

## Perspectives on Change II: Archetypal Psychology

### **Soul-making and the *Puer-Senex* Reunion**

Jung once called us “modern man in search of a soul”. He maintained that the background to our search is what he called our cultural *kairos*, a critical moment when “things fall apart, the center cannot hold”. The web of fate opens. A “shot” must be made through this critical opening. If we do not make the connection or re-connection, he said - a “metamorphosis of the Gods” imaged as re-union of the split archetype of culture called the *Senex* and the *Puer* - we may perish beneath the weight of our own technologies. For, far from having left these Gods, spirits or *daimones* behind:

...modern man has rejected only their verbal specters, not the psychic facts ... The Gods have become diseases, producing curious specimens for the doctor’s consulting room or disordering the brains of politicians and journalists who unwittingly let loose psychic epidemics on the world (CW 13, 54).

*Vocatus atque non vocatus Deus aderit* - Called or not called the God(s) will be here - was one of Jung’s psychological maxims. Regardless of our acceptance or acknowledgement, the divinities and the spirits of the ancestors are always with us.

Jung felt that a dialogue with this unseen world - “not to learn something but to experience something and be set right” – could make the difference between serving a God and falling victim to a world-devouring mania. Better we pay attention than fall prey to their possession of our consciousness. But where does this dialogue begin? How does it “find a place” when in our world that is falling apart?

Turning and turning in the widening gyre,  
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;  
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;  
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world ...

Now, I have called this falling apart of the connectedness of things by the modern term “spin”. This spin is not so much a biological as a *cultural* phenomenon. The biological connection is certain - more people are being born into the world today than ever before - but there is no cultural link between these overflowing generations. Mere anarchy is being loosed upon a world filled to the brim with people who have nothing in common but the present crisis and the culture wars of literalized fundamentalisms.

Archetypal psychology looks at the crucial *cultural* connection between generations – the goal of ritual education – through the dual archetype of the *Puer* and the *Senex*, the Divine Boy who represents the futurity and longing of the spirit and the Wise Old Man who represents its accumulated wisdom and experience (Hillman, “Peaks and Vales”, in *Puer Papers*, arguably his greatest book). United, the *Puer-Senex* is a highly numinous figure, the image of the mysterious Sage Mind itself. We see this conjunction of old and young in *Lao-zi*, literally “Old-Young” Master, in Christ as Father and Son, in the mysterious faces of the Old-Young shamans and wandering sages in traditional cultures throughout the world and in the mysterious image of what Jung called the Self – the *imago dei* or image of God within each of us.

Hillman’s crucial insight here, which set traditional Jungian therapeutic approaches on their head, was that the *negativity* of either side of the dual archetype, the *Puer*’s soppy longing, eternally open wounds, total lack of adaptation and explosive terrorism, or the *Senex*’s saturnine judgments, oppressive and deadening strictures, terminal depressions, sullen aggressions and preemptive strikes were not inherent in either figure itself but were a direct product of the lack of connection with the “other half”. The *Puer* and the *Senex*, the Aspiring Youth and the Wise Elder were once held together in the rituals of education and the ceremonies of innocence. Mere anarchy, something we all know all too well, has been loosed upon the world precisely through the loss of this connection.

The connection, according to Hillman, is “soul” or Anima, the lost (and feminine) third world. This mediating realm has disappeared beneath the bloody tide of literalism, consumerism, reductionism, religious and political fundamentalism, professionalism in the healing arts, gender politics and unreflected social activism. Another major theoretical contribution Hillman made here was to de-literalize the notions of “anima” and “animus” as contra-sexual archetypes, seeing them as dual and non-gender specific, each a part of each one of us.

So Anima Country, the lost realm of “soul” where the *Puer* and the *Senex* can be re-united and culture healed is not so much somewhere we *go* but something we *do*. To find this hidden world and hidden intelligence, we must move into and through the critical moment in the web of fate or *kairos* that Jung said characterizes modern times, expressed as the “strange attraction” of the dark psyche. This move turns us away from logical thought to the underworld of the psychic image, to the *daimones* or *guishen* that Jung called the “living units of the unconscious psyche that are the architects of dreams and symptoms.”

