

The Threshing Floor

March 2019

Newsletter of the Guild for Psychological Studies

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Guild Vision: The Guild envisions a world in which the significance of each person's truth, authority, and inspired purpose finds fulfillment in life and community.

Guild Mission: Guild seminars offer a way of psychological and spiritual transformation that inspires individuals to live their purpose, expand consciousness, and discover and create meaning in their lives and community.

Threshing Floor Special Issue

This is the sixth annual March "special issue" of the Threshing Floor. We take this opportunity to connect with those who don't regularly receive the Threshing Floor by mailing it to the Guild's full mailing list.

Each month, the newsletter may share information about upcoming events, reflections on recent events, short essays exploring new ideas, as well as poetry, stories, photos, and acknowledgements. You can submit an item for an upcoming issue by sending it to the Guild office. The Threshing Floor's volunteer editors work creatively to include as many contributions as possible each month.

If you know of others who might be interested in what the Guild's work offers, please share this TF with them.

The Board of Directors

What Is Chaos? Responses and Reflections

The word "chaos" is frequently used in today's media to describe conditions in modern life and society. For our March special issue, we invited our readers to submit their reflections on the question, What Is Chaos? We received the essays, quotes, poems and images included in this issue. We invite you to send your own reflections for possible inclusion in future issues of the Threshing Floor.



*photo by John Firman
Submitted by William O'Connor*

The Chaos of Time: The Time of Chaos By Barb Cashman

The time of chaos is that mysterious dark fecundity of decay and regeneration, contradicting itself inside Mother's dark womb. When the linear, finite and orderly (according to many) vessels and vassals of time lose their power to be recognized or made sense of, this is when the matriarch of time shows a side of her face.

The journey to the underworld is our choice, made from an act of deep listening to a heart which is not one's own. The decomposition in the underworld is essentially the removing from, of dull black of ash, of spent means. Whether the results are chosen from our attention or lack of it, the blackness is the same. It is the unknown which draws from us toward our own paths of

transformation. A perilous journey to be certain, but one taken willingly, and which must be taken to honor and to hold a grief which is not one's own.

She has been described as paradoxical and gruesome, inspiring fear and perhaps awe in some – if they can peer beyond the surface of their terror. The chaos of time, She mothered the twins of finite and infinite time, and is all but forsaken by them and by us – the twins' progeny. She would bring us back gently, but so few of us choose that path! But even when we forget her, she re-members us, recalling each of us to her as her beloved only child. Chaos is also the path of her movement toward us, the invitation to mystery. If we choose to dance and to play with Her, we may yet recollect that seed of infinity she implanted in us, to nurture it as part of her sacred endlessness and our becoming.



Original photo, submitted by Donna Presson

Chaos and Order are One

By Hal Childs

Chaos and order together are a differentiated unity, related as a dialectic. This means that chaos and order do not exist at all except as a reflection of their other, and that they create each other. When in the midst of one, the other is nearby. Chaos creates order, and order creates chaos.

At the deepest (currently understood) level of what we take to be “matter,” the quantum dimension of sub-atomic particles, reality seems to first exist in a state of original chaos. This “chaos” is what is known as a quantum potential, a hazy field of possibilities, or what has even been called a “smoky dragon.” In this state, there are no actual or specific particles, only the many possibilities of specific particles. It is some kind of interaction that selects from all the possibilities which results in a specific concrete particle. What used to be thought of as the basic building blocks of matter (“particles”) are now realized to be but temporary instances, instantiations, of a field of possibilities.

At this theoretical level, it seems that “particles” are a temporary interruption of an original field of chaos, or disorder. It is appropriate to put the word “particles” in quotation marks in order to remind us that this level of “matter” is so far below, or beyond, our human scale, that there are no adequate analogies or metaphors with which we can grasp what this is. Mathematics is the only available “language” with which to describe reality as this level. Perhaps the closest we can come to “imagining” a “particle” is to think of it as a “thought” or “concept,” which was first implicit (chaotic) and became explicit (ordered). This possibility will bring us to the book of Genesis in a moment.

