



Talking Leaves: Volume 6, Issue 1

Spring Equinox 2017

Welcome to Yggdrasil

Yggdrasil is a collaborative venture of a small circle of co-creative friends - the culmination of our life experiences; our work as healers, teachers and writers; our soul journeys; our dreams and our quests in nature. We envision Yggdrasil to be a mystery school for visionary contrarians and a forest retreat for souls seeking to reinvent themselves, housed within a self-sustaining eco-village community. We are now in the formative stages of this project, working together to refine and elaborate our vision, and root it in fertile soil.

This newsletter is one way for us to stay in touch with our extended family of friends and supporters. Please feel free to share this issue of **Talking Leaves** with anyone who feel might be interested in what we are doing. You can also learn more about Yggdrasil through our website at yggdrasilretreat.com, and/or keep track of us on our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/yggdrasilretreat.



Contents

We Want Your Feedback
Two Views of Soul
The Mentorship Program
Tracking the Soul
Welcome to Our Newest Talking Council Member - Beverly Feldt
Stopping the World
Our Standing Invitation to You

We Want Your Feedback

Over the past 5 years, we have shared our newsletter with you 4 times a year, at the turning of each season. In that time, we have introduced you to new Talking Council members; told you about our workshops and other offerings; and elaborated various ideas – like the four soul tasks, the sacred wound, and the mythopoetic realm – that are central to our vision. We've talked about some of our challenges, our ongoing quest for location, our forays into the art of dreaming, and our response to the state of the world.

Hopefully all of this has been interesting to you. But now we want to know – What kinds of articles would you like to see in this newsletter? What issues or questions would you like us to address? How can we better feed your spiritual hunger to live a soulful life in a troubled world?

We at Yggdrasil consider you to be an essential part of our community. We couldn't do what we do without you. This is your newsletter as much as it is ours. What would you like it to be?



Two Views of Soul

Yggdrasil is first and foremost a mystery school. A mystery school is a space where souls of all stripes and persuasions can gather to contemplate the great unfathomable mysteries that have been a source of wonder and inquiry since divine intelligence first entered into life on this planet and evolved to become the capacity to ask questions, learn and grow. Scientists are beginning to learn that this is not a capacity limited to humans, but we humans are certainly filled with questions – the best of them deep mysteries.

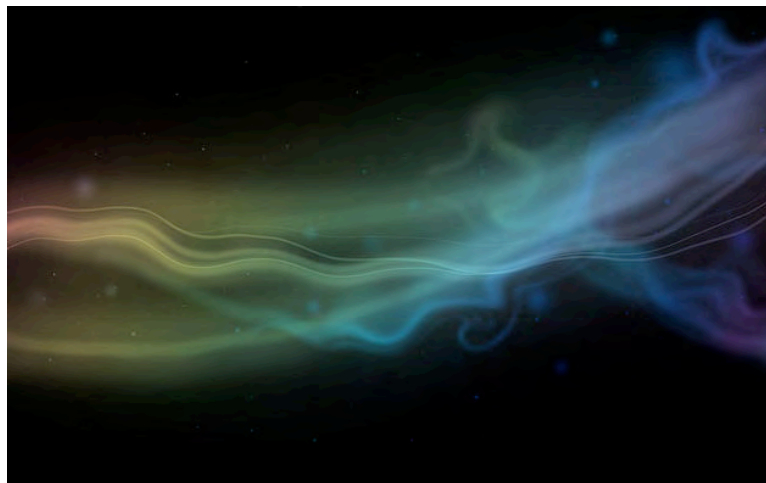
How did we get here? What does it mean to be alive? To be conscious? How is the body related to the soul? What is a soul? What happens to the soul after death? What is death?

These are all questions with no ultimate answers. Mysteries. Suitable food for thought at a mystery school. Perhaps the human tendency is to want to think that whatever temporary working answers to these mysteries we have found are The Answer. Perhaps it is human nature to want to convince others that what we believe is true, and certainly we have the mental capacity to convince ourselves, if not others, that everything we believe is true. Perhaps it is human nature to mistake belief for truth; interpretation of facts for facts; perceptions for reality, and in recent times, it seems to be fashionable to defend our delusions to the death, if necessary.

