



Truth or Dare

Because the woman runs screaming into the gym, because she dives into the center of our meeting, because we are in jail, because six guards are after her, because spontaneously we surround her and protect her, we encounter mystery. The terrain of the mysteries is the edge where power encounters power, for mystery is the arising of powers that are uncharted and untamed, that will not follow the logic of naked force, and so act in unexpected ways. Mystery is surprise.

Six hundred women are crowded into the gym at Camp Parks. All of us have been arrested for blockading the Livermore Weapons Lab, one of the two facilities in the United States where nuclear weapons are designed and developed. We are irritable and uncomfortable. The day is hot; voices ricochet off the walls and bounce on the wood floor. The scanty food runs short at every meal. No one has slept well and we have no doors to close out the crowd, the constant meetings, the decisions to be made; no way to withdraw or be alone.

We are not complaining. In the fervor of the action, we are willing to face horrors much worse than the discomfort of this makeshift lockup in an old World War II Japanese relocation camp. Nevertheless, we feel secure in our knowledge that we probably won't have to. We expect our courage to be tested only a little. Although many women, at booking, gave their names as Karen Silkwood, we are not at risk of being run off the road for our stand. Although we sing songs about Victor Jara and Hannah Senesh, we are not facing massacre or torture, nor do we face, as did the Japanese who preceded us here, long years of custody and loss of our homes, our businesses, our community. Stories of martyrs inspire us but also make us feel slightly guilty, for we know that we are not great heras, or saints. We are a small legion of a more common breed of ordinary, irritable people, able sometimes to be somewhat brave.

On our second day in custody, we are massed in the center of the floor, having an endless meeting that has become an extended argument. We are arguing about solidarity, about militancy, about violence and nonviolence,

about sexuality and spirituality and how polite we should or should not be to the guards. We have learned from our lawyers that the gym we are held in has been the site of experiments with radioactive substances for twenty years. We are arguing about who knew this fact ahead of time and why they didn't tell us and what we should do about it. Outside is nothing but dust, smog, and barbed wire. Inside are six hundred women rapidly getting sick of each other and feeling that the line they have put their bodies on is getting rather frayed.

And then the woman runs in. She bursts through the open doorway that leads to the concrete exercise yard outside. Six guards are after her. "Grab her! Grab her!" they yell. The woman dives into our cluster, and we instinctively surround her, gripping her arms and legs and shielding her with our bodies. The guards grab her legs and pull; we resist, holding on. The guards and the women are shouting and in a moment, I know, the nightsticks will descend on kidneys and heads, but in that suspended interval before the violence starts we hold our ground.

And then someone begins to chant.

The chant is wordless, a low hum that swells and grows with open vowels as if we had become the collective voice of some ancient beast that growls and sings, the voice of something that knows nothing of guns, walls, nightsticks, mace, or barbed-wire fencing, yet gives protection, a voice outside surveillance or calculation but not outside knowledge, a voice that is recognized by our bodies if not our minds and is known also to the guards whose human bodies, like ours, have been animal for a million years before control was invented.

The guards back away.

"Sit down," a woman whispers. We become a tableau, sitting and clasping the woman as if we are healing her with our voices and our magic. The confrontation has become a laying on of hands.

The guards stand, tall, isolated pillars. They look bewildered. Something they are unprepared for, unprepared even to name, has arisen in our moment of common action. They do not know what to do.

And so, after a moment, they withdraw. The chant dies away. It is over. For a moment, mystery has bested authority.

The moment passes. We take a deep breath, return to our arguments and irritation. The encounter does not transform us into saints, or even make us all get along much better. The implications of the incident are too much for us to take in fully: we wall it off, returning to our usual games and strategies.

Yet what has taken place is an act that could teach us something deep about power. In that moment in the jail, the power of domination and control met something outside its comprehension, a power rooted in another source. To know that power, to create the situations that bring it forth, is magic.

AGIC AND ITS USES

Magic is a word that can be defined in many ways. A saying attributed to Dion Fortune is: "Magic is the art of changing consciousness at will." Sometimes we call it the art of evoking power-from-within. Today, I will name it this: the art of liberation, the act that releases the mysteries, that ruptures the fabric of our beliefs and lets us look into the heart of deep space where dwell the immeasurable, life-generating powers.

Those powers live in us also, as we live in them. The mysteries are what is wild in us, what cannot be quantified or contained. But the mysteries are also what is most common to us all: blood, breath, heartbeat, the sprouting of seed, the waxing and waning of the moon, the turning of the earth around the sun, birth, growth, death, and renewal.

To practice magic is to tap that power, to burrow down through the systems of control like roots that crack concrete to find the living soil below.

We are never apart from the power of the mysteries. Every breath we take encompasses the circle of birth, death, and rebirth. The forces that push the blood cells through our veins are the same forces that spun the universe out of the primal ball of fire. We do not know what those forces are. We can invoke them, but we cannot control them, nor can we disconnect from them. They are our life, and when we die, decay, and decompose, we remain still within their cycle.

Yet somehow we human beings, made of the same materials as the stars, the eucalyptus, the jaguar, and the rose, we who inherit four billion years of survival have managed to create a culture in which the power of the mysteries has been denied and power itself has been redefined as power-over, as domination and control. Wielding that false and limited power, we create misery for each other and devastation for the other life forms that share this earth.

In a warped way, such an achievement is almost grimly inspiring. We are like a friend I had in the sixties who, while wheelchair-bound, paraplegic, and needing constant care, managed to deal drugs successfully until he killed himself with an overdose of heroin. We have overcome every handicap and surmounted every obstacle to self-destruction.

We are not particularly happy in this condition. We do not enjoy being the targets of nuclear warheads or developing cancer from our polluted environment. We do not enjoy starving, or wasting our lives in meaningless work, nor are we eager to be raped, abused, tortured, or bossed around. Whether the bosses enjoy their role is not the issue. The question is, How are the rest of us controlled? Or, even more to the point, How do we break control and set ourselves free?

This book is a text of magic, a liberation psychology. It holds tools, not answers, for the mysteries do not offer answers, but questions that in

Those who practice magic can be called many things: magicians, shamans, mystics. I myself am a Witch. *Witch* comes from the Anglo-Saxon root *wic*, meaning to bend or shape—to shape reality, to make magic. Witches bend energy and shape consciousness. We were—and are—shamans, healers, explorers of powers that do not fit the usual systems of control. Those powers are rightly perceived as dangerous to the established order, and so we have been taught to view them as evil or delusionary. We imagine Witches flying around on brooms or brewing up noxious potions.

