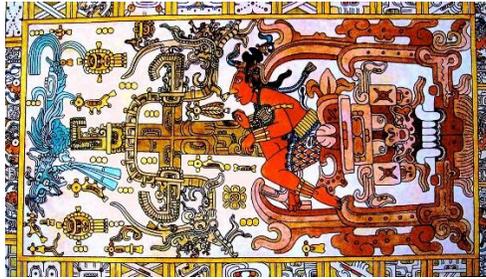


The Travelers Within



Lessons From An Ancient Inner Explorer

“Wandering re-establishes the original harmony which once existed between man and the universe.”

– Anatole France

The main theme of the “Travelers Within” column is to illuminate an extraordinary nexus place within each of us; that midway ground between the majesty of the outer world and the mystery of the inner world. And perhaps more importantly to offer what I call “navigational practices,” ways of maneuvering and working with the emotional material deep within our psyches; practices that when taken to heart, bring about greater harmony and fulfillment in our lives.

This paradoxical terrain of “within and without” is challenging to articulate, but fortunately just about everyone has experienced being changed inside as the result of visiting some extraordinary worldly destination. While many people assume the places they visit in the outer world are responsible for their inner transformations, the reality is we have more to do with the changes that occur within us than we might think.

For example, visiting a “sacred site” is only “sacred” if its visitor hold the desire for a holy experience to occur, or already embody holiness within them. There are many people who experience nothing special at sacred sites. In fact, they irreverently use them as nothing more than exotic backdrops for selfies, or outdoor waste baskets for their trash. Wise life travelers understand this distinction and strive to gain greater command over their capacity to generate sacredness in their daily lives.

This week’s post is dedicated to a few key navigational practices for cultivating our inner transformations, as well as a means for restoring Anatole France’s “original harmony with the universe.” Rather than referring to modern day practices, we turn to ancient Travelers Within for guidance; and particularly to the Maya of Central America and one of their most revered rulers, Lord Pacal.

Examining the image taken from Pacal’s sarcophagus lid it appears he’s not only a Traveler Within, but a “Cosmic” Traveler. He appears to be an ancient astronaut seated inside an rocket ship. In reality, he’s actually mounted on the World Tree, which the Maya believed had its roots in the underworld, trunk on the earthly plane and branches high in upper world.

There is no doubt Pacal is traveling, and the terrain he's covering is from the earthly plane venturing down into the underworld and then rising up the World Tree toward the upper world of Paradise. These three destinations illuminate key navigational principles we can apply in our modern day lives. The starting point of Pacal's journey is the earthly plane, our everyday life experiences, aspirations, fears, gains, losses, joys and sorrows. The first navigational key is to be awake to the full spectrum of life's experiences and allow ourselves to "mount" them by opening our vulnerability and feeling them fully, rather than only being willing to "ride" the experiences we deem as comfortable, nurturing or positive.

From the earthly plane, if we intend to reach "Paradise," we must navigate our way across the World Tree, which is symbolism for the connection between our finite presence as mortal beings and the infinite nature of Heaven, Spirit or God. (Consider the World Tree to be an invisible bridge each of us possesses, a sacred pathway that if we navigate it wisely, leads to Paradise.)

But there is a huge discrepancy between what our ancient Traveler Within is depicting and what many of us believe is the valid way to Paradise or spiritual enlightenment. Rather than aiming for High ground, Pacal is intentionally nose-diving into the underworld, into his subconscious self and the darkness of primal forces moving within him, (what Jung called our "shadow self"). In other words, the way to gain entrance to Paradise is by first traveling into our depths of unknown terrain, places within we either fear greatly, or have adamantly vowed we would never venture into.

I'm not suggesting a fatal fall into the pit of oblivion, but rather a willingness to open to the unknown residing within us so we may know it for what it truly is . . . and accept it wholeheartedly just as it is.

Why on Earth would you ever want to do that? Because it's only when we are willing to accept the unacceptable within us that we attain the capacity to live unconditionally. This powerful navigation towards living unconditionally is I believe, the way to re-establish the original harmony that once existed between us and the universe. So what are you waiting for? Mount up and venture in.



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