LONGING

THE HUNGER OF THE HUMAN HEART

WILLIAM ZEITLER

Longing

The Hunger of the Human Heart

William Zeitler

Longing

Published by GrailHeart
Highland, California

www.GrailHeart.com

ISBN: 978-1-940630-04-5

First Edition

Printed in the United States of America

Contents

Prologue

Alexander's Longing

Alexander the Great (356–323 BCE) is one of the most extraordinary examples of "longing" in all of human history. Always longing for more. Indeed, there's a famous story of him weeping at the Hyphasis River in India in 326 BCE because his troops refused to go further. He wept because there were worlds he would never conquer.

Alexander's conquest transformed Western Civilization. Across his empire he established Greek as a "universal second language" and the "Alexander" coinage as the universal currency. With trade barriers of differing languages and currencies removed, an explosion of trade and prosperity ensued.

He also founded the city of Alexandria on the Egyptian coast, a great melting pot of Greek, Egyptian, Mesopotamian, and even Oriental cultures (due to thriving trade with the far East). This resulted in an eruption of human advancement that included Euclid and his geometry (c.300 BCE), Eratosthenes (276–194 BCE) who measured the *circumference* of our *spherical* Earth with astonishing accuracy, a water clock invented by Ctesibius (c.270 BCE) whose accuracy wouldn't be surpassed for nearly two thousand years, to arguably the first recorded woman mathematician: Hypatia (360–415 CE) centuries later.

And the Library of Alexandria was the greatest library the world had ever seen. The story is told that a requirement for ships to dock at Alexandria was to bring a book for the library.

But none of this would have come to be if Alexander had stayed home. If he had been content to be king of Macedon only.

Something compelled him to reach for *more*…[1]

[1]Of course Alexander had his dark side — the violence of his campaigns was real and sometimes extreme. Yet he could also be remarkably magnanimous with defeated enemies. In the historiography that has come down to us, it's not always easy to separate what is historically true from myth. It's his mythic and archetypal aspect that concerns us here.

Prologue to Longing

In this book, we will mostly consider human longing. But first let's consider how Longing may be woven into the very fabric of the Cosmos itself. Metaphorically speaking, after the Big Bang, the Cosmos could have been "content" to remain an amorphous cloud of gas. But it didn't.

You're here, reading this text, because it didn't.

This is quite strange.

In the chapter that follows, we consider Longing from a cosmic perspective. For me, perhaps the biggest challenge writing it was trying to wrap my mind around the time frames involved. In our culture we're trained to time frames of corporate quarters and two-year election cycles. But the time frames of the Cosmos and Life within it are millions and billions of years.

Then we'll narrow our focus to Longing in mythology, some lives gripped by Longing, then Longing in each of us personally.

We conclude the book by bringing it full circle with a story about Longing greater than the Cosmos itself…

Cosmic Longing

The Second Law of Thermodynamics

The Second Law of Thermodynamics says, in essence, that everything runs down, falls apart, degrades over time. That Chaos has the last word.

But even though things inexorably run down — even though chaos increases in the long run — the Second Law does allow for pockets, islands of less Chaos, that buck the trend.

It's just that if there's a pocket of less chaos *here*, there has to be extra chaos somewhere *else* to balance things out.

Yet, we're surrounded of examples of the Cosmos being drawn to greater and greater order and complexity. In seeming defiance of the Second Law.

Big Bang to Heavy Elements

After the Big Bang, the universe was extraordinarily uniform — almost featureless hot gas. Gravity nudged tiny quantum fluctuations into galaxies and stars. Order and structure emerged from near-uniformity.

But it doesn't stop there. Every element is defined by the number of protons in its nucleus — the more protons, the heavier and more complex the atom. The two simplest elements — Hydrogen (1 proton) and Helium (2) — are almost everything the Big Bang produced.

The heavier elements were forged inside stars. The larger the star, the hotter the star's core furnace, and the heavier the elements it can forge. Our Sun, of modest size, can forge up to Carbon (6) and Oxygen (8). Even this process has its limits. The heaviest element that can be produced in the largest star's core is Iron (26).

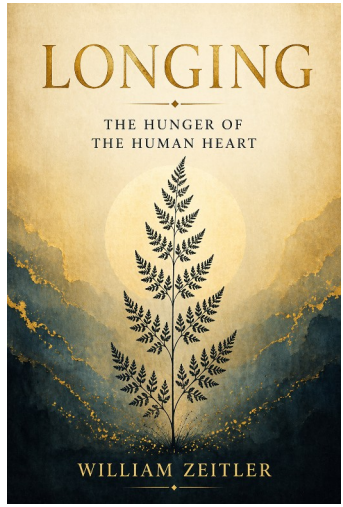
Elements heavier than these can only be produced in a supernova, when a large enough star at the end of its life collapses into a cataclysmic explosion. Zinc (30), Selenium (34) and Iodine (53) are a few elements created in supernovae. These are elements without which life on Earth would not be possible.

In other words, we have life on Earth today because a star died in a supernova before the Earth was born, seeding the four corners of the Cosmos with heavier elements. Some found their way to our tiny planet in the making.

Every living thing on Earth embodies shards of supernovae. Every bacterium, every fungus, every plant and animal requires elements that could only have been forged in the death throes of a star.

GRAILHEART PRESS

You've reached the end of your preview.



For information and ordering, click here.