

## Essay

# “OPENSOURCE” IS A VERB

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Summer, 1950. I am lying on my stomach in the back yard. One small patch of grass looms crazily huge, yields a feast of impressions. Lungs soak up the rich earthen smell, heart mingles with this tangled jungle of slim green reeds creating canopies under which scurry tiny ants, nits, spiders, all manner of living things.

As a child I am aware through my own experience on lazy summer days of how the microscopic can swell into prominence.

Lulled by Sun's heat on my browning skin, I lazily turn over. Grass tickles my back. Deliberately, I stare into the brilliant blue sky. Focus my eyes further, deeper into space. How far can I go? I know that the sky is “infinite.” Yet, subconsciously, I am looking for a ceiling. An end to the sky. The inner surface of the ball that holds the earth inside.

As a child, I am also aware, through my fascination with the sky, that there is more than meets the eye.

At night, braving earwigs, I drag my sleeping bag into the back yard. This is my private ritual, a nightly initiation into mystery. As usual, my stomach feels fluttery. Why? It's the same sky I will be looking into. But there's something scary about nighttime. It's not like the day, calm and serene. The darkness feels full, pregnant, bursting with energy, *alive*. Nervously, I arrange my limbs for maximum comfort. I

don't want to be reminded of my body during this ritual, don't want it to pull me down. Want to feel free. Free to fly. To whoosh out the top of my head, soar into the blackness beyond the stars.

I am hooked. Hooked on dizziness, ecstatic communion. Hooked on infinity, infinite possibility. "This life," I know, and, as later I will discover Socrates and Wordsworth knew too, "is but a sleep and a forgetting."

All my life I have felt the differential between the density of my earthy Taurus Moon, its torpid craving for attachment, security, sameness, and spirit's need for freedom, soaring, infinity, the unknown, coursing through my fiery Sagittarian Sun and Ascendant.

All my life, I have known both Earth and Sky, have sensed the tension between them, and struggled to integrate them internally.

As a young girl, I was brought up to believe that there is One True Church, One True Way of looking at the world; that any other way leads to either hell, purgatory, or "limbo." My family was Roman Catholic, and of course, I had friends who were not, and I felt sorry for them. Most of my parochial school classmates took their religion with a grain of salt, *because* it didn't guarantee a good outcome for their Catholic friends. Not me. I was mentally and emotionally locked into Catholic fundamentalism.

And yet, I was not, not at all. For the night sky was alive, and I regularly floated in its embrace. So though I was a good dogmatic Catholic girl, a larger part of me dwelled within mystery. Even then, though I was too young to realize it, my awareness was multidimensional.

With the onset of puberty, my secret high-flying ways crashed to earth. My Taurus Moon grounded me into surging hormonal cycles. Earth had me now. I desperately needed security and attachment. I was no longer a creature of the sky.

In my early 20s, married and with two little boys, my awareness numbed, dulled, lulled into daily routine: buying, washing, dressing, cleaning, cooking, feeding. Glimpses

of nighttime dreams threaded through those endless grey days, warning of the spirit's plight. In repeating dreams, I was trying to run underwater, or running on a treadmill, going nowhere.

When I was 26 years old, like for many of my generation, conventional life suddenly shifted into something wild and strange. LSD slammed open the doors of perception, dissolving the clockwork mechanical world of cause and effect into a fantastical flowering dance. Whatever my eye focused on birthed, bloomed, died, transformed, birthed again.

LSD returned my childhood to me, gifted me with the undulating fabric of existence, that living presence wherein the small and the large morph in and out, and "things" peel back their layers, dissolve into a single, organic, growing, shimmering being.

I remembered I could fly.

Once again my world was multidimensional. Only this time with a difference. This time I knew it. I *knew* my awareness was no longer single, but multiple. That there was not one Truth, but many truths, each relative both to the uniqueness of the moment and to the state of the perceiver. One tiny tab of LSD burst the bubble of my fundamentalist Catholicism, freed me from that mental and emotional cage.

One might think that this would be the end of the story, that, once free, I could be me. In reality, I see now from the perspective of another 30 years, that this initial burst energized the seed of a lifelong journey. A journey which I experience as an evolving process. I am forced to embrace, over and over, an old human dilemma or paradox, namely: how do I live as a spirit within a body? How do I unite the spaciousness of a single, ethereal, invisible presence with the endless blinding, separating bodily cycle of pleasure and pain?

As ever, the micro mirrors the macro. My personal dilemma is ours. As a civilization, we must learn how to live rooted securely on earth, while yet continuously sensing — and ultimately exploring — the spacious context within which earth revolves and makes its yearly journey around the sun.

