

Entry

Living in the Myth of Psyche and Eros: When I first read the Myth of Psyche and Eros, I was in the throes of becoming what I read, living out in imaginal and, sometimes, real life the story that put together a coherent play before my eyes that would allow me to go on stage and act a part, any part, to be part of the drama, to be what I originally was in childhood at play, an actor. Not only did I become what I read, I became what I listened to and overheard so thin was the membrane of separation of the primary and the secondary process. I had not yet learned to use “epithets”, as a wise friend of mine had, to keep from falling into the primary process without rescue. He would under his breath exclaim his epithets in order not to fall in and get lost, as I so often did.

Once having read the literary telling by Lucius Apuleius of the The Golden Ass (or Metamorphoses) and various interpretations of the myth, I was attracted as by a magnet to the myth yet always made uneasy by the myth and whether it was a myth or just a later told tale by an Italian and unaligned author. Despite the apparent irrelevance to my life, the issues raised by my perpetual digging my own grave of disasters pried me open to the myth that had enough glue to pull energy out of the bottom of the sea and wave it through the journey from the realm of the gods to the ball bouncing of the ego.

Where was I? I sought clues as to where I was, as myths, as spelled out by James Hollis in Tracking the God: The Place of Myth in Modern Life, “represent the crystallization of basic experiences of life construed through various forms of imagery.” The story, which is how the human mind analogically organizes the cosmos as experience, and the images that the myth of Psyche and Eros became were like the unwinding of DNA into my imagination and heartwoods. It told of my experiences of life in images that burnt the fires from my wood clear into the chakra furnace. James Hollis explains well the atmosphere, weather, and world that lives you in myth so that images grow like spring from invisibility into visibility and like summer grow deeper and fuller into mystery and mystery revealed when you have learned to live inside its beating and terrifying heart. He says in Tracking the Gods:

Mythic images help us to approach the mysteries. Myth draws us near profound depths of love and hate, life and death-precincts of the gods, the mysteries, where categories of thought falter and slip into dumb-founded silence. Myth is a way of talking about the ineffable. ...Myth is a way of continuing the conversation when the awesome silence gathers. In theory and system one sees the language of mind; in myth one sees the incarnate language of the soul.

At the outset of Psyche’s adventure, psyche is the soul. In Greek, psyche is the word for soul. The Myth of Psyche and Eros is the divine transformation of the soul, from a human to an immortal, where the animal soul that despairs and goes in fits of depression to the verge of

suicide, persuaded from it by Pan and other active imagination figures and energies, is given the energies and purposes and vision and divine marriage that make of them a divine couple that mate in the deep psyche to insure the permanence of the change in the landscape into energies that make psyche one of active transformers of the world, not only a taoist soul. As Octavio Paz wrote, a turning point in Western Civilization had reared its head: dragon slayer or rider of the dragon. By the end of the tale, the bindings of soul with psyche have loosened so that the membranes separating the two and the incarnation and identity of each of these embodied cosmic energies become two differentiated entities: animal soul and psychic energies have differing abodes, yearnings, strugglings, sufferings, consciousnesses, loves and landscapes. Soul and psyche part company, have different histories, and eschatology. Soul becomes “the butterfly” whose nature energies threads from the long history of a different inner life and dark; psyche binds energies of human and divine love whose threads of beauty and terror map the earth’s terrain in and out of the human mind. Perhaps, with vision and perspective it is time to reunite psyche, soul, and butterfly. This thread would be so weaveable that a vessel forms for the Self so that the Self can enter into dialogue and companionship and combat with the ego.

Soul and spirit have a long history of conflict and innumerable differences between them, and the myth embodies one thread that unbraids the silk while braiding with thicker weaves. Quoting Hollis, in The Swamplands of the Soul on the difference between soul and spirit: “If soul is the purposiveness of life, the investment by nature in the individual, then spirit is the energy, the libido, the eros for the journey.” Psyche and Eros and Aphrodite, Goddess of Love, and Zeus, God of Thunder and father of Eros, and the helper of Psyche in her mortal to the death conflict, for Psyche, with Aphrodite. Four different energies threading through coupling and mortal yet civilizing combat, like energies of merging streams for turning the banks into containers for rivers to wholeness.

