

Essay 3rd Spiral

The importance of the word Mother in the German language

I have always been really intrigued about language and the origin of words. And of course since I am reconnecting with Goddess, I also became more aware of where I find Goddess hidden in my surrounding. It was such an amazing feeling when I found a relic of the Matronen chiselled in stone in my hometown's museum last year. The stone shows a group of three women, representing the maiden, mother and crone. They are dressed in traditional cloth of the Ubier. The Ubier lived in the area of Cologne / Eifel / Niederrhein 2000 years ago. In this area more than 800 of these stones with the Matrones on it were found. Every stone has engravings in Latin, and they found more than 70 Names for Matronen Goddesses. Matron derive from the Latin word mater which is Mother. This really started my journey to look at the German word for mother, Mutter, and in which ways it is still used in the language nowadays showing the importance of the mother line.

German language puts nouns together to create more specific nouns and there are over 300 words in the German language which start or end with Mutter (mother), but only around 170 with Vater (father), most of them created as equivalent to the word with Mother, but not all being used.

The word which fascinated me first is the word Muttersprache, mother language, which stands first or native language. It is an honouring of the mother to actually acknowledge that she is the one who is giving the language to her children. The word Vatersprache, father-language, does not exist. In connection with this is the word Muttersprachler, mother speaker, which describes a native speaker.

Looking more at the words which are talking about lineage, the Vaterland, father country, came to me and I researched that until the late 19th century the word Mutterland, mother land, was the main word used to describe your home country. However, the propaganda in the first and especially the second world war erased the word Mutterland and only the word Vaterland is still used. Whereby I have to say that also because of the extreme use during the wars the word Vaterland brings up associations with the Nazis and 40 of the 170 words with Vater are actually about Vaterland. There are not really used in mainstream normally, but with growing right wing politics it finds its way back into the media. Nevertheless, really obviously showing the patriarchy in the German language is word Vaterhaus, father home, which stands for parental home which is dedicated to the father and has nothing similar for mothers.

Another really interesting word to look at is Muttermal, mother mark, which means birthmark. Again there is no equivalent for father. So it is really obvious that the blood lineage of the mother is honoured.

In German the use of two nouns putting together can totally change the meaning of the new created noun. It is not only obvious in writing if it is one or two words, but also in the verbal language because of the change of accentuation. An example is Mutter Erde, mother earth, and Muttererde in one word. Mutter Erde refers to mother earth in terms of the world itself. Whereby Muttererde stand for very fertile soil, earth to grow something in. There is

absolutely no word with father to describe earth, once again, the honouring of the mother as the fertile, live giving source.

There is also the word Mutterpflanze, mother plant, which stands for the plant which gives the offshoots.

I was fascinated when I started looking at the words Mutter Gottes, mother of god (Gott is god, Gottes is declined in Genitiv which is the case that shows possession and is expressed in English by the use of "of" or the apostrophe `s. Mutter Gottes is mainly used as synonym for the Virgin Maria, her being the mother of the Jesus who was seen as God embodied in this world.

However, it also exists as combined word Muttergottes and has a slightly different meaning. It is mainly used in combination with holy, Heilige Muttergottes. This phrase is used in situations where someone gets a totally unexpected message. In the most important moments, people call to the mother rather than to god himself. And it is used a lot in the German language, independent of religious background.

Another interesting word is Mutterseelenallein, mother-soul-alone, which means all alone. It is a word which is used a lot to describe that there was literally no one but oneself. Again no equivalent for father. It really describes the importance of a mother more than of a father, but because the word soul is in it, it could also refer to a female deity.

There is an endless list of words beginning with Mutter which describe words related to motherhood. It is actually really beautiful and it feels like a real honouring of the mother. Some examples:

- Muttermund, mother mouth, which means cervix
- Mutterkuchen, mother cake, which means placenta
- Gebärmutter, birthing mother, main word for uterus
- Mutterleib, mother body / belly, also used for uterus but more in a context of pregnancy
- Muttermilch, mother milk, describes breast milk
- Mutterschutz, mother protection, describes the time before and after birth in which the mother gets money to be able to stay with her new born
- Mutterglück, mother luck, describing the happiness after giving birth
- Muttergefühl, mother feeling, describing the feeling of being a mother
- Mutterliebe, mother love, describing the love of a mother towards her children.

The word Mutter itself also has a technical meaning and stand for nut, basically the mother who embraces the screw, which I actually find rather funny when I think about it.

Interestingly the word Mutter is also used quite a bit in the business language. For example: the word Mutterkonzern, mother enterprise, and Mutterunternehmen, mother company, describing a company or enterprise which owns other companies. Where in English it is again parent company the emphasis in German is on the mother and no words for father. Another one is Mutterpartei, mother party, which describes a bigger party which has smaller sub parties, mainly used to describe the connection between a student party and the related bigger national party.

Related to this is also Muttergemeinde, mother parish, the leading parish which has smaller parishes under its control.

I can truly say that I love the German language much more since I looked at the broad use of the word Mutter and how the mother is really honoured in the language. Of course there is no real evidence that all these words are somehow connected to Goddess, but at the end of the day there is nothing which is embodying Goddess more than a mother.

For me there is a lot of hope in it as well. I feel the worship of mothers by using the word in so many different ways is still really high, although the awareness is not there. But it means we do not necessary have to create a post patriarchy language, we can just use this one more consciously.