



Australia's Invisible Religion:

A Parable About Divine Madness, Schizophrenia & Psychiatry's Loss of Soul

And it came to pass that the leaders of a certain religion arrived in the Land, proclaiming, "Lo, we are the priests of such-and-such religion. You must all believe what we believe, or else suffer the consequences."

But the brave and defiant Ozzies said, "Bugger off, for we are a free and tolerant people, a vast and democratic land, welcoming of diversity of race, experience and belief. We want no political or religious tyrants cum dogmatists here.

"Nazism and Communism, like One Nation have failed to take firm root in our soil," they added with pride. "No worries, the Hare Krishnas can dance and chant, the Moslems are free to wear their veils, the Christians may shout Hallelujah, God bless 'em, but let any try to force us to dance, veil ourselves, or shout with them!"

And so the disgruntled dogmatists fled Oz in order to seek more gullible converts in less democratic lands. Thus with tragic irony the fair-go-for-all Ozzies - in spite of seeing through the dogmatists - turned unseeing eyes to yet another pseudo-religious dogma that had long flourished and festered, with social prestige to boot, right under their sunburnt noses: namely, psychiatry.

Psychiatry as Religion

Now the psychiatric religion, interestingly enough, had set up the exact opposite of spirituality, namely materialism, as its sacred creed and sole reality, as was neatly formulated in its Bible, the DSMIV. The new religion - a tired legacy of a late 19th century fad - was based on the absurd belief that all soulful sickness was the result of faulty brain structure or chemistry, hence that it could be conveniently band-aided with counteracting chemicals, or electric shock treatment.

A few concerned psychiatrists and therapists spoke up and tried to expose the dangers and delusions of this pernicious Brain Chemistry Dogma (hereafter abbreviated as BCD), but they were shouted down, or ignored, or declared to be heretics. The BCD religion, moreover, infiltrated with cunning, by adopting the disguises of "Medicine" and "Science", two of the ruling deities of Australian society.

And so the flock of BCD priests bleated from their pulpits, "Hearken unto us (or else), for we are the self-proclaimed experts who have categorized, statistically analyzed, tabled and neatly graphed soul with the guidance of our DSM Bible."

Disturbingly, no-one wanted to talk about the spiritual poverty of the floundering country. Instead, the schizophrenic folk, who usually had deep insight into all these truths and more, were witch-hunted, feared, scapegoated and incarcerated, after being diagnosed as "mentally ill" (hence not worth listening to, or taking seriously).

Medicine or Dangerous Dogma?

In fact, any who disagreed with the BCD priesthood could be conveniently branded as "mentally ill." Those who wanted to talk about "soulful crises" (rather than "mental illness") were sneered at as unscientific, or as New Age cranks. Those whose way of life, values, or beliefs were disturbing to the BCD priests were called "disturbed". Those who insisted that they were not "mentally ill" in the first place were told that they "lacked insight" into the reality of their illness.

Schizophrenic folk who tried to escape forced treatment, or complained of "being watched" were told that they suffered paranoia, or "delusions of persecution." Others who resisted "treatment" were threatened with the equivalent of banishment to Hell - incarceration, forced injection, shock treatment, and other forms of help - presumably to exorcise the demons of social dissent and abnormality.

After all, BCD psychiatry, like all religious fanaticism, thrived on circular reasoning, threats of punishment for dissenters, lack of self-criticism, dismissal of any evidence which undermined its dogma, and immunity from honest questioning. To this end, propaganda tracts were put about, explaining the so-called "facts" of schizophrenia as a treatable illness of the brain, involving delusions, paranoia, odd behaviour blah blah.

Ironically, psychiatry as the "art of healing the soul" was in the midst of all this hoo-ha forgotten, while a materialist Holy Trinity comprising the drug companies, the managed care industry and the psychiatric priesthood laughed all the way to the Bank, the temple and altar of the materialist religion, at the people's expense. Thus the BCD religion prospered, because most of the people were blissfully unaware of its sinister existence, or lacked courage to speak out, or quietly acquiesced for fear of reprisal, dismissal, or incarceration.

Psychiatric Doctrine

Part of the BCD crafty indoctrination tactic and survival strategy was to put about the rumour that "one in five Australians suffered from mental illness." In other words, because the BCD religion was decrepit and doomed, its priests needed to declare more and more of soul's natural responses to suffering and soullessness - mood swings, anxiety, depression and so forth - to be examples of "mental illness", in order to divert attention from their own sickness and delusion, sell more counteracting chemicals, and thus maintain their power and enormous incomes.