But, first, let's notice that particles, over vast stretches of time, did aggregate to such an extent that they created a material universe that is stable and ordered enough to support life over millions of years. And yet always nearby is chaos, throwing the created order into disorder, and then recreating a new order. This principle of the unity of chaos and order that we can see in the tensions at work in the physical world, we can also recognize in the tensions at work in culture and psychology, or within the soul of history and the soul of the individual. I would say that the

dynamic and conflicted unity of chaos and order is the primary nature of soul itself:

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. (Gen 1:1-3)

Another translation states, "...when the earth was wild and waste..." Now the tension between chaos and order has shifted to the level of culture and language. If we think of the "formless void" and "God" as a unity, the unity of soul, we see that the order that emerges out of chaos, or the order that orders chaos, takes the form of words, language and speech, which in this mythological account, is personified as a God. The "formless void and darkness" symbolizes the implicit, or unconscious and unthought "order" of the new god Yahweh, who will emerge throughout the Tanakh (Old Testament) in conflict with the prevailing cosmos of polytheistic nature deities. But, my primary point here is that it is articulated language, written and spoken thoughts, that effect order out of the chaos (formless darkness). Which is why psychotherapy and journal (or other) writing have a healing effect. When the chaos of inarticulate anxiety, fears, depressions, rages, jealousies, hurts, overwhelming pressures, and the like have their way with us, making the effort to articulate, to speak, to write what is demanding to be said, will bring order (healing, relief) to the painful, disorienting chaos.

The current political situation with Donald Trump in the White House is relentless, daily chaos. It is as if the Fool or the Trickster has taken over and flipped all of our hallowed traditions upside down. If the principle that Chaos *and* Order are One holds, then the current chaos will give birth to a new order, but not without our help and efforts as midwives.

Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus spoke Zarathustra*.
Submitted by Ruth McMullen

" One must still have chaos in oneself to be able to give birth to a dancing star. "



The Tower 2

By Lisa Yount

Dancing on the Edge of Chaos

By Harry Henderson

Life is a continuing protest against entropy, the tendency for everything to run down and dissipate, and we pay for order in the coin of energy. Life is hard work and we don't appreciate added obstacles. It is tempting to build a psychic wall against the disorder that stresses (and distresses) us.

However, computer simulations of living processes reveal something interesting. Too much chaos can shatter and dissolve life, but not enough chaos leads to a frozen, crystalline stasis. Life at its best dances on the edge of chaos. It is integral but flexible, sometimes rigid, other times permeable—bones, sinews, skin, lungs.

Disorder may be the surface manifestation of chaos, but the phenomenon goes much deeper. The vast, incredibly diverse, and ever-changing tapestry of life on Earth actually rests upon a shifting foundation of chaos. Without random (chaotic) mutations to select from, evolution could not take place.

Chaos runs even deeper, from the random breakdown of radioactive atoms to the ultimate origin of matter and the universe itself. In the "quantum foam" in the Genesis story of physics, particles pop into existence without cause other than perhaps the drive to Be Something. Here perhaps is how chaos nourishes us. It is a token that reality is always much larger than we can comprehend or even imagine. Even as it challenges us, chaos surprises us into following unforeseen paths. Its threads are woven into art, improvisation, and surmise.

Thus in this time of great stress, where disorder is often mobilized by greed, carelessness, or deeper, impersonal forces, we may find in “deep chaos” new resources for building resiliency and adaptability. Like life itself, consciousness must also dance on the edge of chaos as the very forms and structures of thought are shifting. That dance is another word for soul.

Unresolved

By Julia McKeon

When I read the question in an email a few weeks ago, the following jumped into my head:

Out my window hosts of birds
scatter endlessly.
Creation hums along.

“Things fall apart; the center cannot hold”

By Denise Dinwiddie

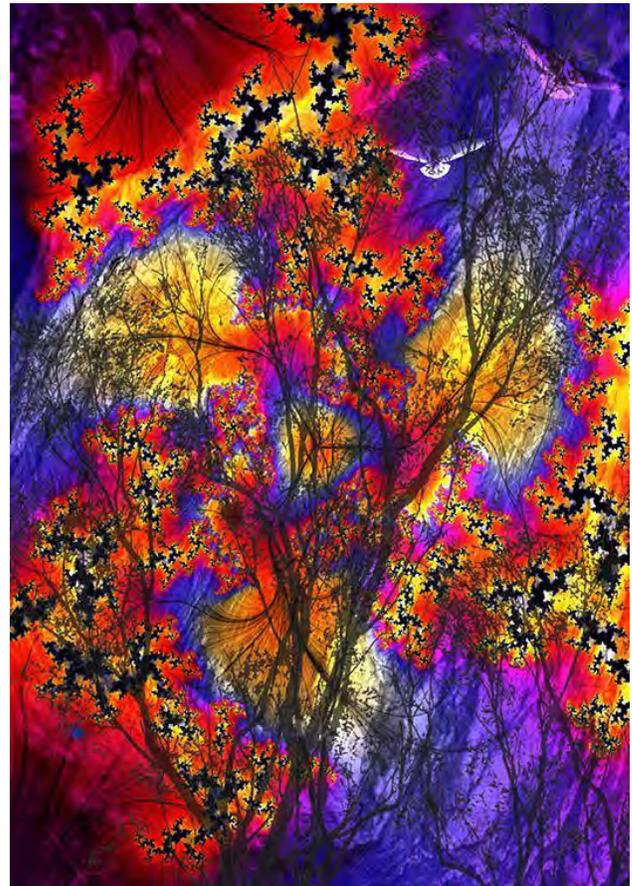
It’s not surprising that this line and others from W.B. Yeats’s famous poem “The Second Coming” were quoted more often in the first seven months of 2016 than in any of the thirty years preceding. Yeats’s poem was written in 1919 just after the First World War and at the beginning of the Irish War of Independence. The first verse of the poem reads:

Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the center cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide of innocence is
drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.

Yeats’s wasn’t a hopeful poem: it concludes with the image of a rough beast slouching toward Bethlehem to be born. Years later, in the 1960’s the US was involved in a time of great turmoil and strife, the Civil Rights movement. Dr. Martin Luther King had a more hopeful vision. In the march from Selma he was asked how long it would take to see social justice. His answer: “The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice.” Interestingly, his quotation was a paraphrase of a quotation from a 19th century abolitionist and Unitarian minister Theodore Parker, who was writing at the time of the anti-

slavery movement, another great period of strife in American history. Parker’s quotation is a longer one: “I do not pretend to understand the moral universe. The arc is a long one. My eye reaches but little ways. I cannot calculate the curve and complete the figure by experience of sight. I can divine it by conscience. And from what I see I am sure it bends toward justice.”

Just recently I have begun to have more hope for Parker’s and King’s visions: in the stance of the now Democratically controlled House, in the morally centered words delivered by Nancy Pelosi during the shut-down, and in Kamala Harris’s inspiring speech as she opened her presidential campaign in Oakland. There is hope that the falcon will hear the falconer and that the center will hold.



Forest Fire

By Lisa Yount

Chaos. Confusion, Obsession.

By Dian Greenwood

I watch a flock of birds flying in rapid and seemingly chaotic patterns against the eastern sky. I wonder if they know what they're doing, driven by instinct the way they are. Those impulsive rights, then lefts. The flash of silver in the sunlight. When I react like those birds, my instincts have often deserted me. I'm too busy pushing and wanting and trying to control something or someone else. I've forgotten the "letting go" part. The God's will part. I have to go for a walk and practically learn to breathe all over again. Having lived long enough now, I know the signs when I'm on a chaos binge and out of control. If I take a deep breath I'm more likely to see Spirit peeking at me until She finally puts her hand on my shoulder.