Actually, Witchcraft is a mystery religion, based on ritual, on consciously structured collective experiences that allow us to encounter the immeasurable. It is the old, pre-Christian, tribal religion of Europe. Like other earth-based, tribal traditions, Witchcraft sees the earth as sacred.

To Witches, the cosmos is the living body of the Goddess, in whose being we all partake, who encompasses us and is immanent within us. We call her Goddess not to narrowly define her gender, but as a continual reminder that what we value is life brought into the world. The great forces of the spirit are manifest in nature and culture. The Goddess is fertile earth and ripened fruit, and she is also the storehouse, where the earth's fruits are collected, guarded, and given out. She is the virgin grove of redwoods and also the carved shape that speaks through art of the wood's power. She is wildfire and hearthfire, the star's core, the forge, and the poetic fire of inspiration. She has infinite names and guises, many of them male: the Gods, her consorts, sons, companions. For what we call Goddess moves always through paradox, and so takes us into the heart of the mysteries, the great powers that can never be limited or defined.

However they name their Gods, tribal cultures across the world have always shared a common understanding: that the sacred is found here, where we are, immanent in the world. In Europe, long after Christianity had become the official faith, the more ancient understanding persisted in folk customs and beliefs, in ways of healing, and in the practices of the Witches, the dedicated few who preserved remnants of the Old Religion.

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Catholic and Protestant churches began systematic Witch persecutions. Witches were accused by both Catholic and Protestant churches of worshiping the devil, but in reality our tradition has nothing to do with Satanism, a peculiarly Christian heresy. Accused Witches were subjected to horrifying tortures and execution. The persecutions fractured peasant class solidarity, and marked the demise of healing and midwifery as the preserve of upper-class, university-educated male "experts." The old organic worldview, the vision of the sacred presence in all of life, was made illegitimate in Western Europe. What remained of the value system of immanence was discredited. The world became viewed as a machine, something made of non-sacred parts that could ultimately be completely known and con-

alled. That worldview in turn justified increased social control, isolation, and domination.²

Maligned and persecuted for four hundred years, the Craft went underground, became a closed and secret society that is only now reemerging.

I call myself a Witch even though I am fully aware that the word often reduces fear.³ Until we confront the fears and stereotypes evoked by the word, we cannot contact the powers that are also embedded there.

The word *Witch* throws us back into a world who is a being, a world in which everything is alive and speaking, if only we learn its language. The word brings us back to the outlawed awareness of the immanence of the sacred, and so it reeks of a holy stubbornness, an unwillingness to believe that the living milk of nurture we drink daily from the flowing world can be reduced to formula administered from a machine.

To be a Witch is to make a commitment to the Goddess, to the protection, preservation, nurturing, and fostering of the great powers of life as they emerge in every being. In these discussions of power, that, then, is my bias: I am on the side of the power that emerges from within, that is inherent in us as the power to grow is inherent in seed. As a shaper, as one who practices magic, my work is to find that power, to call it forth, to coax it out of hiding, tend it, and free it of constrictions. In a society based on power-over, that work inevitably must result in conflict with the forces of domination, for we cannot bear our own true fruit when we are under another's control.

To practice magic is to bear the responsibility for having a vision, for we work magic by envisioning what we want to create, clearing the obstacles in our way, and then directing energy through that vision. Magic works through the concrete; our ideals, our visions, are meaningless until they are in some way enacted. So, if our work is to evoke power-from-within, we must clearly envision the conditions that would allow that power to come forth, we must identify what blocks it, and create the conditions that foster empowerment. Given a world based on power-over, we must remake the world.

THE THREE TYPES OF POWER

The conflicts brewing today are only superficially questions of who will take power. Underneath is a deeper struggle: to change the nature of the power in which our society is rooted. The root question is, How do we define the world? For it is an old magical secret that the way we define reality shapes reality. Name a thing and you invoke it. If we call the world nonliving, we will surely kill her. But when we name the world alive, we begin to bring her back to life.

Reality, of course, shapes and defines us. Only when we know how we

become shapers. A psychology of liberation can become our *athame*, our Witch's knife, the tool of magic that corresponds with the East, the element air: mind, clarity, vision. It is the knowledge and insight we need to carve out our own freedom.

Witches have a saying: "Where there's fear, there's power." It also works backward: "Where there's power, there's fear." We are afraid to look at power because one of the deepest prohibitions is that against seeing how power operates. Psychoanalyst Alice Miller, in her analysis of what she calls "poisonous pedagogy," shows "the overriding importance of our early conditioning to be obedient and dependent and to suppress our feelings."⁴ "The more or less conscious goal of adults in rearing infants is to make sure they will never find out later in life that they were trained not to become aware of how they were manipulated."⁵ We are afraid of the pain of seeing how deeply we have been shaped by systems of control.

Those systems and that power are built of the earth's charred bones and cemented with her stripped flesh. In this chapter, I will explore three types of power: power-over, power-from-within, and power-with. Power-over is linked to domination and control; power-from-within is linked to the mysteries that awaken our deepest abilities and potential. Power-with is social power, the influence we wield among equals.

Power-over comes from the consciousness I have termed estrangement: the view of the world as made up of atomized, nonliving parts, mechanically interacting, valued not for what they inherently are but only in relation to some outside standard. It is the consciousness modeled on the God who stands outside the world, outside nature, who must be appeased, placated, feared, and above all, obeyed. For, as we will see in chapter 2, power-over is ultimately born of war and the structures, social and intrapsychic, necessary to sustain mass, organized warfare. Having reshaped culture in a martial image, the institutions and ideologies of power-over perpetuate war so that it becomes a chronic human condition.

We live embedded in systems of power-over and are indoctrinated into them, often from birth. In its clearest form, power-over is the power of the prison guard, of the gun, power that is ultimately backed by force. Power-over enables one individual or group to make the decisions that affect others, and to enforce control.

Violence and control can take many forms. Power-over shapes every institution of our society. This power is wielded in the workplace, in the schools, in the courts, in the doctor's office. It may rule with weapons that are physical or by controlling the resources we need to live: money, food, medical care; or by controlling more subtle resources: information, approval, love. We are so accustomed to power-over, so steeped in its language and its implicit threats, that we often become aware of its functioning only when we see its extreme manifestations. For we have been shaped in its institutions, so that the insides of our minds resemble the battlefield and the jail.

