as much as possible. There is no need to turn ourselves into

miserable life-deniers, continually carrying the weight of all the world problems on our shoulders.

In the process, however, we might not have realized that – by focusing exclusively on the bright, sunny side of life – we have fallen into the trap of simplifying life by *taking shortcuts* to whatever we like best. And I am afraid these kinds of shortcuts are not going to help us in the long run. This life approach appears to be pleasant, enjoyable, and light. But since we limit ourselves to only half of the lifecycle, indirectly it has actually been responsible for a lot of individual and collective suffering, and on a planetary level for tremendous damage to our ecosystem. It is the mindset that has been dominant in the Western world for a very long time, however unconscious we might have been of it. But now in our time gradually we have become more conscious of its limitation and its contribution to creating damage to both our inner and outer world. To continue our human journey on this apparently easy road, we have to close off our heart and mind to experiences that more and more people are having in our time – awakening experiences that reopen our heart and mind, and that reconnect us to our roots. By consciously avoiding the dark side of life as much as we can, we are only magnifying it to ever bigger, more threatening proportions.

The brief sketch of the historical background

Suppressing the dark side of life has long history. We can trace back its origin to the rise of dualistic worldviews, thousands of years ago, in which life was considered to be about forces of light struggling against the forces of darkness, the absolute Good against absolute Evil. In the ancient Persian religion of Zoroastrianism, the struggle of the light against the dark forces was depicted as its major God Ahura Mazda who was engaged in a perpetual fight against the threatening force of Ahriman. As has been pointed out by many researchers, this has exerted a major influence on the ideas of the Judeo-Christian tradition: the struggle continued in the form of the struggle between God and the Devil.

Although many people in the Western world today do not consider themselves religious anymore and have adopted a secular worldview, the exclusive focus on the light side of life has often remained prominent in their lives. The one-sided focus on the light and warm side of life and

avoidance of the darkness and cold may conceal the fact that it is still part of a dualistic worldview. It easily rises to the surface when people are confronted with the limitations of their worldview and their related comfortable lifestyle: when it becomes obvious that their ecological footprint will need a few planets to be able to continue and will bring planetary life to an end if it is not decreased very soon. The longtime avoidance of the darkness, and the threat that a comfortable privileged lifestyle will come to an end, give new life to the old dualistic ideas about a struggle against flesh and blood enemies who are held responsible for the crisis that we are in.

Before every ascent there is a descent

Fortunately, there is already a change in the air for some time now. Peter Cedrowen Taylor, for instance, has already paid attention to this subject 30 more than years ago and pointed out that the dark side was returning: in his 1991 article ‘Earth changes, ocean dawns’.¹ The truth is that the dark side is not that threatening at all, and that we simply cannot escape the natural principle that an ascent must always be accompanied or even be preceded by a descent – and must even be preceded by a descent to make the ascent possible. We have to *descend to soul* first before we can *rise to spirit*, as the American psychotherapist Thomas Moore has expressed it so convincingly in several of his books.²

We can see all around us that every plant is growing to the light of the sun, but they can only do so because their roots are watered continually so that they have been able to expand wider and deeper as well. We know this and sometimes the top layer of the roots is visible at the surface, but usually they are hidden from our sight. Underneath the surface, through roots and fungi networks, life is inextricable interwoven with and connected to the entire environment. Because we can walk freely across the earth, it might seem that we do not possess this hidden network of interconnection with the environment. But we do. We all spent the first nine months of our lives in the relative darkness of our mother’s womb. And we were born as open beings – open to the entire natural world around us; originally, we were completely embedded in it and interconnected to it. Due to the development of our ego, which gave rise to our sense of separation and invited us to

identify with it, we have forgotten to keep watering our roots and gradually allowed them to shrivel.

But of course, these roots could never die down completely, as this would mean the very end of our life as well. Fortunately – amidst a culture of short-cut thinking in which egocentric minds are getting lost in all kinds of dualistic struggles –, there is a rising awareness in us all that we must keep watering, cultivating and even extending our roots. By doing this we do not just revive our original sense of being embedded in the surrounding natural world, but we will also be able to develop into whole persons and open the way towards living a more balanced life – inwardly, in a psychological and spiritual sense, but also outwardly, in an ecological sense.