At Yggdrasil, we aspire to something different. As contrarians, we take it for granted that we need not blindly accept the beliefs we have been handed – by parents, by teachers, by the culture at large – and that we have the right, indeed the obligation to evolve our own answers, and our own questions. As contrarians come together in community, we are also learning to stand in our own truths, while entertaining with an open mind and heart, the truths of others – entering into the lost art of dialogue with others who do not share our beliefs or worldview.

This is hard. But a true mystery demands no less of us. If there were just one answer to any question worthy of calling itself a mystery, it would not be one. Because this is so, to enter into any mystery, we must be willing to engage other diverse intelligences in dialogue. This is our third soul task – and it has proven essential to us at Yggdrasil Central as we develop our workshops, engage each other in creative dialogue around the basic assumptions underlying almost everything we are attempting to do together. Whether we are talking about the nuances of the spirit realm or what to charge for a workshop, we have to let down our defenses – again and again and yet again – and move to a place of open-hearted, open-minded wonder: “Oh, so this is what it is like to see the world from that point of view? I had no idea.”

Only to the extent that we can do that, do we actually have anything at all worth being discussed at a mystery school. In that spirit, we present the following two views of soul as the introduction to a mystery currently under discussion.



How to Live Forever, Part 1

from a blog post by Talking Council Member Bruce Durward (Gentle Bear)

This answer is so easy! There is no way to **not** live forever! We may lose our body, but **our soul is a part of the eternal whole**. What happens when we die has been confirmed by hypnotherapists like Dolores Cannon and many others. After doing many past life regressions, they started exploring the period between incarnations. People who have had near death experiences, that is, crossed over but then came back to their bodies, report the same story. Most recently author and anthropologist Hank Wesselman spent time in the bardo realms through shamanic journeying. He also agrees with the same after death story. All of these accounts, besides agreeing with each other, also resonate strongly with my own experiences in the Bardo realm. I go there as a medium to communicate with and help souls who have passed over.

What is the Bardo?

This is the name given where we go when we die by Buddhists. To me, when I journey there it feels like part of the fourth dimension. The fourth is tightly interwoven with our third dimension. We also use a level of the fourth when we dream, and another when we take shamanic journeys.

One of the differences of the fourth dimension with the third is that instant manifestation happens there. This is how our dreams get so crazy! After a soul passes over to Bardo, whatever it thinks happens. If the person who died had no idea of the afterlife, this is how they get lost and stuck. If they think of a family member, they go immediately to them and start following them around. I have had this happen to several friends and clients. If the person who died thinks of their home, they go there. This is how homes get haunted.

So, what happens when you die?

When a person dies, the first stop is the Bardo or fourth dimension. They are met there by their soul guide. The soul guide will assist them in going to the Plain of All Souls. There is a portal in Bardo that looks like a tunnel of light. When I work with a confused soul (or ghost) I point out this portal and offer to assist them in going through it to their next soul mission.

The Plain of All Souls is a blissful place where your connection with all is remembered. This is where you could meet with passed over loved ones or ancestors. This is also where your soul committee will meet with you for a review of your life and the contract for this life that you agreed to before you were incarnated. After reviewing, your next soul mission is discussed and a new contract written and agreed upon.

Hank Wesselman went to Bardo on a shamanic journey. He met his soul guide for this life, and asked to be taken to the Plain of All Souls. His soul committee was surprised! They did not expect to see him until he died. He explained that he was seeking information to teach others about what happens when we die. The committee shared his contract with him.

In part two, I'll share my experiences in Bardo and tell about meeting a deva who's mission is helping souls move on to the Plain of All Souls.