In the Livermore action described in the opening of this chapter, we were relying on a different principle of power, one that I call power-from-within, or empowerment. The root of the word *power* means to be able. We were acting as if we were able to protect our friend. Our strength came not from weapons, but from our willingness to act.

Power-from-within is akin to the sense of mastery we develop as young children with each new unfolding ability: the exhilaration of standing erect, of walking, of speaking the magic words that convey our needs and thoughts.

But power-from-within is also akin to something deeper. It arises from our sense of connection, our bonding with other human beings, and with the environment.

Although power-over rules the systems we live in, power-from-within sustains our lives. We can feel that power in acts of creation and connection, in planting, building, writing, cleaning, healing, soothing, playing, singing, making love. We can feel it in acting together with others to oppose control.

A third aspect of power was also present in the jail at Camp Parks. We could call it power-with, or influence: the power of a strong individual in a group of equals, the power not to command, but to suggest and be listened to, to begin something and see it happen. The source of power-with is the willingness of others to listen to our ideas. We could call that willingness respect, not for a role, but for each unique person. We joined in the chanting begun by one woman in the jail because we respected her inspiration. Her idea felt right to us. She had no authority to command, but acted as a channel to focus and direct the will of the group.

In the dominant culture, power-with has become confused with power-over. When we attempt to create new structures that do not depend upon hierarchy for cohesion, we need to recognize power-with, so that we can work with it, share and spread, and also beware of it. For like the Witch's knife, the *athame*, power-with is double-bladed. It can be the seedbed of empowerment, but it can also spawn oppression. No group can function without such power, but within a group influence can too easily become authority.

AUTHORITY AND OBEDIENCE

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines *authority* first as "the power to enforce obedience: moral or legal supremacy: the right to command, or give an ultimate decision." Authority is also "power to influence the conduct and actions of others . . . title to be believed . . . one whose opinion is entitled to be accepted—an expert in any question."

The influence, the respect commanded by an authority is different from the respect we give to an equal. The influence of authorities comes from their roles or positions in a hierarchy. They have a *title*, a named role,

which *entitles* them to influence others. Ultimately, their entitlement derives from their power to enforce obedience.

Authority does not depend on the personal qualities of the individual. The guards in the jail expected us to respect their commands not because of who they were as individuals or because of the worth of their ideas, but because they were in a position to control us. Respect for authority is fear of power-over.

The woman in our group who suggested we sit down and chant had no position of authority. She was not designated as our leader. We did not fear her. Yet she exercised leadership in a positive sense; she put forth a plan of action, and we followed because we believed the plan good.

Power-with is more subtle, more fluid and fragile than authority. It is dependent on personal responsibility, on our own creativity and daring, and on the willingness of others to respond.

Through our willingness to respond, we can also throw away our own power, letting the "experts," tell us what to think and do, forgetting that true respect implies the possibility of challenge.

In a culture based on domination, authority and power-with are often confused, and the boundaries can be fuzzy. A teacher, for example, may impart valuable skills and knowledge in ways that empower us. We may rightfully respect such a person. Another teacher, however, may treat us in ways that establish her or his superiority and make us feel inferior. When we are required to act respectfully toward such a teacher's authority, we show deference to the role, not the person. We ignore our actual experience of her or his teaching, and by speech and gesture confirm our acceptance of our lesser status, adopting corresponding roles of our own: the good student, the teacher's pet, the rebel, and so on. Once in those roles, we are no longer thinking freely or acting freely, but reacting in set ways that reinforce the patterns of domination.

Our conditioning to obey authority is the foundation of the culture of domination. It is embedded in us so deeply that we are rarely aware of it. My own vision has been sharpened by the experience of doing direct action—of deliberately deciding to break an unjust law, to challenge authority on its home ground. In the jail, when every moment we face the decision of whether to resist or to comply, the strength of our conditioning to obey becomes clear. The guards say, "Give me your name and address," "Get on the bus," "Bend over and spread your cheeks," and we do. Only when someone refuses, resists, does another possibility reveal itself. Until then, we do not realize that we could say no.

Nazi Germany, My Lai, and many other examples have shown us how the conditioning to obey can override moral compunctions and human compassion. Another example comes from psychological experimentation.

In the 1960s, psychologist Stanley Milgram conducted a series of experiments in which he asked subjects to administer electric shocks to volunteers in what was presented as a learning experiment. The learners, who

were actually actors, were to be given shocks when they failed at a memorization task, and the shocks were to gradually increase in intensity past a level clearly marked Danger. The shocks were simulated, but those who administered them believed they were real. The actors screamed and pleaded with the subjects to stop the shocks. The experimenters encouraged subjects to continue, and a frighteningly high percentage did so, over half continuing to the highest level of shock available.

Milgram commented, "Subjects have learned from childhood that it is a fundamental breach of moral conduct to hurt another person against his will. Yet twenty-six (out of forty) subjects abandon this tenet in following the instructions of an authority who has no special powers to enforce his commands. Subjects often expressed deep disapproval of shocking a man in the face of his objections, and others denounced it as stupid and senseless. Yet the majority complied with the experimental commands."⁶

Because of our experience in a society based on domination, we often expect to find a system of power-over operating in any new situation. We feel uneasy when we don't know who is in charge, and look to others to take responsibility.

In the same jail setting I described at the beginning of this chapter, I was waiting in a long lunch line one afternoon when I heard a woman behind me grumble to her friend, "Boy, would I ever have a thing or two to tell this organization if I could ever figure out who it is!" I turned to her. "But you are the organization—we all are!" I said.

Her friend poked her and stage-whispered, "She's one of the leaders."

The woman blushed. "I shouldn't have said anything."

"But I'm not a leader," I protested. "We have no leaders. And anyway—we really want to know what you think."

She proceeded to tell me a long list of things "the organizers" were doing wrong. I suggested she take responsibility for making some changes.

"I'm not in charge," she said.

Systems of domination destroy power-with, for it can only truly exist among those who are equal and who recognize that they are equal. The woman in the lunch line could not recognize that she had a right equal to anyone's to shape decisions and influence the action. She would not accept the responsibility that went with that right. And so she lost her power, and the group was deprived of her perspectives.

Power-with is always revocable. The group may consider our ideas, but it does not automatically adopt them or obey them. And if we misuse our influence, we may lose it.