This cultivation and extension of our roots takes place in several different areas: in the darkness of our unconscious through experiencing and valuing the presence of the darkness and the magical world of our dreams; through opening up during the day to our hidden feelings, including the less pleasant ones, which are always present below the light of reason; through exposing ourselves to the cold of winter and be conscious of the fact that it forms a valuable and necessary contrast to the enjoyment of the warmth of summer; through becoming aware of the ongoing presence of death – including the death of our thought patterns, of our individual cells, and eventually of our entire body – during the material manifestation of our earthly life.

Rooted in the earth

The Irish philosopher John Moriarty has said some significant things about being rooted. He spent some years as a teacher in a Canadian university, but after a few years decided to resign and return to his native Ireland. He settled there in Connemara, to work as a gardener, and to write about life – and in a more general sense about humanity, our culture, our civilization, history, mythology and our relationship with the natural world. He said that in institutions, like the university he was working in, he felt like a potted plant, that had restricted the growth of the roots to the size of the pot. His return to Ireland and settling in Connemara to him felt like he was a plant that was taken outdoors and put in the soil again, without any restrictions;

and that since then his roots could spread more deeply and widely, to make his further growth possible. He had come to the West of Ireland to deepen the experience and the development of his ‘bush soul’.³ This spiritual development, and his reflections on the state of the Western world and its institutions, became a central theme in his philosophy.

During the corona crisis I had an experience with a little bonsai tree that is related to Moriarty’s story. I had left this bonsai tree behind in the office where I used to work, and one day I managed to pay a visit to the empty office. During my absence the little tree had been watered regularly (so I was told), but it looked very dry and had lost all its leaves. That is why I brought it home with me. After having giving it plenty of water for a while, I was glad that gradually the green leaves were returning.

Due to restrictions of travel to prevent the spreading of infection, in this period everyone was more or less forced to spend a lot of time at home and in the vicinity. Quite often I went for a walk in a small park at the end of our street. One I was suddenly entranced by the presence of the large trees in the park. I looked at them as if I was seeing them for the first time. Apparently, before the corona crisis I had walked past them without really taking too much notice of them. Now I looked at their trunks, the patterns on the bark, the branches, the leaves, the sheer size of them, towering above me. They were so incredibly large in comparison to my bonsai tree at home. I was taking care of the bonsai tree, but these large trees in the park, together with all the trees on Mother Earth, were taking care of me – in fact, they were taking care of us all, working perpetually to transform as much as carbon dioxide as they can handle, transforming it to oxygen for us to breathe, to keep ourselves alive – and on top of that, giving us also a cooling shade in summer, and protection from the wind and the rain. In fact, the relationship between us – no matter how small or big our bodies we are – is always reciprocal, one of mutual care. What are we without each other? The apparently insignificant act of bringing the little bonsai tree home has made me more aware of our reciprocal relationship with the surrounding natural world. I came to realize – and I gather that I wasn’t the only one – that perhaps we all have been running too fast through life, without taking too much notice of all the details of life in our direct environment. The importance of that deep connection with nature I haven’t lost since then. It

has also made me realize that that we do not always have to make a journey to some place faraway, and to confront ourselves with pristine wilderness. We can simply stay at home, open our minds as much as possible and have a new look at this place that we have called 'home'.

Of course, a bonsai tree is also a potted plant. It remains small because its roots cannot expand. It seems that by planting it again outdoors in the soil, it will grow again into a real big tree – the tree potentially it always was. It is good to keep realizing that all the little plants that we keep in our home are potentially large ones. It is nice that we can bring parts of nature from outdoors world to the indoors world. But not only the size of plants and trees was diminished by putting them in restrictive pots. We keep them in our home as separate individuals. Outdoors the roots of plants and trees weave together with the threads of the roots and fungi into a large interconnected system that includes all the plants and the trees. It makes them an inextricable part of an ecosystem – a park, a wood or a forest.

The fact that the plants and trees in the park, wood or forest are interconnected to each other below the surface of the earth, in the darkness of the soil, is significant. It mirrors the interconnected side of our own dual nature which resides below the surface of our egocentric consciousness – whether we are conscious of that or not. Interestingly, and perhaps even more significant, different kind of trees can root very well together in one park, wood or forest, leaving space for each other's growth process, and exchanging information to each other through their network of roots and fungi. Likewise, we humans are born to cherish diversity, to be inclusive, to leave space of people with different cultural backgrounds and allow them to grow psychologically and spiritually – and thereby can offer their contribution to the whole of our culture and society. So, the popular principle of Diversity and Inclusion is borrowed from the natural world.