<https://www.gentle-bear.com/single-post/2017/03/07/How-to-Live-Forever---Part-Two>

This wonderful poem by Tagore sums up my feelings about death:

*Say not in grief that she is no more
But say in thankfulness that she was.
A death is not extinguishing of a light
but the putting out of the lamp,
because dawn has come.*



Toward a Working Definition of Soul

from Chapter 1 of [The Seven Gates of Soul](#) by Talking Council Member Joe Landwehr (Graywolf)

As James Hillman has suggested, soul “is neither physical and material on one hand, nor spiritual and abstract on the other, yet bound to them both”. It inhabits the middle ground between Spirit and body, a sacred territory that has been largely abandoned by religion. Most religious traditions identify the soul exclusively with Spirit, and place it in opposition to the mortal body in which it is housed. In the formative years of the Judeo-Christian tradition, the body was thought to be a source of imprisonment. Buddhists consider the body a source of suffering to be transcended by detachment. Hindus believe the body and the physical realm to which it was bound to be a dance of *maya*, that is to say, an illusory dream. When these and other traditions speak about soul, they use the term as a synonym for the presence of God, or Spirit, within the body, but deny, downplay or denigrate the role that the body plays in housing Spirit. Yet, as contemporary mystical theologian Matthew Fox reminds us, “there can be no living worship without the body . . . Our

bodies are the temple that con-templates us with other temples, other bodies of the universe, bodies of stars, of suns, of earth, of winged, finned, four-legged and two-legged brothers and sisters, children all of a living God”.

Before we can comprehend the soul in its human dimension, we must first find a language broad enough to recognize Spirit and body as partners in a sacred dance they must negotiate together. Soul, as I am choosing to define it, is this partnership. Soul is *the embodiment of Spirit*.

Embodied Soul – Eternal Spirit

In differentiating Spirit and soul, I do not wish to deny the possibility that something essential within us survives physical death. Nearly all religious traditions throughout the world agree on this point, although there are important differences when discussion turns to what, exactly, that something is. Most Western religions believe that the soul is a discrete entity that survives intact as a unit after death. Buddhists and many early indigenous cultures believe that what survives is the Life Energy contained within the soul, but not the individual soul itself. Many esoteric traditions – such as those practiced among Taoist yogis, Yaqui shamans, and Tibetan Buddhist monks – believe the survival of the soul’s identity after death requires mastery of advanced spiritual practices, and only the most fiercely dedicated souls complete the arduous journey. Many mystics suggest that when the soul becomes immortal, there is no one there to experience immortality. Or as American mystic Ram Dass succinctly put it, “”The difference between you and . . . a perfected being is that they aren’t and you still think you are”.

It is likely that something survives the transition from life to death, but exactly what that is remains part of the Great Unknown. Even those who return from near-death experiences convinced of the soul’s capacity to survive physical death are only able to convey their message because the etheric cord connecting Spirit and body was never completely severed. What happens after the cord is severed cannot be discussed with final authority by the living. As Zen master Gudo responded to a student who asked him where souls go after death, “I know not... because I have not died yet.” We can believe whatever we choose to believe about what happens after death, but all we can actually *know* about ourselves as *living* souls must be experienced within the context of our embodiment.



At Yggdrasil, it is not our goal to provide you with answers to life’s most mysterious – and worthy – questions, but rather to provide you with the opportunity to explore them, and clarify your own evolving relationship to them. In 2017, we are offering our 4th annual [Tracking the Soul](#) workshop as a pathway into this open-ended and ongoing exploration. The [Mentorship Program](#) – six one-on-one mentoring sessions – is a pre-requisite for anyone planning to attend the workshop.



The Mentorship Program

Crack Open Your Geode – Let Your Inner Jewels Shine



Did you know that a geode starts from an empty bubble or a space left by rotted out organic matter? A rock crust forms around the bubble or space just like we create a protective shell around our core childhood wound(s). However, this hard crust is slightly permeable and water filled with dissolved minerals does trickle through to line the interior and grow beautiful crystals within the geode. In the same way the protective shell we have created so no one can touch or view our tender wound is permeated by trickles of love from friends and family and transcendental experiences which touch and open our souls. Knowingly or unknowingly you have beautiful crystalline jewels growing hidden within your deepest secret places.