For women, power-with is especially elusive. We are not taught to expect that our ideas, our contributions, will be valued equally with men's. Women defer to men in discussions, and are more hesitant to speak out in mixed groups of women and men. When researcher Matina Horner presented college students with the task of finishing a story that began,

"At the end of first term finals, Anne finds herself at the top of her medical school class," she found that students predicted tragedies and disasters for Anne, while a group given the identical sentence about a male predicted great achievements and good fortune. Concluded Horner, "For most women, the anticipation of success in competitive achievement activity, especially against men, produces anticipation of certain negative consequences, for example, threat of social rejection and loss of femininity."⁷ We fear the achievements that might gain us respect and admiration, for loneliness is the price we expect to pay for esteem.

Perhaps we also fear power-with because we do not recognize it as different from power-over. Women have been victims of power-over, and we hesitate to step into the role of dominators. We are aware of the hostility directed toward women who wield power. For while we rarely reach the higher echelons of power-over, women most often fill the ranks of those who directly administer the decrees or impose the sanctions of the authorities. We rarely are the politicians who cut benefits to the hungry, but we are often the social workers who are forced to refuse the claims. We staff the front desks and answer the phones, and we receive the rage and frustration that really belongs elsewhere. And so the image in our minds of women in power becomes that of the Big Nurse, the hated, petty tyrant, someone we shrink from becoming, not someone we aspire to be.

In tribal and traditional societies, power-with, influence, increased with age and experience. "Old age was equated with wisdom and learning in most Native American societies, and aged persons were treated with deference and respect. In many tribes, women gained more power as they became older."⁸ The elder, the clan mother, the chief, the person whose wisdom and judgment were acknowledged by the group, was listened to. Her or his opinions were sought on important matters, and were followed not because they were backed by law or force but because the experience of the group over time proved their consistent wisdom. Conrad Arensberg describes the informal gathering of old men in an Irish village of the thir-

teenth:
"O'Donoghue is the 'judge' in this gathering. . . . He is regarded as a wise man. All must defer to his opinions. Usually he contents himself with a word of affirmation, or now and again, a slow, measured judgment upon a current topic. He initiates nothing. . . ."

"Silent as this shrewd old man is, his is the central position in the group. Comments and questions are phrased through him. . . . And, when agreement is finally reached, it is his quiet 'so it is' that settles the point for good."⁹

Power-with retains its strength only through restraint. It affirms, shapes, and guides a collective decision—but it cannot enforce its will on the group or push it in a direction contrary to community desires. The elders, the wise men, retain our respect when we see them as working for the good

of the whole. Should O'Donoghue attempt to influence the group for his own personal benefit at the community's expense, the good will upon which his influence rests would rapidly disappear. Were he in a role of authority or a position to wield control, the community might obey his directives, but they would not trust his judgment. The limits of influence are inherent in its nature.

ROOTS OF THE THREE TYPES OF POWER

Power-over, power-from-within, and power-with are each rooted in a mode of consciousness and a worldview that can be identified. Each speaks in its own language and is supported by its own mythologies. Each depends upon distinct motivations.

The consciousness that underlies power-over sees the world as an object, made up of many separate, isolated parts that have no intrinsic life, awareness, or value. Consciousness is fragmented, disconnected. In *The Spiral Dance* I compared it to seeing by flashlight with a narrow beam that illumines one separate object at a time, but cannot reveal the fabric of space in which they interconnect. Relationships between objects are described by rules. We believe that we can, in the end, find rules to describe all things and their relationships, to predict what they will do, and allow us to control them.

The language of power-over is the language of law, of rules, of abstract, generalized formulations enforced on the concrete realities of particular circumstances.

In the worldview of power-over, human beings have no inherent worth; value must be earned or granted. The formulation of Fall/Redemption-oriented Christianity is that we are born in original sin and we can be saved only by grace.¹⁰ In the secular world, the worth we acquire is constantly rated against that of others, in school, in the workplace, by potential mates and lovers. We internalize a primal insecurity about our own right to be, which drives us to compete for the tokens of pseudo-value.

Mechanistic science provides us with the technology of power-over. Technology gives us power entirely split from any questions of meaning or purpose. The nuclear bomb is perhaps the ultimate symbol of power-over and the ultimate irony, as nuclear physics has "proven" that the mechanistic model of the universe is overly simplistic.

Power-over motivates through fear. Its systems instill fear and then offer the hope of relief in return for compliance and obedience. We fear the force and violence of the system should we disobey, and we fear the loss of value, sustenance, comforts, and tokens of esteem.

In the jail story, our victory came when we ceased to act from fear. Systems of domination are not prepared to cope with fearlessness, because acts of courage and resistance break the expected patterns.

Power-from-within stems from a different consciousness—one that sees the world itself as a living being, made up of dynamic aspects, a world where one thing shape-shifts into another, where there are no solid separations and no simple causes and effects. In such a world, all things have inherent value, because all things are beings, aware in ways we can only imagine, interrelated in patterns too complex to ever be more than partially described. We do not have to earn value. Immanent value cannot be rated or compared. No one, nothing, can have more of it than another. Nor can we lose it. For we are, ourselves, the living body of the sacred. This is what Witches mean when we say, "Thou are Goddess," and also what mavericks and heretics have always read into the biblical account of the creation of the world in the image of God.

Immanent value does not mean that everyone is innately good, or that nothing should ever be destroyed. What is valued is the whole pattern, which always includes death as well as birth. I pull snails off the iris leaves and crush them—they are out of pattern here. They have no natural predators and devour the diversity of the garden. A hundred years ago they escaped from a Frenchman who brought them to California so he could continue to eat escargot. Now they ravage plants all up and down the West Coast. Yet I do not expect to completely kill them off. We will, at best, strike a balance, a new pattern. Nor will I put out poison, which disrupts larger patterns still. I will be predator, not poisoner.

The language of power-from-within is poetry, metaphor, symbol, ritual, myth, the language of magic, of "thinking in things," where the concrete becomes resonant with mysteries that go beyond its seeming solid form. Its language is action, which speaks in the body and to all the senses in ways that can never be completely conveyed in words.

The technology of power-from-within is magic, the art of changing consciousness, of shifting shapes and dimensions, of bending reality. Its science is a psychology far older than Freud, Jung, or Skinner. And its motivations are erotic in the broadest sense of the deep drives in us to experience and share pleasure, to connect, to create, to see our impact on others and on the world.