Another important thing the plants and trees can make us aware of, is that to be able to root deeply in the soil and to grow to maturity, it is not necessary to be in the place where one is born. To able to root deeply, all one really needs is sunshine, rain, enough fertile soil – no restrictions of a pot – and this can happen anywhere on the planet. On the one hand, people born in a certain place, might never have managed to root deeply in it and have grown to maturity. They might feel have started to feel alienated in

their own country or region. On the other hand, there are people who have come from a faraway place, with a completely different cultural background, who might have managed to root deeply in ‘foreign’ soil, and have turned it into a real new home.

The sense of being rooted in the earth is also expressed in surviving folklore about the birth process. In many countries people were convinced – in some places well into the 20th century – that human beings literally were first born from the earth, before they were born from their human mother. The French historian Jacques Gélis says the following about it: ‘In Estland and Russia people thought that human beings were born ‘from the Earth’, and in Central Europe they came out of the depth, the wells and the pools, the caves and the rock crevices. Or also out of trees and bushes. In the form of legends or metaphors the belief in the earthly origin of children still lives in Germany, in the Vosges and in the Swiss Valais.’⁴ According to the historian of religions Mircea Eliade, the belief that human beings are born from the earth has been universal. To be born the babies had to hide themselves for a while in caves, moors or wells. There they led a kind of embryo life in the womb of Mother Earth, before they were brought into the world by their human mother.⁵ I think that the alienation from our environment, and thereby also from each other, has to do with our lost sense that in the first place we are all earthly beings.

Rooted in the nighttime

Through the rise of depth psychology, we have been made newly aware of the significance of the nighttime. Our prehistoric ancestors have always been aware of the relevance of the nighttime, and laid emphasis on it. Their rituals and celebrations were often focused on the nighttime. In their outdoor spirituality the location of their Sacred places was determined by the surrounding landscape, and this included to a large extent the overarching night sky, with the ever-changing positions of the moon and the stars in it. It is only when we gradually changed over to the various indoor religions, to experiencing the Sacred within human-made buildings, that we started to lose sight of and turned away from the power of the surrounding natural world, which included the huge expanse of the night sky. Depth psychologists like Freud concentrated on the darkness of the suppressed

unconscious in ourselves, and after him Jung expanded the terrain to the collective unconsciousness and the archetypes. More recently still James Hillman made an effort to bring psychology outdoors again, away from the consultation room. Primatologists like Jane Goodall and Frans de Waal have shown that psychology is not limited to the human world, and that animals have psyches and feelings like us.

Wilderness researchers and writers like Bill Plotkin in America and Martin Shaw in England are emphasizing the importance of confronting ourselves regularly with the surrounding natural world for our psychological and spiritual development.⁶ They have given a good example themselves by spending a lot of time in the wilderness, and regularly they are organizing outdoor workshops to share their vision with other people. The American former Buddhist and spiritual researcher Clarke Strand tells us we have to wake up to the dark. He has argued that being awake in the middle of the night has been part of our normal sleeping pattern in the pre-industrial world. He has pointed out that we have forgotten how important this awakened state in the night has been for human development in the pre-modern world. In this state people got conscious experiences, and even visions, that were very different from their conscious experiences during the day and might have been responsible for mythically inspired views and stories.⁷ The Dutch theatre maker and researcher Marjolijn van Heemstra has argued that it is important to be aware that we are always part of a large surrounding cosmos, even when we are living in a city.⁸ She (re)discovered the presence of the nightly silence near her hometown Amsterdam and organizes nightly walking trips to share this experience with other people.

Usually, the nighttime is the period in which we spend some time sleeping and during that sleep we tend to have dreams. According to James Hillman, it is important we allow dreams to remain the nighttime phenomena that they originally are, because they lose a lot of their meaning when we translate them to our waking daytime consciousness through dream interpretation.⁹ Although depth psychology has made us once again aware of the importance of our dreams, it is still part of a modern culture in which the focus is still very much on the daytime world, on the light of reason, on written language and a linear, historical worldview. Dreams belong to a mythological, cyclical world in which communication is primarily done

through images. In earlier cultures that still acknowledged the rootedness of their cultural development in the nighttime, they equally acknowledged the importance of their dreams and their messages, and allowed them to dedicate the course of their lives. As is well-known, Jung has once stated: myths are collective dreams, and dreams are individual myths.

