

## What is the Magic Tortoise?



At an MA seminar a few years ago, we consulted the I Ching about what the group needed to know in order for the MA to prosper. We received hexagram 27, 'Providing Nourishment' with the first line changing. The text for this line in the Wilhelm edition is as follows: *You let your magic tortoise go, and look at me with the corners of your mouth drooping ... misfortune ... the magic tortoise is a creature possessed of such supernatural powers that it lives on air and needs no earthly nourishment.* This led to contemplation on the meaning of the magic tortoise, and what letting it go would entail. I think this is again a relevant question, as we seek to continue and promote the work and values of the MA and strive not to let the tortoise go. Here are some responses about our tortoise.

*The magic tortoise is being able to stay on the threshold between worlds. To maintain the balance between embodied, intuitive and imaginative engagement and allowing this to feed and empower our rational minds, in whatever way works for us, without ever holding on to the 'form' in which it speaks as any kind of ultimate truth, or as a truth that should be imposed on others, or define their worldview. But at the same time, it is important to guide, hold and discern the 'truth' of things, and to see clearly when the form is no longer holding the mystery – becoming merely conceptual, abstracted or fantastical. The magic tortoise is about always navigating, always enquiring, always seeing past, seeing through, creating.*

*The magic tortoise is the ability to shift between worlds. It is an ability to handle contradiction. It is a scream in the face of modernity. It is snow falling in summer. It is the source at the heart of the rose. It is a desperate attempt not to go insane. It is the wings of a butterfly breaking free from the chrysalis. It is faith in the path of one thousand candles. It is Ibn'Arabi sharing a glass of beer with Jung, while Corbin dances naked in the moonlight with Sophia. It is a hard shell on a sea of ribbons. It is a flight from cement and aluminium and back again to bless them. It is the ocean in a pint. It is me, us – all of us – and lysergic rabbits dancing in the dance of the dark star. It is the cuckoo's nest burning down after dusk. It is the embrace of the unembraceable.*

*The magic tortoise is the clarity of seeing with new eyes, revealing the way to integrate purpose and meaning.*

The magic tortoise is ancient and sacred, a way-shower and keeper of the mysteries. Both in and out of the space/time continuum, she waits to be unlocked, to be revealed and to serve her purpose as Stewardess of the Imaginal realms. A bridge between heaven and earth, she dances in spirals merging in turn with the Godhead and the abyss, back and forth on the spindle of creation she weaves her tapestry of red and blue, silver and gold, sewing the ancient codes back into the cloak of the anima mundi.

She breathes life into lost and forgotten Gods, enchanting them to dance once more in the abandoned temples of the human soul. She is the life blood, finding cracks within barren lands, gushing forth with memories of union, when humans were Star Walkers and respectful guests in Celestial Halls. She is powerful yet delicate and fragile, easily crushed by a heavy hand and a leaden mind. She suffers in the dry, tight compartments of duality, her Queendom is the fertile space between the worlds, the threshold of the Fey, the liminal. She earths the mystical.

You catch a glimpse of her sometimes, moving behind the veils, liquid light in the cosmic womb, shapeshifting into endless manifestations, variations, and windings of the Wyrld ... humming a strange yet familiar tune, only half forgotten to you now. Listen ... she will teach you again – the song that will lead you home.

The magic tortoise is at home everywhere, it can travel anywhere. It is mystical knowledge, always on the move through space and time, through history and geography, forever protected, never lost. It moves both slowly and swiftly. The magic tortoise wins the race. In its safe container, it holds and carries all that has been banned, excluded, suppressed in the heart and soul of wisdom: the earth, the erotic, the body, the feminine, the intuitive, the magical, the joyful, the wild.

We welcome it back. Now is the time: it returns to the garden, to the oasis, and begins to feast on luscious fruits and tender grass – and the old structures, all the walls which tried to keep it out, must now crumble back to dust.