Complexes, which can be the result of internal traumas as well as from external ones, Jung discovered, could be created or attached to “moral conflict, which ultimately derives from the apparent impossibility of affirming the whole of one’s nature.” Psyche, and myself, both, found it impossible to affirm our life and the whole of our nature. By this moral conflict of inner objects that we would not live out but only live in the imagination we created the external conditions as our fate that reflected our inner life although we had no awareness of it as we acted in the throes of upheaval, downfall, and self destruction. (See Jung’s writing on fate.) Look at the myth as a fairy tale, and the story as the inner life of Psyche; look at my life at the time as a mythical one whose life events were seamless generations of inner life and history that can be read as a fairy tale whose primitive, primal logic and erotic fervor and moral mortal combat and life lessons learned and refused make sense (psychic sense) of the bone shuddering heart attack that struck where the roots of the world tree grasp out its urgencies of fate’s eros, unwinding and unbinding the threads by which I had hung myself and enspiriting a new life lived ensouled by the dark vessel of Hermes. Out of these tales, Psyche and I came to live out the axis mundi, where the ego-self axis begins like flint on flint to light darkness with fits of spiritual yearnings and desires and the soul carrier to bring you deeper into the yearnings so that it becomes the food feeding you. You are not alone,

never have been, but it is not the god or gods of history although there are tracings. Awe and wonder. You are inside of mystery before you are aware of your location and its existence, whose beauty brings you in but whose strange nature and land, like a dream, disorient, disrupt, make each thought crags where death lurks always, loosens bodily bindings so that familiar becomes strange: self takes the image of Psyche, the anima, in order to be the story you are “lost” in for only by being lost can the taoist, no footprint left behind, soul be in a state where earth will come to you of its own accord, as nature has lived in you for thousands of ancestors.

The self loves beauty. Combining both vivifying energies, love and beauty, activates its resources in the psyche, drawing the Self out into living Psyche in active initiation of its images and life. Another story line of the Myth of Psyche and Eros is, thus, transformation of the soul and spirit needed to meet in the green meadow of the true meaning of inner beauty and how only with the coming alive in the psyche, along with its companion, terror, can the ego-self axis be awakened out of the dark, “dragon bred”, sleep of the guileless and innocent to be in combat and arm to arm dialogue with the Great Dragon, who is ever demanding and circling, wanting the beauty attracting it out of its lair to give it what it craves: attention, devotion, love which is beauty. Consciousness concentrated on the Self that it may feed and elaborate on its inner journey that you have the choice to join and reject. The Self will react accordingly. Suffer the tears of terror and the eclipsed landscape. Once you turn inward, as the Buddha said, the attention you give to your buddha nature fires the light of the beginnings of the spiritual journey, the survival from which is no where possible and improbable. We must learn to breathe in dragon’s breath.

So this is the third story line I find compelling out of mutual history with the myth, having lived the soul’s curative powers in my healing the simultaneously thundered and lightning struck tree that had split open by splitting apart to reveal emptiness and echoes, like out of the beauty box, demons, gods, goblins, dwarfs, spiritual masters, creative artists, animas, shadows, personas, stories and myths spewing out in gushes of water jettisoned energies and terrors that turned me into a paranoia horn, obsessing and distressing in a new world, one I began to call the real “new world” discovered by journeys to new continent. Divine transformation of the soul, how inner beauty like an artist draws to you as second skin, as doppelganger, as your twin, who has a whole world you know nothing of (and we call it consciousness? and our strivings, moral?). The transformation of inner beauty is Psyche’s overall task so that she opens the Beauty Box, that the Far-Looking Tower warned her not to, and swoons into unconsciousness, becomes the image of the divine beauty, the daughter, Persephone, Queen of the Underworld, reborn as mother, Demeter. Eros awakens her, as Psyche had previously rudely awakened him, with renewed spirit and completion of the pregnancy, bringing out into the world the inner beauty Psyche displayed in the form of everyone’s daughter who has lived and gone what she has gone through, birthing a daughter named “Joy”. The third story line is one that is not obvious on first or second reading: the awakening of the ego-Self axis and how that activation happens and what the intent is of this different type of threading of existence. In other words, how you become the richness of your inner life and the inner images living you so that you are the four seasons and realize their tellings of reality to you. Truth then becomes a testing stone for your journey. Everyone one is the stories

and lives in moral depths that the spiritual storms leap out of you, usually involuntarily, into what has secretly been growing in you, a secret even to yourself until the evidence reveals the truth, you are the soul's vessel, and its healing power, weather the terrifying dark bleak unblinking nights. You realize a whole soul is a compass for the journey you never learned to read and ignored for outer education and fulfillment as you were ignorant, arrogant, and spiritually and psychologically blind. Then, like Buddha, you learn compassion for all that you threw away and lost because they only shape shifted into other energies trying to open you to the terrible splendor of the universe. Compassion learns you lessons you never knew existed. You were educated, but you had no knowledge despite your most vehement protests to the contrary.