But the Shaman's view, based on her own work and experience, was that one in five people who had been diagnosed as "mentally ill" were in fact ill in the first place. The vast majority she had worked with were simply folk who were desperately unhappy, anxious, lonely, neurotic, grieving, traumatized, pleasantly eccentric, or whose spiritual experiences, values and abilities posed a threat to the BCD religion.

Government's Soul Loss

Now the Rulers of the Land were for the most dull-hearted, irresponsible, and fearful, lest they offend the psychiatric priesthood and betray the materialist religion, which they, too, served. The Shaman begged the Rulers to heed her advice, but tragically, the Leaders continued to invest their faith (and the people's money) in the Brain Chemistry religion, assured that its priests would be able to fix up what they all called the "Mental Health Crisis." Sadly, though, it was not to be.

Instead soul, stifled and offended at being expected to tap-dance to polite policies and dull monetary tunes, exploded in a riot of divine madness and sacred chaos, as the schizoid gods wreaked havoc and upset all the neatly-stacked political and pseudo-medical apple-carts.

The Rulers continued to ignore the Shaman and went on talking about funding, as though they believed that the well-being of soul could be bought and sold with money. In blind homage to the Brain Chemists who whispered seductively in their ears, they kept on tithing to the BCD religion, even though no-one was ever cured by the chemicals and there was no proof that schizophrenia was a brain disease to start with. For the BCD priests knew the ABC of their DSM, but they didn't know the first thing about the elusive and labyrinthine needs and yearnings of soul.

Schizophrenia & Visionary Reality

The schizophrenic folk, meanwhile, were busy encountering the terrible and wondrous Otherworlds, which were familiar to shamans and visionary artists, yet unknown to the BCD priests, who (therefore) refused to acknowledge their existence, or the right of others to experience them.

Most failed to see that schizophrenia was a soulful compensation for the society's loss of soul. The schizophrenic folk, after all, spoke the language of myth, dream, symbol and shamanic vision, not the arid textbook drone of psychiatric sermons. They loved Nature, open fires, stones and drumming, not artificial chemicals, empty jargon and cold, sterile clinics. In fact, so engrossed were the schizophrenic folk in their inward torments, voices and visions, that they often forgot to pay the rent, or wash, or eat properly. Conversely, so engrossed was the society as a whole in material gain, social prestige and the competitive job market that they forgot the sacred realms of vision, divine madness, myth, and all-pervasive soul.



The Shaman

The Shaman, who had been into the Abyss and to the Stars and back, was all the while practising soul-centred psychiatry and busy befriending the schizophrenic folk, with whom she had a great deal in common. For the Shaman, like the great shamanic psychiatrist Jung, was a technician of the sacred and a scientist of soul.

The sacred gods and demons of Underworld tormented and inspired her schizophrenic pals, scattering their souls to the Four Winds and tearing them to pieces to find out what they were made of, and whether they could pull themselves back together again. At great cost of energy to herself, the Shaman helped some of them, pulling them out of the muddy swamps of soul, or up from the black coldness of the Abyss, or away from entangling astral vampires and parasites.

Some schizophrenic folk harmlessly wandered the beaches, collecting shells and driftwood, or were busy making soft music with Pan pipes to befriended forest animals. One, though, was being attacked by cold energies, shadowy wombats, and nasty loud armies and engines which the

Shaman, in their shared world of vision, saw and fended off on his behalf. Another saw black spiders, healing and wounding spirits, crawling up the walls of the Lock-up Ward. Schizophrenia is, after all, a twin-edged sword.

Working for the most alone and voluntarily, the Shaman asked the Rulers for financial aid so that she could continue her heart-flamed work of helping the schizophrenic folk pull their scattered soul energies together, so that they, in turn, might help others going through similar soulful crises. The Shaman said to the Rulers, "Let me help you help these folk, for I have knowledge and experience of the sicknesses, wanderings, longings and fragmenting fate of soul." But the Rulers stopped their ears and further hardened their hearts.

Divine Chaos Called Up

Like the matter-of-fact child in Hans Andersen's tale "The Emperor's New Clothes", the Shaman cried out that psychiatry's pompous mantle of authority was fake, transparent and nonexistent. She spoke on radio and before crowds; she wrote and wrote until her arms became inflamed with chronic pain and her spirit weary.

