

## Eco-Exercise for the Soul - The dung beetle, Shame and Symbols

*“As scientific understanding has grown, so our world has become dehumanized. Man feels himself isolated in the cosmos, because he is no longer involved with nature and has lost his emotional “unconscious identity” with natural phenomena.”*

*~Jung*

You yourself are a living symbol of the Universe. Everything that exists merely points to a deeper reality. Whether a dung beetle, elephant or human, all forms are different outer representations of Ultimate Reality involuted, informed and involved into physical manifestation. Everything created shares the same blueprint, the same basic genetic code with very slight variations. For instance a difference of 3.1% in genetic coding distinguishes the outer form of a human from the great apes. As Meister Eckhardt says, “Being is God’s circle and in this circle all creatures exist. Everything that is in God, is God.”

Humans are merely one interdependent expression of the whole display of creation, one tiny cell of a large body. We can choose to be a healthy, co-operative participant or a cancerous cell in the body of Creation. If we choose the latter we have the power to destroy the whole body.

Learning to see and experience ourselves as part of the whole is a function of Higher Mind and is the way in which we can reconnect the splits in our own psyche that have happened as a result of the development of the rational, intellectual, dualistic mind. Now is the time for our rational mind to be used in the right way - in the service of the vaster awareness of Unitive Mind (Higher Mind) that sees connection and interrelatedness and brings us back to our true identity that has, as Jung says above, been unconscious.

Understanding symbol, myth, metaphor, principles, blueprints and maps underlying form helps make the unconscious identity of our own soul conscious. We can move from an unconscious identity, to conscious identity through the path of becoming aware that the egoic mind is merely a function that enables us to become aware of our true Self. It is through the knowledge of duality that we come to the gnosis of unity. It is through fragmentation that we come to intuit connections, it is through knowledge of component parts that we come to know how they fit together in a whole. The greatest achievement of evolution has been the rational mind of discovery, invention and science. And yet, if we do not wake up and see how we are caught in the awareness of only fragmentation and difference we will never be able to put the pieces back together into a whole. When we regain our True Identity, with full awareness we start co-operating and collaborating with the whole body of the Universe. Think of a jigsaw puzzle - it perfectly represents the process.

Some of you encountered the dung beetle on our safari earlier this year. There are approximately 800 species of dung beetles in South Africa. Next year you will all be meeting a very special dung beetle. The flightless and vulnerable dung beetle (*Circellium bacchus*). It is endemic to the Addo Elephant National Park, where there are still elephant and buffalo, on whose dung it’s survival depends. Because it is flightless, due to its adaptation to arid and hot areas, as populations of wildlife decrease, it cannot leave and go to different areas.

The dung beetle, known as the scarab in Egypt, has captured the imagination of humans for thousands of years as a complex symbol of life and death, destruction and regeneration, self creative power and divine wisdom. It is associated with Khepera, god of creation.

It is a universal symbol in the collective unconscious of humanity that shows us the process of life and death, the process of transformation and metamorphosis, generatively and resurrection. It is associated with both the lunar and solar powers.

The dung beetle is a very busy, strong, diligent beetle that is the sanitation department of the bush-veld. If dung beetles did not exist the dung of elephant and buffalo would destroy the environment making it unlivable. Without the dung beetle, nothing could survive, including the elephant.

It has enormous strength. The female will collect dung and roll it into a ball that she rolls backwards with

her back feet to a suitable area for digging a burrow. The male trails her and when she has made a burrow she rolls the dung into it. The beetles mate and she deposits her egg into the dung. Usually this species raises only one larva. The female stays with the dung ball and cleans it of any fungus that might eat the dung, so that when the little egg hatches the larva can feed on the dung. The larval stage lasts 120 - 140 days and then it takes another 50 - 65 days for it to become sexually mature.

Dung is a prized commodity and will be robbed by other beetles. It is really important, if you are a dung beetle, to move the ball away as quickly as possible in a straight line to a suitable spot for a burrow. If you watch them, you will see them getting on top of the dung ball every now and again. This is for two reasons. Firstly to cool their burning feet on the dung but secondly to orient themselves. And they do this by looking up at the sun and the moon and the positions of stars in the milky way! To listen to a really entertaining Ted talk on this, go to:

[http://www.ted.com/talks/marcus\\_byrne\\_the\\_dance\\_of\\_the\\_dung\\_beetle](http://www.ted.com/talks/marcus_byrne_the_dance_of_the_dung_beetle)

So, let's examine what this marvelous little creature can teach us. Dung is obviously a metaphor for the shame of our lives. We talk about feeling "shitty" or say that we feel like "shit" when we mean we feel shame. We see people who shame us as "shitting on us" and as "shitty people."

Shame feels messy and smelly and is not intrinsic to our true selves. We came by it as a by-product of our childhood socialization. It is the emotional state that gives rise to dualistic thinking of "good" and "bad." It is the emotion that fragments us and splits us. Consider the following questions and journal about them:

What is the dung in your own life? How strongly are you identified with it? Are you the dung or the dung beetle?

What memories can still evoke shame?

When are you triggered into shame?

How does this go back to old experiences in your life?

What have you done in relationship to the dung in the past?

Was this helpful? Did the shame go away permanently?

What does the dung beetle teach us to do with the dung?

How does shame help us grow and evolve?

When do we no longer need shame?

What potential new life is in the dung? How can you transform shame?

Can you tend this new life with the same attention as the mother dung beetle?

How can you use the sun, stars and moon to navigate?

What does this mean in your life?

Can we know the sacred without the contrast of the profane?

Can you write a story/myth about the dung beetle?

*Nothing ever goes away until it has taught us what we need to know. If we run a hundred miles an hour to the other end of the continent in order to get away from the obstacle, we find the very same problem waiting for us when we arrive. It just keeps returning with new names, forms, manifestations until we learn whatever it*

*has to teach us about where we are separating ourselves from reality, how we are pulling back instead of opening up, closing down instead of allowing ourselves to experience fully whatever we encounter, without hesitating or retreating into ourselves.”* ~Pema Chodron

May you all start to recognize shame as a wonderful opportunity for new life, growth and adventure. May you be able to roll it into a manageable ball, embrace it and go deeply into it until it is transformed by your love into the new life of your resurrected Self.

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The man who understands a symbol not only opens himself to the objective world, but at the same time succeeds in emerging, from his personal situation and reaching, a comprehension of the universal ... Thanks to the symbol, the individual experience is “awoken” and transmuted into a spiritual act ...

The function of symbolism is to go beyond the ‘limitation of the fragment’ and link the different ‘parts’ of the whole. We like Plato’s prisoners in the cave, can see merely the shadows of the images of the real objects, which themselves are only the manifestation of the Ideas and the Archetypes (or immutable Essences). In other words, even the ‘originals,’ let alone the physical manifestations of nature, are but symbols of the metaphysical realities; and even these last, by virtue of their multiplicity, are but ‘parts’ of the One Essence. In Japanese the word, ‘to understand,’ wakau, literally means ‘to be divided.’ ~Mircea Eliade

“I was a hidden treasure that desired to be found, so I created the world.” ~J. Purce

“Symbols are merely veils of light rendering visible the Divine Dark.” ~Anne Kingsford

Beneath the coarse surface of material being  
I managed to touch the eternal purple hue,  
And I came to know the radiance of divinity. ~ Solovyov