Rooted in the cold

Of course, we are not only confronted with darkness on a daily basis, but also on a yearly basis. The winter is the time of the year in which the periods of darkness are the longest. However, much we might find the summertime more agreeable, more pleasant due to the warmth, we still remain rooted in the colder period of the wintertime. Although it seems to quieter period, with not too many things happening, there is in fact an awful lot going on in that period. It is the time when life underneath the surface of the earth, hidden away from our senses, is renewing itself. For us human beings, it is the time of withdrawal and self-reflection. If the summer is the ideal time for extravert expressions of life, the winter is the ideal time for introvert expressions of life. No wonder that in our extraverted culture, people generally prefer the summertime and often literally hate the wintertime, because it confronts them with their other side, the undeveloped introvert side, of their being. For them it is hard to believe, that the introvert expressions of life provide a necessary foundation to be able to mature psychologically and spiritually – and thereby to be able to fully experience the depth of life.

Fortunately, in our time we can see that the importance wintertime is gradually being acknowledged again, and the way it is inextricably related to our inner darkness. In 2020 the English writer Katherine May has for instance written a beautiful book about it, entitled *Wintering*. She has shown that opening up to the dark and cold seasons of the year is aligned with opening up to the inner wounds we have got during our life and therefore still being able to heal them.¹⁰

Although the winter period is not only much darker, but usually also much colder than the summertime, it is intimately related to the warmth of the female womb. In this womb all life forms find the time and space, the

energy and safety, not only to be born but also to be reborn – after going through a healing process.

Rooted in death

Closely connected to our being rooted in the earth, in the nighttime and in the wintertime, is the fact that our lives are rooted in death. The soil beneath our feet is the presence of previous lives of plants, animals and humans that have died and been transformed by bacteria, micro-organisms, and insects – to create the top layer of soil on our planet, which continually feeds, directly and indirectly, all the organisms that happen to be living now. This means, of course, that the soil beneath our feet – at least when it is fertile – is not dead at all, but in fact very much alive. It is only life that has died, been broken down and transformed to its basics – ready to feed all the newly born, larger living beings.

In earlier cultures, there has been a widespread belief in rebirth, and in nature all around us we can witness that nature continually goes through the seasonal cycles of life, death and rebirth. Every night when we surrender to sleep and dreams, we surrender to ‘a little death’ and get reborn in the morning when we wake up again. By realizing that we necessarily go through this cycle every night and day, we might also start realizing that we have to die continually to be able to live our lives fully.

People who have gone through so-called near-death experiences have often become much more aware of the fact that their life, and life in general, is deeply rooted in death. As a result of that awareness, they often completely lose their fear of death, and get inspiration to start living the rest their earthly life more fully, more authentically. Experiencing such a near-death experience ourselves firsthand is of course the best thing, but these experiences cannot be planned consciously. They just happen unexpectedly. But fortunately, in the last decades many goods have been written about them – both studies of the phenomenon and individual reports of the experiences themselves. Reading those can also help us to make us more aware the importance of being rooted in death.¹¹

Rooted in feeling

The Dutch primatologist Frans de Waal has argued that exclusive emphasis on the light of reason, as is still happening in the world of academic science, tells only half the story. In his view, our rational thoughts are always triggered by underlying feelings and emotions.¹² The American writer Susan Cain has also emphasized the importance of our feelings, in particular of sorrow and longing. In her book *Bittersweet* she shows that these feelings of sorrow and longing have been expressed in many songs. They express the pain of separation that we experience since the day we were born, the vague notions of a lost paradise that has stayed with us, and the idea that creating a more wonderful world is still possible. They express the sorrowful feeling that our daily world is only thinly separated from that hidden more magical otherworld – which we know is real, but just out of reach. But this doesn't stop us from searching, and getting glimpses of it every now and then, when we are drawn into a relationship; when we are confronted with overpowering landscapes; when we recognize a deep other side of ourselves that often remains hidden under the surface in a work of art, or in a song. Cain's argument is that we should acknowledge these kinds of sensitivities and not suppress them. When we suppress them, the feelings come out anyway, in a less appealing way, as anger or violence. Perhaps the different kinds of crime can be seen as a result of the denial of the feelings of sorrow, of experiencing the pain of separation, and through impatience wanting to take a shortcut to this more wonderful, otherworld, and thereby causing a lot of suffering and damage: in other people, and in the natural environment.¹³