As a Sagittarian, the cultural ramifications of our common human dilemma initially held more appeal for me than the personal ones. Indeed, not until my 40s could I acknowledge personal pain. Rather than admit that there were painful memories that I needed to consciously integrate in order to heal, I projected everything out, becoming an activist, trying to save the world.

I was flying high, not grounded into the flow of my own inner life. Indeed, I can hardly call it a “flow,” since what I was experiencing, without knowing it, was sludge. Stuckness. Big time. The continuous low-level anxiety produced by my own unprocessed childhood fears fueled addictions, kept me running around in small repeating circles, while deluding me into thinking that I was going somewhere. Rather than focus on the pain inside, I was desperately trying to run away from myself, determined to fix, heal, change, transform, everything and everyone around me. Eventually, of course, I crashed, the weight of my addictions finally poisoning my body into near-fatal toxicity.

That was in my early 40s. Once I woke up to the fact that I was part of the problem, I figured it would take six months to two years to heal myself. HA! For seven long years I worked to excavate my own unconscious, to emotionally process the viscous ancestral gunk that had generated repeating dysfunctional patterns in my daily habits and in my relationships. From the high-flying activist, I was brought low to the ground, forced to eat my own shit.

Life moves, as they say, “in mysterious ways.” Immediately following that first LSD experience I had begun to search for a philosophical world-view which transcends fundamentalism while remaining grounded in daily life. At that early arrogant age, of course, I had no idea that I did not know how to be “grounded in daily life.” It was the hard emotional work of my 40s which would gift me with some measure of humility. In my 20s, just beginning the search, all my “knowledge” was intellectual, as was I an “intellectual.”

Even so, I was on the same track then that I am on today. All along, soul has been nudging me unswervingly through a certain trajectory. Sometimes I consciously sense the direction, sometimes I feel lost and confused. But at this point I can say with

sureness that whenever I feel confused, it is because an old way of understanding the journey is dissolving to make room for a new and larger understanding.

I still search for a world-view which integrates spirit and matter, which frees the spirit while opening the heart, which loves and respects all earthly concerns while daring to explore the infinite beyond. The search is ongoing. Since my Taurus Moon is so strong, I must always uproot incipient fundamentalism whenever it rears its ancient head — as it often does. That old intellectual desire for certainty which, I now realize, masks an emotional desire for security, is also strong and ongoing. Over and over again, I must transform my tendency to fundamentalism into skepticism. (The word “skeptic,” from the Greek, *means* “searcher.”)

Always, I seek to avoid identification with either spirit or matter, to integrate them. I have little patience with either “woo-woo” smiley-face spirituality of the New Age, or for the cynical victimization of those who bury their heads in the sand. I want the light and the dark — simultaneously.

I’ve only been able to articulate this search within the past 15 years or so as the one which I have, in fact, been on! Prior to that I knew I was restless, I was searching, but for what? What?

Now I realize what I am about. And I work to find ways to describe what I have discovered so far.

When I was 30 years old, I discovered astrology — and promptly tried to forget it! It was too crazy, too nonsensical, too “woo-woo,” I thought, way too “out-there” for one who was, by this time, a “Ph.D. philosopher.”

But astrology wouldn’t let me go. It drew me like a magnet, and despite several years of confusion, of being ashamed of myself for stooping so low as to furtively look at astrological books in bookstores, I finally gave in.

After a few years, I realized that my study of astrology was a continuation of my studies in philosophy. As a graduate student, I had told my mentor that I wanted to study “Space and Time.” “No, no,” he had admonished. “Too difficult.”

Astrology, the study of the structure and process of space and time, was exactly what I had been looking for all along.

Astrology places Earth within the context of Sky, its heavenly home. And, though astronomers may debate the origins and destiny of the universe, I have always assumed that this heavenly home was endless, infinite, and growing. I find it interesting to note that astronomers now agree with this idea, and talk, no doubt while scratching their heads, of an eternally expanding universe.

The theory about this is one thing. The experience of it is entirely other. Imagine yourself to be inside a universe expanding equally in all directions. Where are you? What is your place inside such a universe? *Your place is to be in the center, in the center of everything. You are in the center of the universe. For if the universe is continuously expanding, then the center of the universe is everywhere.*

This is a profound understanding. It means that space is a fountain, continuously, indefatigably pouring forth of itself. It means that more and more space is being created every instant. It means that the NOW is a spacious presence, with plenty of room for everything. No living thing need feel crowded. The so-called “instinct” for territoriality – so long used to justify war, and conflict of any kind--is predicated on abject ignorance of the creative nature of the universe.