The soul mentoring process allows you to consciously crack open your precious geode, your sacred wound, with full support. Let your beautiful inner jewels shine as you share and heal your pain and clarify and empower your visionary calling.

How to Enroll

You can read more about The Mentorship Program, Yggdrasil's experienced mentors, and download an application [here](#).

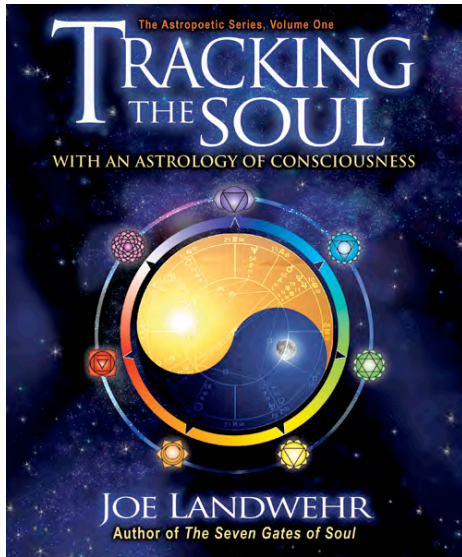
If you are specifically interested in enrolling in the Mentorship Program as preparation for the Tracking the Soul Workshop, please contact Joe at jlandwehr@yggdrasilretreat.com.

It is also possible to enroll in the Mentorship Program as a stand-alone experience. If you are interested in discussing whether or not the Mentorship Program is right for you, please contact Nia at nia@crystalsoflight.com for a **free personal session** to discuss the possibilities.

Tracking the Soul Workshop

from August 17-21, 2017 at Spirit Matters (near Almonte, Ontario)

The Tracking the Soul workshop is based on Yggdrasil Founder's [book](#) of the same name. The book integrates the exquisite spiritual psychology of the seven chakras with an intimately personal, image-based approach to astrology called astropoetics. In the preparation for the workshop, author and workshop co-facilitator [Joe Landwehr](#) works with the system outlined in the book to lead each



participant to a deeper understanding of their core issues, as well as to an intuitive sense of what might be necessary to shift these issues to more positive, creative and self-empowering expression. At the workshop itself, we leave all theory behind and create an experiential space in which the understanding attained in the preparation can be rooted in the body, heart and imagination.

The workshop brings the provocative theory of the astrochakra system into real life application in relation to core issues brought by participants. The emphasis is on working with troublesome patterns and shifting them toward positive, more creative and empowering expression.

The workshop provides each participant with ample opportunity to be the loving center of group attention, while allowing plenty of alone time for integration. The workshop includes experiential exercises in authentic movement and other experiential modalities designed to illicit your own inner knowing and bring it to the fore. In the 2017 workshop, we will incorporate some shamanic work, as rooted in the experience of workshop co-facilitator [Julie Yeaman](#). We also develop customized exercises to address the specific needs of those attending.

About the workshop, a 2016 participant said:

The workshop was really, really something for me. It was wonderful, scary, fun, sacred, mind-jarring, a time of growth and peace and a whole lot more.

Another 2013 participant said:

I would say that it was life altering. I feel that strongly and I don't say that lightly, perhaps because I've done some personal growth work before. I was ready to heal and I'm extremely grateful for this past weekend.

Our 2017 workshop will be held from August 17-21 at [Spirit Matters Centre](#) near Almonte,

Ontario, Canada. Since the workshop requires a bit of preparation, early registration is encouraged. You can sign up directly on [our website](#), using Paypal to pay.

For an in-depth account of last year's workshop, read "[Tracking the Soul 2016 - Another Mind-Jarring Experience](#)" in [Talking Leaves #19](#) (downloadable from our website).



Welcome to Our New Talking Council Member – Beverly Feldt

Says Beverly, "I'm very excited to become a member of the Yggdrasil Talking Council following several years of reading the [newsletters](#), doing [mentoring](#) with Yggdrasil mentor [Joe Landwehr](#), participating in last year's [Tracking the Soul Webinar](#) and attending the [workshop](#) at [Spirit Matters](#) in Ontario, Canada. Being part of a forest community of [visionary contrarians](#) and working on the [four soul tasks](#) as outlined by Joe feels just right to this soul.