Power-with also embodies a particular consciousness, language, and set of motivations. It bridges the value systems of power-from-within and power-over. Power-with sees the world as a pattern of relationships, but its interest is in how that pattern can be shaped, molded, shifted. It values things, forces, and people according to how they affect others and according to a history based on experience. It can recognize inherent worth, but can also rate and compare, valuing some more highly than others.

The language of power-with is gossip. Gossip has a bad reputation as being either malicious or trivial. But in any real community, people become interested in each others' relationships within the group, love affairs, quarrels, problems. The talking we do about each other provides us with

invaluable information; it makes us aware of whom we can trust and whom we distrust, of whom to treat carefully and whom to confront, of what we can realistically expect a group to do together.

Gossip maintains the social order in a close-knit society more effectively than law. Margery Wolf describes how she observed women's informal groups working in rural Taiwan: "A young woman whose mother-in-law was treating her with a harshness that exceeded village standards for such behavior told her woes to a work group, and if the older members of the group felt the complaint was justified, the mother-in-law would be allowed to overhear them criticizing her, would know that she was being gossiped about, and would usually alter her behavior toward her daughter-in-law. Every woman valued her standing within the women's circles because at some time in her life she might also need their support. . . . In the Taiwanese village I knew best, some women were very skilled at forming and directing village opinion toward matters as apparently disparate as domestic conflicts and temple organization. The women who had the most influence on village affairs were those who worked through the women's community."¹¹

The art of wielding power-with, of gaining influence and using it creatively to empower, is probably intuitive to great and charismatic leaders. We can, however, observe and study it, both to improve our ability to use influence constructively and to identify the qualities we expect of those who assume leadership.

SEEING POWER AS IMMANENT

Power is exerted in the material world. Power-over has a clear material base, as it is grounded in the ability to punish by imposing physical or economic sanctions. Constructed from the demands of war, domination in turn builds in us a continuing psychological readiness to accept and administer control, a willingness to obey.

Power-from-within and power-with are grounded in another source, akin not to violence but to spirit. Because power-over works by creating false divisions, we have been trained to see spirit as something severed from the material world and from the world of real political and economic struggle. The split between spirit and matter, which locates God and the sacred outside the world of form and earth and flesh, allows exploitation and destruction of human beings and the earth's resources. The model of God in patriarchal religion furnishes the model that lends authority to all hierarchies.

In my earlier book, *Dreaming the Dark: Magic, Sex and Politics*, I spoke of another model of spirit, as a presence immanent in the world, in nature, in the body, in the human community and all its creations. "Spirit" can be another way of saying "immanent value." When matter is

sacred, there is no split, no severing of value from the here and now. Immanent spirit is the ground of the European Goddess tradition, as it is the ground of Native American, African, and other tribal traditions and of shamanistic practices everywhere.

In Latin America, liberation theology, the response of radical Catholics to conditions of poverty and oppression, inspires revolution. In the peace movement church-based groups form the backbone of resistance to militarism. A neo-Pagan movement allied to a radical vision is also growing rapidly.

Still, the linking of politics and spirit among politically minded people is often greeted with embarrassment or fear. Marx's famous quote, "Religion is the opiate of the people," still holds sway. No one can deny that patriarchal religions often have served to drug people into submission, but the assumption that all spirituality inevitably functions oppressively in every culture and context misses the perspective held by most of the world's peoples.

I was made aware of that gap one afternoon when I visited the *assiento* of my friend Luisah Teish. Teish was being initiated into the Afro-Cuban religion of Lucumi as a priestess of Oshun, the Yoruban goddess of love. During the several days of the *assiento*, the new initiate receives friends while seated on the throne of the Goddess. The whole community comes to visit and bring gifts and offerings of sacred foods.

I walked into a room full of food, color, noise, and laughter. Teish was sitting in state, draped in golden cloth in the back bedroom. The front room was crowded with women in flowing white dresses, their heads bound in colorful cloths. Men wore whites or the colors of the *orishas*, the Yoruba goddesses and gods: the gold of Oshun, the red of Chango, the blue of Yemaya. Some of the participants were black, others Hispanic. I was the only white person in the room.

I set my food down in the kitchen, and began talking to Teish's *padrino*, the priest who had officiated at the ceremony. Teish had told him that I was a Witch, and soon a number of us were discussing the similarities and differences between our traditions. Teish's friends seemed amused that I called myself a Witch. They knew the term only as an insult, a way of discounting their rich religious tradition.

After a while, one of the older women called me over and gestured toward the chair next to her. She spoke with a soft Spanish accent, and patted my hand in a motherly way.

"Tell me," she asked, "Do you have trouble being accepted by white people?"

I looked at her, somewhat stunned. I'd certainly had my share of trouble in life but it had never occurred to me to look at it in that way. As I thought about it, I realized that she was quite right. The shift of perspectives was both dizzying and exhilarating. The spiritual/political split is a problem

of white people. The dominant culture can afford to cast power purely in terms of power-over, for it has at its disposal the backing of that power: the guns, the prisons, the laws, the economic wealth.

The resistance to questions of spirit among radicals is itself born of the white culture's delusion that power-over can be countered only by power-over, that spirit, mystery, bonding, community, and love are weak forces at best, and at worst, distractions from serious struggle.

But the dispossessed, to survive, to have power at all, must seek another source. They know the power of the common bonds of culture, of song, of ritual, of drum and dance, of healing to sustain hope and strength to resist oppression. The authorities know also. The slave owners outlawed the drum, the dances, and the African languages. The landowners of Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries persecuted the ancient peasant celebrations and traditions and labeled their healers Witches. The United States government removed Native American children from their families to place them in boarding schools where they were indoctrinated into Western culture and religion.

The women's question had jolted me into an awareness I might have intuited from my own Jewish history. Power-from-within, the bonding power of the spirit, sustained Jewish communal life through two thousand years of landlessness and persecution. Knowing my own people's history, I knew that the dispossessed can arise again and again out of that cohesive spirit to become a political force, and although those risings may bring tragedy as well as liberation, they represent forces that must be reckoned with.¹²

Culture describes reality, and different cultures develop different descriptions of what reality encompasses. Modern Western culture is perhaps unique in pushing spirit outside the boundaries of what we call real.

Spirituality was a powerful force in the black civil rights movement, not just because many of its leaders came from the Church, but in the way it was experienced in the lives of ordinary people. Alice Walker wrote: "I sometimes think that it was literally the prayers of people like my mother and father. . . that kept Dr. King alive until five years ago. For years we went to bed praying for his life."¹³ In the movement for justice for Native Americans and indigenous peoples, religion plays a central role.