Each of us is meant to be a fountain of energy, situated in the exact center of the universe, flowing from within. As we release the sludge of our ancestral emotional patterns, the lid pops off the fountain. Each of us is gifted with what most people think of, with nostalgia, as “the fountain of youth,” but is actually there, in latent state, for us all, no matter what our age, the fountain of our own most precious aliveness.

As usual, the old maxim holds: “as above, so below.” Or I should say here, “as below, so above. As within, so without.” For as we unlock the life force within ourselves, our sense of the universe as a whole expands. The more we focus inward, the more the universe opens. This paradoxical understanding is at the heart of astrology, and is symbolized through the conception of planetary energies as being both physical and spiritual, both without and within. “Uranus,” for example, is both a physical body in the sky, and a spiritual energy which lives inside us — or more accurately, in the case of Uranus, which *we live inside of*. The spiritual energy of Uranus is the invisible globe which is defined through the circumference of its cycle. The cycle of Uranus is 84 years, i.e., the Uranian globe is very large; very few of us live to be that old. Very few of us, then, undergo a full cycle of Uranus, incorporate the full globe of its meaning into our lives.

All this may sound foolish to the uninitiated, but believe me, I have consciously experienced the energies of the planets, and I *know* they are real.

How do I experience them? How do I know something is “Uranus,” for example, and not “Saturn,” or “Mars,” or even a bad mood caused by indigestion? I know because I can look up in my Ephemeris (a book of the daily motions of the planets) the *timing* of events that their motions precipitate. I know because I sense planetary motions as they live inside me, or as I live inside them. The longer their cycles, the longer they take to work, the longer it takes for their meaning to be consciously recognized. We do not understand the meaning of a planet until we have lived through one complete cycle of it. Once one full cycle has been assimilated, we can become conscious of the way it works, the kind of energy it is, how we can expect it to work the next time around.

The larger the cycle that we experience, the more awareness we gain of both space and time. Cycles carve out space through time. The older we become, the larger our awareness. At least in theory. In practice, we must practice this kind of awareness. Pay attention. Notice, for example, the first heavenly cycle that we can become aware of, that of the Moon. Notice how different the feeling at new and full moons. At New Moon there is a new beginning of a month-long energy; at Full Moon there is the full stretch of how much space that time cycle actually includes. The amount of time a particular cycle

carves out creates its reality, and that reality lives inside the reality of other cycles. There is no cycle which is not both smaller or larger than others. The infinity of time/space cycles creates realities, they are the warp and woof of the fabric we weave with our daily lives, of the birthing and dying of galaxies.

Each of us stands in the exact center of the universe, surrounded by planetary cycles of varying lengths which are continuously providing us with different experiences. The longer the cycles, the longer the precipitated experience takes to work itself out. The meaning of a particular experience may not become clear for days, months, years, decades. Indeed, any particular point in any cycle can be viewed within any or all of the other planetary cycles, and within each cycle have a different meaning. One event placed within the context of the Mars cycle, the Jupiter cycle, the Saturn cycle, etc., yields different meanings. Now we begin to gain a glimmering of how truth is both *relative* and *multidimensional*.

Astrology gives exacting structure and an orderly process to what mystics and psychedelic experimenters both recognize as “flow.” Astrology deconstructs the point-by-point line of Newtonian time into moments which can be experienced as large or small, depending on which flow, which cycle, it is being experienced within. The “eternal now” is a reality. The “now” expands forever, if we allow it, if we let go of one cycle and move into the next, and the next and the next. We can shift from dimension to dimension, cycle to cycle, each one like the floor of a building, where the kundalini energy of our spines is the elevator, hurtling us from floor to floor.

The more we open to the universe, both within and without, the larger grows our awareness, the greater our corresponding compassion. The larger the truth which we incorporate within our being, the more our heart opens, the greater our love. What was formerly separate, dissolves into unity. The expanding Now is the mystic One.

We are here on earth to open up space. Openspace is a *verb*. Every day, in every way, we are either opening space through love or closing it down through fear-based fundamentalism. Our tendency to fundamentalism freezes things in place. It divides the world into me and not-me. It creates the conditions for conflict, for war. Ultimately our



tendency to fundamentalism is a refusal to re-member that the universe is alive and growing. For there are no closed circles in nature. All that seems to circle actually spirals, evolves, changes, dies, forever and ever to be reborn.