Over the years my focus has been on healing sacred wounds and to that end I've lived in a residential Zen center for six years and have studied astrology continuously since I was first introduced to it by a Rosicrucian gentleman in a university without walls in Madison, WI in the late 1960's. After doing a solitary three-month meditation retreat in a cabin in Maine in 1985, I felt empowered and motivated to get a graduate degree in Social Work, which I did in 1989. Subsequently my career has led to work with neglected elders in Boston, to crisis intervention, home health and hospice work in Maine and for the last 15 years to work in a locked psychiatric unit and detox facility in a community hospital in Maine.

Since getting my MSW I have studied Non-Violent Communication and Inner Relationship Focusing intensively in addition to my astrological studies. My studies and professional experience have helped me to understand how deeply wounded we are as individuals and as a culture, and I believe that my life experiences and skills can contribute to the soul development and healing of myself and others throughout my crone years."



Stopping the World

originally written as Full Moon Meditation 82 (August 28, 1988) by Joe Landwehr
just as relevant now as it was then - IMHO



In my travels this past month, I have noticed a divergence of opinion between those who are working to usher in a New Age of planetary renaissance, and those who are working for external change on the political front. Those who readily identify with the New Age often judge the activist as being too caught up in anger and fear to be useful in effecting real transformation. Those who prefer direct action and non-violent confrontation often consider New Agers to be airy-fairy, wishful thinkers too invested in themselves to be effective in changing the real world. Often there is cynicism, and scorn, where dialogue and cooperation might produce a more positive result.

No one can deny that the old world needs changing. Too many people are dying because of political policies that reduce the environment to a problem of resource management. Too many people are starving or homeless because of gross inequalities in our economic system. Too many people are denied basic rights, because of color, sex, sexual preference, religious or political beliefs, or other marks of difference from an elitist minority. To deny that these problems exist, or to believe that they can be exorcised through any amount of meditative practice is to live with one's head chronically stuck in one's navel. The modern day cave dwelling holy person who believes that moving into his/her personal euphoria somehow contributes toward the healing of the planet is sadly deluded at best, at worst a self-indulgent blight upon the planet.

At the same time, s/he who would work for world peace, but takes his/her anger out on the children, is fooling no one. S/he who rallies on behalf of the rainforests, stopping only for a quick burger at lunchtime, fights the good fight with one arm tied behind his/her back. S/he who gives his/her money to a humanitarian roster of noble causes, but stays only one step ahead of interest hungry creditors, serves at least two masters. No amount of political action, divorced from consciousness and work upon the self, will produce change worth celebrating. Where is the revolution that has ever failed to replace oppression with more oppression? Where is the strictly

political movement that has ever sought anything more than its own day of power?

In these extraordinary times, we cannot afford to delude ourselves on either end of the spiritual-political spectrum. There must be a marriage of the two, if the world we are creating together will serve both Spirit and the next seven generations that will live upon it. We must be equally conscious of our true grounding in Spirit, and our connection to Mother Earth. We are flesh and blood, born of dust and destined to return to dust, just as surely as we are eternal beings beyond the vale of time and space. This is the paradox of our human existence. This is the riddle we are living. We cannot attain immortality in this life or the next without honoring our mortality, nor can we find true satisfaction in this mortal life without honoring our timeless bearings.

Honoring our timeless bearings does not mean denying the reality of this earth plane. Just because we will move on from this planetary sphere when our lessons here are done does not mean that this earthly life is illusion. Too many well-meaning religious disciplines, both eastern and western, have focused on the attainment of some otherworldly state, to the neglect of integration within this one. Too many pious souls have rolled a meditative eye, while the Earth beneath them suffered the agony of shortsighted torture. When we treat this Earth as little more than a launching pad for the excursion of our souls into realms beyond, it is only one small step to the dangerous attitude that the fouling of our nest does not matter. In this small step, however, is the undoing of any spiritual altitude we might otherwise have reached, for the attainment of genuine divinity requires the exquisite compassion of a Creator God/dess toward His/Her Creation. Until we know the subtle threads that connect us to fish and fowl, nebula and nematode, Inuit reindeer herder and nanotechnology engineer, we have not earned our passage to worlds beyond. Until we know how to care for the material bounty that blesses our native soil, we can hardly fail to avoid the exportation of slash and burn technology to the distant galaxies of our meditative dreams. The mastery of right stewardship is the test of our worthiness to enjoy the bliss of heaven, not just another path through the vale of illusion onto higher ground.