When we acknowledge that feelings and emotions lie at the heart of all our rational thinking, as Frans de Waal says has already been the case in the animal world, we prevent our feelings to turn negative into excesses of aggression, anger and violence. In other words, we help to create a more balanced, and more friendly human world.

Rooted in prehistory

Closely connected to being rooted in the earth is being rooted in prehistory. Not only from the folklore mentioned earlier we can learn about the importance of being rooted in the earth, the archaeological remains from the

Paleolithic, and the Neolithic and their connections to the conceptions and architecture from the later historical periods help to give some extra ‘body’ to it.

The development of Western civilization – from ancient Sumerian culture, through Greek and Roman culture and the medieval period, all the way on to the present modern age – has been one in which we have increasingly separated ourselves from the natural world. Sumerian culture did not represent a beginning – as it is still conventionally considered – but a shift into a cultural development that was founded on a sense of separation from the natural world. According to the English psychologist Steve Taylor about 6000 years ago we were confronted collectively with an *ego explosion* which in that period has triggered the rise of our separate self, of sense of separation.¹⁴ According to the American cultural philosopher Charles Eisenstein the ascent of Western culture must be qualified as *the Story of Separation*.¹⁵ It is not a coincidence that this same cultural development has also been a shift into patriarchy, a shift into a *dominator culture* (in the words of the Austrian-American researcher Riane Eisler) – a shift to a culture in which men and so-called masculine principles began to rule and to give shape to the structure of human societies.¹⁶

But preceding the rise of Western civilization, and its shift into patriarchy and a sense of separation, there has been a long period of prehistory in which people generally experienced their lives as completely embedded in the matrix or womb of the surrounding natural world – and therefore had a deep sense of belonging to the landscape, of being inextricably connected to the place in which they spent their daily lives. In the Paleolithic period our distant ancestors expressed their sense of being rooted in the earth in their ritually painted caves, which they considered the womb of Mother Earth, and later in the Neolithic period this cultural expression was continued in the building of womblike, artificial mounds and megalithic structures, and later still this mythical conception was getting expressed in the architecture of the cathedrals. This is evidence that our sense of being rooted in the earth and that we are all spiritually born from an earthly womb goes back a very long way. The continuation of this idea, which was still reflected in the folklore that was mentioned earlier, confirms that it is deeply connected to what it means to be human.

Awakening from ego sleep

The sense of separation that has accompanied the rise of Western civilization from its very beginning, which as has been argued above was in fact a shift from an earlier human prehistoric culture, has become critical in our time. It is in fact at the heart of the spiritual crisis that we are facing today. We badly need to reconnect to our lost sense of being rooted in the dark. Spiritually this reconnection is experienced as an experience of waking up, of awakening from our egocentric sense of separation.

Although every day we go through the process of waking up in the morning, this does not mean that this is all there is to being awake. In this respect Steve Taylor has written extensively about more intense *awakening experiences* that can manifest themselves in our lives during the day and expand our sense of being awake. These are usually temporary changes in the way we experience reality within and without, which eventually could result in a permanent state of *wakefulness*.¹⁷ In the context of the theme of this article, we can say that the more rooted we feel in the dark, whether it concerns feeling rooted in the nighttime, in the cold of winter, in death or in feelings – and consider this darkness an essential part of our experienced reality, even the very foundation of it – the more likely it is that we might get these kinds of awakening experiences.

Spirituality is often still connected with being woolly, living with our head in the clouds, but that is a spirituality that is based on a dualism of mind and body, of spirit and matter. But the kind of spirituality that is involved here, actually makes us feel more grounded – much more grounded than life experienced through our ego identity, which gives us an overall sense of separation, of being cut off from the natural world. The more we dare to be rooted in the dark, dare to fully open ourselves to the wholeness of life, the more we are opening our minds to experience this kind of spiritual depth, while taking part in the activities of daily life. It is a spirituality that is closely connected to feeling embedded in the surrounding natural world, in the body of the landscape, and thereby also in our own body.