Myth is enacted in the world according to its theology or thealogy, to use Naomi Goldenberg's term for a feminist knowing of the sacred.¹⁴ The mythology of Christ has certainly been used as much as any ideology in history to support oppression and the status quo. On the other hand, although its imagery for women is always problematic, Christianity also can inspire struggles for liberation. In December of 1984, I spent two weeks in Nicaragua with a Jewish delegation of Witness for Peace, a group that brings North Americans into the war zones to see firsthand the effects of our country's policies. As I heard individuals tell of how they became involved in the Revolution, I began to realize that liberation theology has

developed an understanding of Jesus as immanent, alive in the world, especially in the poor. A verse from the "Missa Campesino," the Peasant's Mass, goes: "Jesus is a truck driver fixing the wheel on a truck . . . Jesus is a man in the park buying a snow cone and complaining that he didn't get enough ice." An old man in a border cooperative told us, "The revolution reminds us of when Christ walked on the earth."

"There are two churches here," one woman told us. "The church of the poor and the church of the capitalists." The Christ they invoke in the church of the poor is a Christ who, like the other fallen heroes and martyrs, is still *presente*, who walks among us and within us. The church of the poor is the church of the Delegates of the Word, lay preachers, *campesinos* themselves, who teach and encourage the people to read the Gospels and to interpret the stories for themselves. In the slow and dusty villages of the border, the life of Jesus seems contemporary. He too lived in sunbaked shacks like these, with the animals wandering in and out, with the people trudging off to the fields behind the oxen. And what the people read in the Gospels becomes the concrete practice of revolution: to serve the poor, to work for justice, to share what people have.

Spirituality promotes passivity when the domain of spirit is defined as outside the world. When this world is the terrain of spirit, we ourselves become actors in the story, and this world becomes the realm in which the sacred must be honored and freedom created.

If we are to be allies in struggle with people of different backgrounds, we need to respect different worldviews. The debate about the linking of the spiritual and the political too often takes place in terms that discount or make invisible the experience of the nondominant world. Such cultural imperialism is itself a form of racism. It is hard for us to acknowledge that powers and dimensions of reality with which we are unfamiliar may be more than quaint hangovers from a prescientific age, that they represent people's real experience and that we might have something to learn from them. Or, if we do bring ourselves to admit that the dominant description of reality is too narrow, we may run slavishly after other spiritual traditions, eager to acquire experiences of nonordinary consciousness as if they were Gucci bags or Cuisinarts, commodities we can use to bolster our status. We become spiritual colonialists, mining the Third World for its resources of symbols and shamans, giving nothing back, in a way that cheapens both the traditions we seek to understand and our own spiritual growth.

To find the point of balance, where we can learn from and share other people's cultural riches, we must be grounded in the experience of our own mysteries. That grounding is a difficult process, for the remnants of the mysteries in the West have been described to us for the last four hundred years as evil and frightening. The Witches, our Western shamans and healers, have been portrayed as either demonic or ludicrous. We fear identification with that tradition, and expect the mysteries to be strange,

occult, and bizarre. Yet the mysteries are made up of the stuff of everyday life. They center on the most common of human experiences: birth, death, love, nurture, challenge, passion, time. We make mystery ourselves out of our everyday lives, and so we must discover the mysteries that will take us to the heart of our world.

The terrain of the mysteries is the ordinary. To seek out mystery, we don't have to go anywhere. We must simply change our perception, our description, our consciousness of where we are.

DEVELOPING A PSYCHOLOGY OF LIBERATION

The skills, the descriptions, the tools of magic are road maps. I offer the principles of magic not as a belief system to be proved or disproved, but as an alternative descriptive system that can help us develop a psychology of liberation. An alternative is necessary because, in Audre Lorde's words, "the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house."¹⁵ The way we describe the world determines how we will value and experience the world. The descriptive systems of psychology, of science, of patriarchal religion are not objective. Embedded in them are values. If we describe the world as being separate from God, we have devalued the world. If we say that only quantifiable experiences are true, we have not eliminated what cannot be measured, but we have devalued it. We are unlikely to encounter it in our texts or the works of the authorities, however often we may encounter it in our lives.

Language is political. A liberation psychology cannot be written in the standard jargon of the psychologists, because such language is designed to exclude those who do not have the approved training and credentials. For example: "In the less-structured personality, therefore, the technical problem is not to make the unconscious conscious, but to make the ego capable of coping with the drives by means of neutralizing libido and aggression, thereby making them available for the building of higher levels of object relations."¹⁶ This statement could be roughly translated into advice for beginning therapists: "When you're dealing with someone who is really unstrung, don't delve into their dreams and fantasies, help them gain some self-control, at which point they might have hope of making friends or even attracting a lover." More than its content, the language and form of the statement embody attitudes about power, knowledge, and value. The statement reserves power for someone steeped in the training necessary to translate it. It assumes that knowledge can be conveyed separately from feeling, that the process of healing is directed and understood by the healer, not the patient. Furthermore, it presents itself as a statement of fact. Its abstracted language seems scientific but is not, in reality, either objective or verifiable. The statement actually is an unpoetic metaphor. It implies that the human psyche is constructed like a machine, fueled by

twin drives of sex and aggression. If all the parts are not firmly bolted together, the fuel will spill out, possibly igniting explosions, and the engine will go nowhere.

An overt metaphor is a map, a description we may find useful or not, may accept or reject. A covert metaphor is an attempt to restructure our reality by leading us to accept the map as the territory without questioning where we are going or whose interests are being served.

A liberation psychology, like liberation theology, maintains an "option for the poor." It allies itself with the dispossessed, with those resisting oppression, not with the forces of control. It must be useful to those who may not have formal education, or state-issued licenses. Therefore, it must be understandable. It is not anti-intellectual, but it realizes that intellect divorced from feeling is itself part of our pain. Its insights are conveyed in a language that is concrete, a language of poetry, not jargon; of metaphors that clearly are metaphors; a language that refers back to the material world, that is sensual, that speaks of things that we can see and touch and feel. It is a vocabulary not of the elite but of the common, and its concepts can thus be tested by experience.

A psychology that can lead us to encounter the mysteries must be rooted in an earth-based spirituality that knows the sacred as immanent. What is sacred—whether we name it Goddess, God, spirit, or something else—is not outside the world, but manifests in nature, in human beings in the community and culture we create. Every being is sacred—meaning that each has inherent value that cannot be ranked in a hierarchy or compared to the value of another being. Worth does not have to be earned, acquired, or proven; it is inherent in our existence.