Hillman remarked in an early book called *Insearch: Psychology and Religion* that:

We can and do lose our souls. I believe with Jung that each of us is modern man in search of a soul. He who has lost his soul will be finding God anywhere, up above and down below, in here and out

there; he will cling to every straw of love blown past his doorway as he stands waiting for a sign. Therefore rather than quarrel over to whom the soul belongs, let us go in search of it. Let us “make soul” into a real experience again rather than a topic for endless debate. Let us move towards re-mythologizing experiences with religious implications.

The major religious problem today is the search for the soul and the belief in its reality, which means finding a living connection to one’s own psychic reality. Major emotional ideas, such as the idea and image of God, can die out of the psyche, but not for long. The energy bound in these complex ideas and feelings does not just vanish, much as man might like to free himself from the burdensome notion of God by writing theological obituaries. The issue is not that “God is dead” but in what forms this indestructible energy is now reappearing in the psyche. For us, clinical psychopathology and programs of research will yield less than our own individual insearch. The psychological amateur, truly defined as the one who lovingly cultivates the soul, may be the true psychological specialist.

Soul-making, reconstituting the “third world” of the soul, *esse in anima* or “being in soul”, a “faith in the images” in a time when the Heavens have fallen and the Ghost River flows all around us – how do we do it? In *Revisioning Psychology*, another great early book, Hillman suggests several things. These have a direct relevance to our encounter with the hidden language and long-term ritual education in *Change*, the goal of which is the production of the Burning Water, substance of the imaginal fertility of the soul that brings about the *Puer-Senex* reunion.

Personifying: the creatures of our dreams and the symbols of the great divinatory traditions have an autonomous and potentially healing power that we can activate by returning their “persons” to them rather than reducing them to concepts or allegories to be used in our own self-development. This is the first step. Honoring their “otherness” and independence, empowering them as what I call Dream Animals, opens the Gates of Change.

Pathologizing: the Dream Animals embrace both “good and evil.” They introduce us to “shadow”, to our own and our culture’s pathologies. Their appearance will wound our certainties and radically cut into our desired self-image. Thus the second step is to let them deconstruct us, to recognize that the royal road to soul is precisely through our weakness rather than our strength. The door to the soul is sickness, the “sacred sickness”, the sickness from which we can never recover. Thus, Hillman says, whenever we see death or disease in our dreams we might first of all accept and

understand it as an omen that a de-literalizing process is at work, freeing the reality of the soul from the prisons of the literal.

Psychologizing: Everything we encounter in the world is first encountered in the soul. In the still center, the Magic Mountain, what we will not encounter in the imagination we will be forced to encounter as fate. Here we confront the third step: the Way of the “Rainmaker”. It is the great power of inner work, of psychologizing outer events and encountering them first of all in soul to produce synchronistic outer change that can be effected no other way.

Seeing through: “Behind the symptom is the complex, behind the complex is an archetype and behind the archetype is a God.” This fourth step is a bit like Deity Yoga. When we see through the literal events of the world to the psychic realities behind them, stilling the ego’s drive to enactment, we truly enter Anima Country. We see the world through the eyes of the God(s), putting their perspective on like a mask, a truth that is both truth and fiction. As we do, the imaginal world comes to life again.

“Like(ness) cures Like” is a fundamental principle of traditional medicine: the cure is a likeness of the disease. But likenesses are *not* same. As in homeopathic medicine, the “cure” is the substance that has caused the symptom in a highly diluted and imaginably empowered form; the symptom itself transformed into a *daimon* or a symbol. This transformation has a deep and healing significance. When we touch on this border, “the realm of subtle bodies comes to life again ... the physical and the psychic are once more blended” (CW 12, §394).

If we do this we are “making soul”, creating the opportunity, opening the *kairos* through which the world can be re-imagined. This is epiphany, the psychic connection at the heart of the sacred cosmos and the ritual landscape. It is also the central concern of all divinatory systems and of the act of divination itself: to move through the shadow of the literal situation towards a psycho-active and transformative force which is demanding access to consciousness.