In this respect ‘herbalist, artist, activist and writer’ Vanessa Chakour has pointed out in her beautiful book *Awakening Artemis*, that in current

spirituality the emphasis still seems to be on light, whereas many ancient traditions ‘spring from fertile darkness’ and value both light and dark in a balanced way that is ‘in alignment with the true forces of nature’.¹⁸ In the mystery of this fertile darkness ‘growth, healing and transformation begin’. According to her, ‘darkness is receptive, feminine’, existing both in the womb and ‘below our feet in the body of Mother Earth’.¹⁹ Interestingly, she connects it to ‘ancient and present-day goddess-centered traditions’, in which ‘people tap into the power of darkness by going into caves, the wombs of the Earth.’²⁰ In her view, we need to recharge this feminine power, which does not just manifest in women or even in humans, but is ‘present in all species and genders’.²¹

Moving towards a state of balanced duality

Being disconnected from being rooted in the dark reflects a state of *unbalanced dualism*. Experiencing our lives as being permanently rooted in the dark reflects a state of *balanced duality*. It means that we are aware in the midst of the warmth and light of summer that we are born and reborn from being rooted in the cold and dark of winter. And means that in the midst of the cold and dark of winter we can feel that something is healing and growing around us, and in us, which forms the necessary basis for everything that will be born and reborn in the light and warmth of summer. It also means that during the day we are aware that all life in the daytime cannot flourish fully without the rest and healing process of the preceding night. And so on.

This state of balanced duality, which of course is never static but always moving through cycles of change, is expressed beautifully by the ancient Taoist symbol of Yin and Yang. Although in the well-known symbol the dark and light parts have the same form and take up the same amount of space, they are not really similar or equal but rather equivalent forces. In a balanced state the emphasis is on the Yin. In this regard, it is not a coincidence that Yin has always been mentioned first: we talk about a Yin-Yang symbol. When we shift the emphasis to Yang, this immediately involves a subordination of Yin, the creation of an unbalanced dualism. That is the reality that we have seen manifesting itself during the millennia of the development of Western civilization. The Western world has done its

best to avoid being confronted with the dark in its different forms, but thereby it has turned it into a threatening element.

Moving from linear to cyclical growth and context enlargement

In my view, our sense of separation and the short-cuts we take from within that mindset to go directly to the light, avoiding the dark as much as possible, is closely connected to our idea linear, mechanistic growth. This idea of ongoing linear growth is still a central part of our economic thinking. Reconnecting with being rooted in the dark, also means a rediscovery of a much older form of growth: organic, cyclical growth. This kind of growth is manifesting itself all life forms, including ourselves. The growth process of trees shows us very well what organic cyclical growth entails.

Due to our sense of separation, we have grown accustomed to limit our worldview to the ins and outs of our human life. Experiencing our life as being rooted in the dark also means we enlarge our context to include the more-than-human world (in the words of David Abram): the cyclical natural world in which our human world is always fully embedded.²² When we get more conscious of being rooted in the dark, this does not only mean that we start feeling more at home in the local environment or landscape where we happen to be living our daily lives. Simultaneously, on a larger scale, we also start feeling more connected to the entire living planet, to Mother Earth, and even beyond. But it always starts in the direct environment.

Leiden, June 2023

Notes

¹ Peter Cedrowen Taylor, 'Earth changes, ocean dawns', Alick Bartholomew (ed.), *Crop Circles - Harbringers of World Change*, Gateway Books, 1991, p. 59-80.

² See for instance: Thomas Moore, *Care of the Soul. A Guide for Cultivating Depth and Sacredness in Everyday Life*, HarperCollins Publishers, 1992; Thomas Moore, *The Re-Enchantment of Everyday Life*, HarperCollins Publishers, 1996; Thomas Moore, *The Soul's Religion. Cultivating a Profoundly Spiritual Way of Life*, HarperCollins Publishers, 2002.

³ Brendan O'Donoghue (ed.), *A Moriarty Reader. Preparing for Early Spring*, The Lilliput Press, 2013, p. 382. Originally from: *What the Curlew Said: Nostos Continued*, Lilliput Press, 2007. See also: Mary McGillicuddy, *John Moriarty. Not the Whole Story*, The Lilliput Press, 2018.