Sentimiento

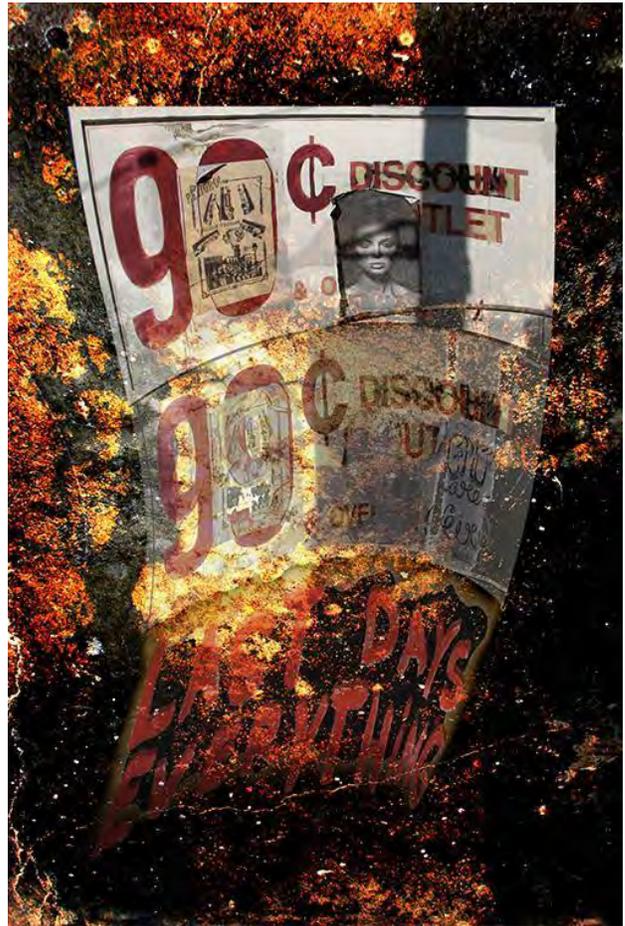
By Selina Sweet

Every time (almost)
I see a bird,
a pigeon (even) flying in
heaving spirals with her mates
over and around
the tall building to the North,
or the trim, tidy, delicate
brown mourning doves
feasting on the invisibles
scattered about
on the red gray
pavement in Llano Park
I fall into a pit
of astonished black
screaming grief
that we are allowing toothy bankers,
politicians, corporate CEOs
and those mega rich madmen
to imprison and then
incinerate us all for the sake
of their pitiful unslakable,
voracious blinding greed
for more and more.

What is Chaos?

By Chris Weil

Chaos is a state of order which we, as yet, are insufficiently evolved to understand.



End of the Universe 4

By Lisa Yount

Limitless

By Shirley Sullivan

We live in chaos. We have fierce emotions about our political, social, and spiritual chaos, to name only a few. Some of us have become sick from rehearsing daily the minute details of the chaos that surrounds us. Some of us have gone on media fasts. Some have hidden in avoidance, become mute, gone to sleep.

What if we could see chaos as the beginning, the source of possibility, the raw material ready for our hands to shape as best they can? What if, instead of lying immobile like the paralytic, we might find courage, hope, playfulness, creativity, and allow these to bring us to the living Source? What if, in that meeting, we could find a way to begin again? There is no limit to what is possible. Chaos could be the hope, the starting point.

If chaos is "unformed, disordered, and infinite," by definition, perhaps it is also the place of the prima materia, source of all possibility.

The Stories We Tell

April 15 - 18, 2019
Bishop's Ranch
Healdsburg, CA

There are stories that reside within each of us. Perhaps they come into conversation as an anecdote or are retold around the holiday dinner table. They may be awakened by an image, song or movie character. Often linked to experiences in the past, these stories seem to carry within them an indelible "truth" about who we are:

*By the third grade, I realized that I was an odd duck.
I came into a big family so I do well in groups.
When my father died, I stopped believing in God.
I am just not a creative person...*

What are the stories that have formed our sense of self? How have they influenced us, possibly from behind the scenes? Perhaps we need to hear them through their own voices. Who or what authors our "history"? Do these stories have their own intentions? If so, do those intentions support or stifle the becoming of our true self?

In this seminar we will become our own listeners, allowing the stories to tell their own tales. Welcoming what has become history, we will invite *Knowing* to unfold itself through reflection, imagining, art, body awareness and sharing. Through this process space may be discovered that allows new and different stories, along with their insights, to emerge.

We listen for answers to the question: Who do I think I am?

Leaders:

Manuel Costa, M.A. LMFT
Jennifer Morgan Mansfield, M.A.
Patricia Calcagno Stenger, M.A. LMFT

Cost: \$550.00 plus \$50.00 registration fee.
Scholarships are available



Wrestling with Truth

A seminar presented by the
Guild for Psychological Studies
September 28 (Sat) – October 6 (Sun), 2019

In our upside-down society, where media and technology are appropriating the whole world, and the very idea of truth is questioned, what will help us live meaningful lives in an age of pervasive anxiety?

Though it has waned and is no longer the guiding light of our civilization, the Judeo-Christian tradition has been the archetypal DNA of our collective soul. Unseen, it works still in the background of our lives.

After many decades of work with the historical Jesus, the Guild now turns its attention to consciousness, truth and the end of meaning. The death of God symbolizes a new status of consciousness that influences us all. What does the death of Meaning, a brand-new event in the history of the world, have to teach us?

What can we learn about what has happened to consciousness over the last three thousand years by taking a fresh psychological look at the Judeo-Christian tradition? How do Abraham, Moses, Job and Yahweh, along with Jesus Christ, illuminate the evolution of consciousness from a new soul perspective?

We will seek a new truth embedded in the teachings of Jesus that reflects the historical self-negating and self-transforming work of soul, which is truth ever recreating itself. As we wrestle with truth we wrestle with ourselves and engage with what is called soul-making, or making soul real.

The seminar process uses a modified Socratic method to guide group discussion. We honor the dignity of each individual to express themselves honestly and move at their own pace. Mutual respect will support us as we engage difficult truths and new perspectives.

Our work together will be enriched by the use of non-verbal approaches: meditation, expressive arts, music, body movement and awareness, and silence.