In political and medical circles, ominous clouds gathered as the Land rumbled with sickness and muffled rage. And the Rainbow Serpent, long-abused by the same materialistic greed and disrespect for Spirit Dreaming, writhed and convulsed the Land with her bright angry colours.

The Shaman quietly went about her work and continued to upset apple-carts left, right and centre. Finally, after years of futile pleading with the Rulers, she consulted with her Spirit Guides as to what drastic measures might be needed to heal the entire situation and awaken the Rulers to soul's tragic predicament. Heeding the counsel of her most powerful Guides, the Shaman, in the name of truth and compassion for all, called up various wrathful deities and mischief-making Tricksters from the fiery Underworld, admonishing them all to do no harm.

Wrathful Deities Evoked

Meanwhile, fearing no opposition to their silent tyranny, the Brain Chemists kept quiet, sat behind their desks and glanced at their watches as they wrote out more prescriptions for toxic chemicals. But in time many of them became ill, deluded and depressed, while others turned suicidal or violent, because the Divine Madness they had scorned, patronized, persecuted and tried in vain to oust from society - namely, the Underworld gods who lurked behind schizophrenia - fought back and now turned their dark and chaotic faces to the Brain Chemists with revenge, true madness, and destruction.

The BCD priests fought back. Terrified schizophrenic folk, many gentle, brilliant and spiritual, were arrested and forcefully injected or incarcerated. If they resisted, they were told they were "non-compliant" (a symptom of the illness they refused to admit to having). The BCD priests offered them - for "their own good", of course - salvation from the realms of divine torment and vision, with round white pills that looked uncannily like Communion wafers. For just as the Medieval priests had threatened saints, mystics, witches and visionaries with torture, imprisonment and fire,

so the Brain Chemists enforced their treatment on the schizophrenic visionaries and potential shamans.

Spiritual Crises Misdiagnosed

A young man, frantic to get out of the Lock-up Ward, said, "I speak with animals. I am the Eagle spirit. Set me free."

One (wrongly diagnosed as schizophrenic) suffered a phantom pregnancy and spoke with God, who told her she was to birth the Divine Child. Another, wrongly diagnosed as schizophrenic, had (like the Shaman and the local Aborigines) seen a giant crystal buried beneath a city's central fountain. Yet another had been branded as schizophrenic for claiming to have had an alien abduction experience as a child. (The BCD circular reasoning ran as follows: "Our materialist dogma doesn't allow for the validity of spiritual emergencies, UFO trauma, or extrasensory sight, therefore you must be mentally ill.")

An Aboriginal man said, "I was told I was 'bipolar' because I shook and wept aloud for the tragic fate of my people and the Land."

A quiet, sensitive guy said, "I was told I was mentally ill because my behaviour doesn't conform to social norms, and because I live alone at the beach and am writing a PhD thesis on the Soul Loss of Western Society."

But the Brain Chemists regarded them all with bland fear, handed more prescriptions across their desks and said, "Hmmm. Take these chemicals and it will all go away, so that you can return to empty and otherwise normal lives, like ours."

Some BCD priests, in line with their DSM dogma, called the paranormal abilities "hallucinations", while others pronounced the non-ordinary states of consciousness, mystical visions, spiritual crises, or insights into society's sickness to be "delusional". Those who wished to retreat into Nature, constructively question the society's values, explore visionary worlds, or live solitary, quiet lives were accused of "bizarre behaviour", or of having "unusual thoughts." Thus the BCD dogma successfully masqueraded as "medical diagnosis", or as "science", although it was in reality a dangerous tool for social control.

Psyche Down Under

All in all, the more the BCD priests tried to eradicate the soulful symptoms of schizophrenia with their chemicals, the more schizophrenia erupted from the depths of soul as a necessary counterweight to psychiatry's soullessness and futile desire to control. The Shaman all the while watched, worked and waited for the next act to unfold in this intriguing drama of the gods at war and play in the Land of Oz. For in the end, she mused, it was up to the Rulers and the people to say No to the tyranny of the psychiatric priesthood and Yes to the needs of soul.

Would the fair-go-for-all Ozzies - on behalf of their thousands of traumatized and witch-hunted schizophrenic mates - give the brave boot to the BCD dogma, just as they had to other religious dictatorships? Time alone would tell the ongoing tale of the unfolding fate of Soul Down Under.

c. 2007 Darknight Publications by Maureen B. Roberts, PhD. Not to be reproduced whole or in part without the author's permission. Note that all personal testimonies and examples of persecution are drawn from real life situations.