Earth-based spirituality values diversity, imposes no dogma, no single name for the sacred, no one path to the center. But at this moment in history, the mythology and imagery of the Goddess carry special liberating power. They free us from the domination of the all-male God who has a strongly legitimized male rule, and by extension, all systems of domination. The Goddess represents the sacredness of life made manifest. All of the symbols and practices associated with her reaffirm her presence in the world, in nature and culture, in life and death. She does not symbolize female rule over men—but freedom from rule. She herself has male aspects who are earth Gods, alive in nature, in the wildness and cycles of transformation. The mystery, the paradox, is that the Goddess is not "she" or "he"—or she is both—but we call her "she" because to name is not to limit or describe but to invoke. We call her in and a power comes who is different from what comes when we say "he" or "it." Something happens, something arises that challenges the ways in which our minds have been shaped in images of male control. The hum of bees drowns the sound of helicopters.

A liberation psychology, based on the acknowledgment of the inherent

worth of each person, views each person's truth and emotions with respect, sees resistances as evidence of strength, and knows that each process of change proceeds at its own pace.

When we see spirit as immanent, we recognize that everything is interconnected. All the beings of the world are in constant communication on many levels and dimensions. There is no such thing as a single cause or effect, but instead a complex intertwined feedback system of changes that shape other changes. The destruction of the Amazon rain forest changes our weather. The murder of a health-care worker in Nicaragua by the Contras affects our health. And so our health, physical and emotional, cannot be considered out of context. To change ourselves, we must change the world; to change the world we must be willing to change, ourselves.

When the sacred is immanent, the body is sacred. Woman-body, man-body, child-body, animal-body, and earth-body are sacred. They have an inherent integrity and inherent worth. All of our bodily processes, especially the deep, pleasure-giving force of our sexuality, are sacred processes. A psychology of liberation is not one of repression, nor does earth-based spirituality call us to asceticism. The times may demand courage and self-sacrifice, but we have no spiritual need for martyrdom. The celebration of life is our value.

With the AIDS epidemic threatening so many lives, it is more important than ever to assert the sacred value of the erotic. Caution about transmitting AIDS may restrict some aspects of erotic expression, but AIDS does not change the sacred nature of our sexuality any more than it invalidates the medical use of blood transfusions.

Society's response to AIDS reflects our fear and hatred of sexuality. The disease is used as an excuse to tell us, once again, that sex is dirty, nasty, and wrong—especially when not done in the approved manner. Out of fear of AIDS, people can be manipulated to accept schemes for concentration camps, identity cards, and other forms of social control. Punishment is our central social metaphor: we are eager to see AIDS as some form of divine or cosmic punishment, to blame instead of assuming the responsibilities of caring. In a culture that valued the erotic, a disease that attacked our free expression of love would be a top research priority. Instead, we see funds diverted or denied. In a culture that valued the inherent worth of every being, no disease would lead us to shun the sick or deny them treatment, care, or dignity.

By shoving our noses in the face of death, one of the great mysteries, AIDS can be a powerful teacher. The largescale breakdown of immune systems warns us that our environment is dangerously overloaded with toxins. The disease challenges us to speak publicly and graphically about sexual practices, ending hypocritical censorship. Most of all, AIDS challenges us to mobilize the erotic force of love to create communities of healing and care.

Earth-based spiritual traditions are rooted in community. They are not religions of individual salvation, but of communal celebration and collective change. Community includes not just the human but the interdependent plant, animal, and elemental communities of the natural world, and is both a model of and limit to what we can become. A psychology of liberation is one whose primary focus is the communities we come from and create. Our collective history is as important as our individual history. A liberation psychology is more concerned with how structures of power shape and bind us than with the particular events of our individual childhoods. Those events are important, but to focus on them outside of the context of the whole is misleading. Individual therapy may be helpful, and sometimes necessary, but a liberation psychology is more concerned with ways of creating communal healing and collective change. For it is our responsibility to bring into being a culture that will nourish, heal, and sustain us in freedom.

The model we use is not one of health or sickness, but one of personal power. We each strive to increase our power-from-within, and this growth in power is beneficial as long as we remain centered and in balance. Many roads lead to power-from-within: among Witches, some of the traditional ways have been through knowledge of nature, through healing practices, through ritual, through trance, through the erotic, through the provision of food, through divination. Among Native Americans, magic, war, healing, peacemaking, and the vision quest can be roads to power. Pathways to power may be extraordinary or very ordinary. Sister José Hadday, a Native American teacher and Franciscan sister, speaks of being called to power by the road of giving gifts to those who don't deserve them.¹⁷

The Yoruba term for personal power is *ache*. Luisah Teish writes, "Replenishing the 'ache' is a prime reason for the existence of individual and group rituals and the use of charms.

"There is a regulated kinship among human, animal, mineral and vegetable life. Africans do not slaughter animals wholesale, . . . nor do they devastate the fields that serve them. It is recognized that they have been graced with the personal power to hunt, farm and eat; but it is also recognized that they must give back that which is given to them."¹⁸

Personal power, *ache*, power-from-within, depends on a moving, living balance of the energies that sustain interconnected life. To misuse it is to lose it. Energy, like water, has power to shape only when it is in motion. Stagnant, it stagnates and evaporates.

In Witchcraft, the model of balance is the magic circle that we cast by calling four directions and four elements, which each correspond to qualities within a human being. Correspondences vary among different groups, but in the tradition I learned, East corresponds to air and the mind, South to fire and energy, West to water, emotion, and sexuality, North to earth and the body. We need to be in touch with all aspects of ourselves. Each informs, but none controls, the others. When we develop personal

ver, we learn to move freely around the wheel, and in and out of the ter—to evoke the aspect of ourselves that we need, to become whole.

THE PRINCIPLES OF MAGIC

Magic, as I have said, can be called the art of evoking power—from thin. Art implies skill and knowledge that empowers us to create. The arts of magic are the techniques of moving and shaping energy, of work, celebration, and ritual, of making the proper offerings and giving the right gifts. The knowledge magic teaches is that reality is deeper, more complex, more intricate, than it appears. We can swim, but not measure, its depths.

What we call magic is a body of knowledge compiled from many sources, and a tool that has been used to build many systems, some of them as hierarchical as any construction of mechanistic science. A liberation psychology understands the principles of magic and uses its tools to challenge hierarchies that keep us unfree and create structures that embody values of immanent spirit, interconnection, community, empowerment, and balance.