Special Note: All applicants, please include a letter stating your interest in attending this seminar. If you are new to the Guild's work, please tell us a little about yourself and your psychological and spiritual journey.

Location: Four Springs, Middletown CA
Leaders: Hal Childs, PhD, MFT and Patricia Calcagno Stenger, MA, MFT
Fee: \$1,495, plus a non-refundable fee of \$50 with registration.
Scholarships and payment plans are available.
Contact for more information: Hal Childs, 415-573-2469; halchilds@gmail.com
Register at <https://guldssf.org/online-seminar-registration/>



Upcoming Seminars

For additional information and to register, please visit the Guild's web site at www.guildsf.org, or contact the Guild office. Scholarships and payment plans are available for all seminars. The non-refundable registration fee is required at the time of registration.

Fees, Scholarships, Payment Plans

Perhaps the value of stepping into a residential seminar invites you to apply or to tell a friend. You look at arranging your schedule; your heart soars! You look at your budget; your heart sinks. Don't give up—chances are, there's a way.

We keep seminar fees as low as possible and offer financial assistance to those who need it. The advertised fee for each seminar is the amount that will cover the cost, based on the expected attendance. Costs include the facility, lodging, meals, materials, and stipends for leaders and staff. Those who can afford the full fee help support the Guild's ability to continue offering seminars. Anyone who cannot attend due to cost is encouraged to request financial assistance. The Guild does not want cost to be an obstacle to participation and is fortunate to be able to offer scholarships and payment plans.

Scholarships:

To request a scholarship, contact the Guild office. Your request will be forwarded to the staff of the seminar you wish to attend. Because scholarship funds are limited, it's important to make your request early, and to request the minimum support that you can manage. Scholarships may be combined with payment plans.

Payment Plans:

To arrange a payment plan, please contact the Guild office. With or without a scholarship, you can arrange to pay over time, with the final payment due by the end of the calendar year in which the seminar is attended.

All seminars, and the Guild's overall operations, are supported by donations. Gracious appreciation is extended to those who support the Guild's work—through attending seminars, through making tax-deductible contributions, or both!

Thank You, 2019 Donors

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seminars and leaders who so enriched my life
Dixie Young, In Memory of Barbara Acker
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Bob Ridder, Administrative Coordinator, is available for all inquiries by phone at (415) 561-2385, or by email at office@guildsf.org.

Send your email address to office@guildsf.org so that we can keep you connected and up-to-date on Guild events. Also be sure that we have your current mailing address so that we are able to send you this yearly edition of the newsletter. Please keep us updated with your address changes.

Mailing Address

Guild for Psychological Studies
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San Francisco, CA 94129-0385

Guild Website

Visit www.guildsf.org for information about seminars and events, and to register for seminars. The website also has general information about the Guild, past issues of the Threshing Floor, relevant news, and links to resources. If you would like to post information of interest to the Guild community, please email harryhenderson51@gmail.com, our web administrator.

Guild Facebook Page

<https://www.facebook.com/guildsf>. If you haven't yet, please "friend" and "like" us!

Newsletter

To receive 12 issues of *The Threshing Floor* a year, please contact the Guild office. There is no charge for an e-mail subscription. For a print subscription, please send a check for \$25 to the Guild office.

Items for inclusion in the Threshing Floor should be mailed to the Guild Office, Attn. Threshing Floor Editor, or emailed to office@guildsf.org. The deadline for each issue is the 20th of the month. Items received after that date will be published the following month.

Production & Layout Editor: Wilene Chang
Content Editor: Sue Renfrew
Distribution: Bob Ridder

Disclaimer: The opinions expressed in this newsletter (by contributors other than staff and directors) are the writers' and not necessarily an official position of the Guild.

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Order publications on the Guild website, or contact Carina Ravelly at guildpublishing@yahoo.com.

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Volunteers

There are several people who fill necessary volunteer roles in the Guild. If you would like to be a Guild volunteer, please contact the Guild office at office@guildsf.org and let us know particular volunteer roles that appeal to you. Currently volunteers are members of the editorial staff for the Threshing Floor; members of the Board of Directors; train to serve as seminar coordinator, committee person or cook; provide transportation to/from seminars for attendees; help to catalog or research Guild archive materials; write reviews for Guild books and other publications; etc.

Friends and Members

Friends of the Guild are donors and others interested in receiving Guild information who are not Voting Members. Voting membership requires active participation in some form of leadership or committee role, or other volunteer effort, and the payment of annual dues. Voting members may receive a print subscription to the Threshing Floor upon request.

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