

Roundness

Dear S.,

When I read your correspondence I immediately thought of Roundness.

Sufi dervishes spin round and round. They spin with one hand up to receive from Allah, and the other hand down so they can transmit whatever they receive into the human world.



Here is the hall where I saw them perform the *Sema* (I was early)

The binaries you mentioned: being & doing, happenstance & purpose, flow & stuckness...ultimately are all resolved by Roundness.

These binaries “chase each other’s tail”; they are an oroborus. But instead of getting caught in the chase, in the longing after one just as it vanishes into the other, I encourage you to enter Roundness.



Blue Mosque ceiling, Istanbul

The highlight of my trip was the six days I spent in Konya, Rumi’s town (now a mid-size city). It was why I came to Turkey. It was highly spiritual. It was a week of feeling I was totally on my path. Those six days were followed by a backpacker trip to the Mediterranean. There, I hung out with a 25-year-old American traveler who hosts a website where people submit photos of their bare butts as they visit various places around the world.

Roundness. Not the butts, I mean. ☺ I mean, roundness in how the sacred and the profane are always smushed up together, like a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. How we can't cling to anything, how I am reciting a poem one day to a female Sufi mystic and the next night I'm in a tourist bar, where in the time it takes me to drink a glass of wine the owner has introduced me to his wife and also told me about the prostitutes he slept with in Thailand.

Or, how these flames, caused by methane escaping the rocks in little caves, have been consistently burning atop Turkey's Mount Olympus for 2000+ years:



And yet when I visited, European tourists were roasting weenies on them.

I could rail against these kinds of roundnesses but instead I find myself coming back to mostly a quiet kind of comfort toward it all. This acceptance feels new to me, a new direction for growth.

A lot of contemporary American spiritual dialogue might encourage you to “fix” your perceived imbalance, or give you tools for how to tinker with the ratio of what you experience, so that you might end up where you think you want to be more of the time. That’s not what I’m doing here. I am encouraging you towards acceptance, towards remembering that the binaries you experience are part of a larger, interconnected whole.



don't forget the whole when you examine all of the parts

I made friends in Konya with an uncle and a nephew who ran a tourist shop. We smoked *nargile* (tobacco from a hookah) and drank Pepsi on the street and communicated via body language and Google Translate. They took me to dinner at a beautiful open-air restaurant. “I’ve been here in a dream,” I typed into the phone. “Certainly,” the nephew replied.

But before that, weaving through the streets of Konya, around traffic circles, down streets branching off like spokes:

“Konya’s round!” I shouted out from the backseat.

And the nephew turned around and cracked up with me. “Konya’s round!” he shouted back.



Just your typical Konya street sign

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But still... you asked about navigation, and simply remembering roundness won't do it all... (will it?)

The Three Navigation Pictures (like the [Ten Oxherding Pictures](#)):



1. Traffic, herd; plus, recognition of your own unique difference



2. A Certain moment on the path



3. A way unfolds, with both direction and roundness

I will leave you here, my friend---

--All the best,

Nora