It is often stated in New Age Circles that we create our own reality, and this is certainly true to the extent that we are mental beings, shaping the material world with our thoughts. But what is often ignored is that we are also material beings, born of the substance of the Earth, constantly being shaped ourselves by the rhythms and the energy flows of the planet on which we live. The shifting patterns of global climatology, the ebb and flow of geological activity, and the constantly rebalancing of local ecologies determine the rise and fall of civilizations, and the evolution of the human species. On a subtler level, the electromagnetic field that the Earth produces affects the circadian rhythms of our bodies, and the glandular balance of our emotions. The vibrational tone of mountain, river, ocean, forest, and plain determine the quality of life for those in close proximity far more than we may ever realize. We do not simply live upon this Earth, and exercise our wills upon its passive landscape. We interact with the Earth, and are changed irrevocably through that interaction. Whether we stay here one lifetime or many; whether we spend our entire evolutionary process within the Earth's domain, or pass beyond to mingle with the stars, the mark of this Earth is upon us. We have been created in its image, and all realities that stem from our own imaging are children of the same Mother.

Where we fail to recognize this truth, our spirituality smacks of arrogance. However grandiose and well-intentioned our schemes for the healing of the Earth, if we do not for a moment consider that we may be subject to a larger plan unfolding beyond our conscious volition or consent, we are only children seeking to dress up in God's clothes without first growing to fill them. If we truly believe that we can step outside this Creation to save it, we are like a plant that rips itself up from the soil to carry its own seeds to some far corner of the garden. We do not see our folly, because we mistakenly believe that we have been given dominion over the earth, even if this idea is couched in New Age terms as the power to create our own reality. There are larger forces at work than we can lay claim to, and to pretend otherwise is to live in illusion. Would any mother ask her child for guidance and protection? Would any flea pretend to own the dog that scratches it?

There is a plan encoded in the very molecules that compose this Earth, a plan that the human mind cannot begin to fathom without first acknowledging its subservience to that plan. We did not create this Earth. How then can we be expected to guide this Earth through its evolutionary passage? Certainly, we have a part to play, or we would not be here. But what arrogance to assume that we humans hold the keys to planetary salvation. How much cleaner to admit we do not know what we are doing, and listen to what the Earth itself has to teach us.

If we pull uranium out of the ground and it makes our people sick, there is a lesson there to be heard. If we gather in harmonic convergence and a sickly haze continues to taint the periphery of our vision, there is also a lesson to be heard. The healing of this Earth is not a matter of stampeding sacred sites, any more than it is a matter of willfully ignoring natural law in the plunder of what dominionists so glibly call our natural resources. It is first and foremost a matter of stopping the world, so the planet can be heard. Our job is not to speak for the planet, but to stop, listen and learn. Only then can we pretend to act in its best interest.

Our Standing Invitation to You

If you want to stay in closer touch with what we are doing, you can easily subscribe to [our blog feed](#), like us on [Facebook](#), follow us on [Twitter](#), make a [donation](#), attend a [workshop](#), or find a [mentor](#). Or if you want to be a part of this exciting venture, [join the Talking Council](#).

Whatever your level of interest, thanks for being part of our extended community and for helping us hold a space for the vision we carry.

Yggdrasil is a mystery school for visionary contrarians and a forest retreat for souls reinventing themselves, eventually to be housed within a self-sustaining eco-village community.

Keep an eye out for the next *Talking Leaves* - Summer Solstice 2017
Contributions in the spirit of Yggdrasil are welcome by June 14.