Magic teaches that living beings are beings of energy and spirit as well as matter, that energy—what the Chinese call *chi*—flows in certain patterns throughout the human body, and can be raised, stored, shaped, and sent. The movements of energy affect the physical world, and vice versa. This is the theory that underlies acupuncture and other naturopathic systems of healing, as well as the casting of spells and magical workings.

Energy can be formed; "structures," stable patterns, can be created by focused visualization. Energy structures influence physical reality. Physical beings are energy structures. Events in the physical world shape energy into patterns that in turn shape events that themselves move energy. The material world and the nonmaterial world are a mutually influencing system, a continuous feedback loop.

Of course, our power to shape reality has limits. Reality also has the power to shape us, and its power is usually stronger than ours. We do not say, as do some fashionable New Age philosophies, that we create our own reality. Such an idea can only conceivably make sense for white, upper-middle-class Americans, and then only some of the time. It is clearly senseless and becomes a form of victim blaming when applied, for example, to a Nicaraguan peasant child murdered by the Contras. We come into a reality that is already a given; within those sets of circumstances, we can make choices that will shape our future, but reality is a collective event and can be changed only by collective action. The peasants of Nicaragua did collectively shape their reality. Many individual changes in consciousness eventually sparked the actions that led to revolution. For action, ultimately, shapes reality. A change in consciousness changes our actions, or it is no true change. Only through action can magic be realized. And actions shape a new reality that in turn shapes

us, as the revolution in Nicaragua, in turn, changed individuals' ideas of who they were and what they could be.

Energy is directed by visualization, by imagining what it is we want to do. What we envision determines how we act. Our vision is distorted if we discount any aspect of reality. We cannot ignore the political, the spiritual, the social, the physical, the emotional, or any dimension of our lives. Again, the goal is balance, the image that of the magic circle where all forces come together equally.

Energy is erotic. Erotic energy is a manifestation of the sacred. Our mysteries draw on the erotic; respect our drives and know that they have their own rhythms and cycles, their own regulatory principle. Control of sexuality by others is a primary way in which our sense of worth is undermined, and is a cornerstone of the structures of domination.

The tangible, visible world is only one aspect of reality. There are other dimensions that are equally real although less solid. Many cultures acknowledge other realms of existence, and there are many different systems for naming them. Ron Evans, a Native American shaman, identifies eight worlds—the Inner World, the Outer World, the Mist World, the Pollen World, the Dawn World, the Dusk World, the Dream World, the Dark World—each of which has a precise use and is entered by a different type of drumming.¹⁹ The Western theosophists spoke of different planes of existence. Witches, also, speak of different worlds, and read myths and symbols as maps to other dimensions. Tir-Na-Nog, the Land of Youth in Irish mythology, is not a metaphor nor archetype—it is a real place that can be visited, but its reality is not a physical one and the visits do not take place in the physical body.

Beings also exist in those other realms. The Goddesses, Gods, the ancestors, the Beloved Dead are more than symbols; they are powers, consciousnesses, intelligences, perhaps of a different order than our own, but nonetheless real. When we name them, call them, we open a doorway and power enters, for we are naming the great patterns that move and shape life.

"The African observed the voluptuous river, with its sweet water and beautiful stones and surmised *intuitively* that it was female. They named the river *Oshun*, Goddess of Love. They further noticed that a certain woman carried the flow of the river in her stride. . . so they called her the daughter of *Oshun*. They know that the river came before the woman, and that the woman's stride is affected by the flow of the river."²⁰

The gods themselves may be shaped by how we perceive them. Our images of the gods in turn influence our acts. When our Goddess is voluptuous, flowing, erotic, so will be our dances, the rhythms of our drums and chants, our bodies. When the Inquisition became obsessed with the devil, it performed acts of evil, torturing and murdering suspected witches. To say the Goddess is reawakening may be an act of magical creation.

Just as individuals have an identity, a form, and a corresponding energy form, so do groups. The idea of a "group mind" or a "group soul" is, again, not just a metaphor but a reality in subtler dimensions than the physical.

To expand our vision of reality does not diminish the immanent value of the material world. The ancestors are revered, but not more so than the living. The Goddess, the Gods, the great powers, are the material world, are us. If they extend beyond us they do so like the sun's corona flaring beyond its core. No power is entirely separate from our own power, no being is entirely separate from our own being.

THE DARE

Any psychology, to be useful, must look at two basic questions: How did we get into this mess? and How do we get out of it? A psychology of liberation, rooted in the magical description of the world, sees that the process of getting into our mess is long, complex, and historic; that we are in pain because we live in psychic and social structures that destroy us.

Our way out will involve both resistance and renewal: saying no to what is, so that we can reshape and recreate the world. Our challenge is communal, but to face it we must be empowered as individuals and create structures of support and celebration that can teach us freedom. Creation is the ultimate resistance, the ultimate refusal to accept things as they are. For it is in creation that we encounter mystery: the depth of things that cannot be wholly known or controlled, the movement of forces that speak through us and connect us at our core.

To value the mysteries we must describe the world in ways that make possible encounter with mystery. When we view the world through the lens of that description, the old systems and structures may themselves be revealed as distortions.

The core of the mysteries is the understanding that truth is always deeper and richer than any description of it. To change lenses and face a fuller spectrum of that truth can be frightening, shattering. It requires daring.

And so I have named this book after the game of Truth or Dare, a favored pastime in groups suffering enforced boredom or confinement. I have played it waiting in traffic jams and in holding cells after being arrested. The rules are simple. One person is "it." Anyone else in the group can ask that person a question, preferably intimate, sometimes embarrassing. "What would you like to do sexually that you can't ask for?" "What is your most exciting fantasy?" "Who in this room do you find most attractive?"

When you are "it," you are required to tell the truth—or else you must face the dare. No one knows what the dare is, but everyone knows it will be worse than the question.

So the game becomes an endlessly fascinating stripping process, a collective demand to speak the unspeakable, reveal what we have always been warned not to reveal. Secrets become common knowledge. Love affairs are sparked.

In the process, we learn something important about our own secrets: that they too, like the great mysteries, are common. What shames us, what we most fear to tell, does not set us apart from others; it binds us together if only we can take the risk to speak it.

"Let everything private be made public" was a Situationist slogan of the sixties.

The slogan and the core of these encounters with common mysteries is this:

Truth is the dare.