Questions? We are in the religious dimensions of the Psyche, for this is where the spiritual engine of continual skin scratching dissatisfaction with everything, everywhere despite the beauty in front of you every day, pulls you, when you think that you are being pushed by yourself, like the little engine that could, into "Sacred Chaos." Until the days when the spiritual itch either wears itself out and you are in anomie for years as you are being replanted or the itching is so ferocious that you have to dig deeply into your skin, your neck, your heart, your balls, as it never ends: you scratch yourself until red with the swelling welts of many demons dancing in your skin chakras: you are on the edge of the cliff. Your fate is no longer in your hands, but your fate, as the myth shows, is never foreordained or determined as the resources of Psyche are so abundant and rich that choices always fly up, as the eagle did, to complete the task. The moral vision you exercise is not between life and death, for death in Psyche and with soul is natural and enamoring, but between using the richness of the soul to ravel the world into a story or unravel the weave and woof into chaos. When you get there, it is the "sacred", the gods, god, sacrifice, numinosity, the self, the image of the god, the synchronicities that surround you that like the sun brings out the planted roots from seeds to blossom, that the "fragile" ego encounters, hopefully in a sealed container, the pregnant, secret questions that the Inner Presence asks of you in the valley made to meet and talk.

Are the sacred energies infusing humankind for thousands of years too numinous, powerful, chaotic, enveloping, dark, primitive, animal for the human mind and heart to deal with because these powers and inflictions and healings are too powerful for the "ego" to fold together so that it cannot overcome, is destroyed, driven crazy or insane, becomes schizophrenic, hews to splitting, etc. the little speck that we are? Or because the ego and our other resources are too small, too limited by the evolved mind and psyche that the avenue, openings, flows, imaginative stage, heart work and the needs of the dark cough of incubation of evil for the whole earth so that virtually any of the more powerful, sacred infusing through us have a difficult, winding, chaotic journey through a too small passageway we have evolved to survive but not to catch the universe in the way it could be caught if we had different apparatuses? Are we too small or narrow or too unconscious of spiritual beings to image and live the energies that earth's nature has grown into our very core, as Jung says, our rhizome, or are the sacred energies too robust, powerful, shaping and chaotic for us spiritual beings to incubate and incarnate except in the most religious of ways? That is, spiritual and religious are not the same practices: one is individual and says there never is any salvation and one is communal and through the species instinct grasps for salvation.

From this perspective, we have only begun our spiritual journey by taking the first step, and the spiritual and religious practices and groups are like rivers flowing who have asked the questions of the cosmos from the human perspective when we are not the center of the universe and should be asking of the reality of the cosmos that we manifest. My answer is spiritual freedom that like the freedom in every other human endeavor threads with the highest aspirations of the heart muscle exercising the attention of the mind deep into the mysteries of the organism. Since my tentative answer is freedom, the proliferation of ideas and images can abound, gods are not fixed but bring eternal change into living beings, moral and ethical visions and guides must at their roots have no tyrannical or inherent blight that sanctions the mass diseases that have afflicted the religions of the world. Humans, in other words, are not here to be saved or to worship gods, for there may be a god or no god or imperial suffocators of the earth; rather, we are a journey of discovery to explore with consciousness the nature of the cosmos and every living being to ask of the cosmos, in, yes, our limited way and vision, what it needs of us and wants of us to shape the sky wide energies that live in us that opens our seasons into spiritual homes that accomplish aspirations that are truly singularly communal, in freedom and compassion. Part of this is Jung, of course, but the rest comes from my direct experience, especially of Zen and rejection of the Christian religion, not necessarily of the insights of Jesus of Nazareth.

Buddha gave insights into suffering and how to end suffering from his direct experience. The Myth of Psyche and Eros is as well a story of suffering Psyche, as well as Love, Soul and Spirit, and how they communicate and shape from within themselves the resources to end the suffering in divine marriage. The myth is a direct story of the source of suffering that the Buddha said was the origin of suffering: the mind from which everything flowed though in our ignorance we could not see we were the origin of the stream and the stream's images and ideas so diffusing, projecting, emotionally unclaimed and cliffed were we humans that we lived in a world we made and forgot we did and also lived in a world we did not make (nirvana, satori, original mind) and thought out of existence so that we thought we made the world that we did not make, as we enter a larger stream when we are resilient and pliable and bodily strong swimmers and breathers.

From the beginning of the story, Psyche has her own inner beauty and knew that that inner beauty was more important than outer beauty. Those societal tellers of tales who spread the word that Psyche was more beautiful than the Goddess of Love, Aphrodite, and fed the goddess' jealousy, initiates the action in the story. What she is innately, what seasons she would be in their abundance and natural setting, blossoms in her while the society seeks to limit her role to one of competitive beauty. How would she become what she was, not just a creature of nature or of society? Inner beauty is one of the most energetic and aromatic attractors activating the Self and the growth of the imaginal plantings that bring the Great Dragon out of its lair into forms amenable to shape shifting images and discussion, growing the dark and light, the beauty and the terror, in mutually cultivated fields, valleys, mountains, and gardens.