-
- ⁴ Jacques Gélis, *De boom en de vrucht*, Sun, 1987, p. 62/63.
- ⁵ Mircea Eliade, *Myths, Dreams and Mysteries*, Harper & Row, 1975, p. 164.
- ⁶ Bill Plotkin, *Nature and the Human Soul. Cultivating Wholeness and Community in a Fragmented World*, New World Library, 2008; Bill Plotkin, *Soulcraft. Crossing into the Mysteries of Nature and Psyche*, New World Library, 2003; Bill Plotkin, *Wild Mind. A Field Guide to the Human Psyche*, New World Library, 2013; Martin Shaw, *A Branch from the Lightning Tree. Ecstatic Myth and the Grace in Wildness*, White Cloud Press, 2011; Martin Shaw, *The Snowy Tower. Parzival and the Wet, Black Branch of Language*, White Cloud Press, 2014; Martin Shaw, *Scatterlings. Getting Claimed in the Age of Amnesia*, White Cloud Press, 2016.
- ⁷ Clark Strand, *Waking up to the Dark. Ancient Wisdom for a Sleepless Age*, Spiegel & Grau/Random House, 2015.
- ⁸ Marjolijn van Heemstra, *In lichtjaren heeft niemand haast*, De Correspondent, 2021.
- ⁹ James Hillman, *The Dream and the Underworld*, Harper Collins, 1979.
- ¹⁰ Katherine May, *Wintering. The Power of Rest and Retreat in Difficult Times*, Penguin, 2020.
- ¹¹ See the books of the American researcher Raymond Moody, starting with *Life after Life* from 1975, and many subsequent books he has written on this theme. See also: Anita Moorjani, *Dying to be me. My Journey from Cancer, to Near Death, to True Healing*, Hay House, 2014; Eben Alexander, *Proof of Heaven. A Neurosurgeon's Journey into the Afterlife*, Simon & Schuster, 2013; Pim van Lommel, *Eindeeloos bewustzijn. Een wetenschappelijk visie op de bijna-dood ervaring*, Uitgeverij Ten Have, 2009 (translated under the title: *Consciousness Beyond Life. The Science of the Near-Death Experience*, in 2011).
- ¹² See for instance: Frans de Waal, *Our Inner Ape*, Riverhead Books, 2005; Frans de Waal, *Age of Empathy. Nature's Lessons for a Kinder Society*, Crown 2009.
- ¹³ Susan Cain, *Bittersweet*, Random House, 2022.
- ¹⁴ Steve Taylor, *The Fall. The Insanity of The Ego in Human History and The Dawning of A New Era*, O Books, 2005.
- ¹⁵ Charles Eisenstein, *Ascent of Humanity. Civilization and the Human Sense of Self*, North Atlantic Books, 2013; Charles Eisenstein, *The More Beautiful World Our Hearts Know is Possible*, North Atlantic Books, 2013.
- ¹⁶ Riane Eisler, *The Chalice and the Blade. Our History, Our Future*, Pandora, 1990.
- ¹⁷ See for instance his books: Steve Taylor, *The Leap. The psychology of spiritual awakening*, Hay House, 2017; Steve Taylor, *Waking from Sleep. Why awakening experiences occur and how to make them permanent*, Hay House, 2010.
- ¹⁸ Vanessa Chakour, *Awakening Artemis. Deepening Intimacy with the Living Earth and Reclaiming Our Wild Nature*, Penguin Life, 2022, p. 233.
- ¹⁹ Vanessa Chakour, *Awakening Artemis. Deepening Intimacy with the Living Earth and Reclaiming Our Wild Nature*, Penguin Life, 2022, p. 225.
- ²⁰ Vanessa Chakour, *Awakening Artemis. Deepening Intimacy with the Living Earth and Reclaiming Our Wild Nature*, Penguin Life, 2022, p. 234.
- ²¹ Vanessa Chakour, *Awakening Artemis. Deepening Intimacy with the Living Earth and Reclaiming Our Wild Nature*, Penguin Life, 2022, p. 237.
- ²² David Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous. Perception and Language in a More-Than-Human World*, Vintage Books, 1997.