

Pacifica Graduate Institute

Mythopoetic Expression (MS 624)

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### Pagan Awakening

“There are Gods in our ideas.”  
(James Hillman)

I invite you to an amalgam of metaphors and analogies gathered from the Shepherd/Sheep motif combined with insights and intuitions that arise from the imaginative engagement that creates and also deconstructs and reconstructs concepts. The Shepherd/Sheep motif contains stories that unfold and change over time in different ways in different times. Through symbols/images accessible to us in the archetypal realm it may reintegrate our instinctual animal nature. Moreover, I believe we can go beyond the existing norms of mythology itself by re-imagining and reversing oppressive models towards a creative awakening of mythopoesis, a freedom *within*. With better words by Harry Slochower:

Mytho-*poesis* (from the Greek *poiein*, meaning to make, to create) *re-creates* the ancient stories. And, while mythology presents its stories as if they actually took place, mythopoesis transposes them to a symbolic meaning. Indeed, *the mythopoeic works examined in the study arose when the literal account of the legend could no longer be accepted. They arose in periods of crisis, of cultural transition, when faith in the authoritative structure was waning. It is at this juncture that our great prophets and artists would redeem the values of the past and present in their symbolic form, transposing their historic transitoriness into permanent promises. (Mythopoesis 15)*

Rushing towards the abyss of the “pastoral care” ideal of the Shepherd/Sheep motif, I perceive caution for the gigantic duties of perfectionism, ego-roles and claustrophobic sense of non freedom that this motif has left us – not to say, the devastation it may bring to our psyche. The word “devastation,” brings to my mind, the idea of landscapes; and it is from this initial idea that I would like to invite you to imagine (as in an experimental imaginative laboratory), how the landscape of the Shepherd/Sheep looks. Take some time to visualize this landscape.

Does your image have green fields, rolling hills, and scattered clumps of trees, but very little in the way of what is wild? Now, if we think about the domestication of livestock – sheep, goats and cattle – we can see it as a major step by human beings in the process of transforming the natural landscape, from a place considered wilderness, to one considered civilized, or at least semi-civilized. Livestock grazing required vast open landscapes of grasslands. We see it as safe, hospitable, and easily transversed. And with delicious grass to be eaten! To achieve the “perfect” grazing landscape, fire was, and is still used to clear away wilderness and shrub lands, which are further maintained and increased by the incessant nibbling of sheep, goats, and cattle. This constant technique of grazing, after all, is a way to eat away at the grasslands leading to exhausted and devastated soils. This tradition has been with us for so long, and it makes me think that our sheep/shepherd motif has already rested in our grass for too much time, and has eaten away and weakened our wild imagination. Does this imply a loss of the invigorating spirit of wildness? A devastation to our souls?

The landscape of livestock grazing is called the “pastoral.” This is a landscape (landsteak) between that of the wilderness of the forest, and the cultivation of agricultural

land, as well as the civilized environs of town and city. The Shepherd/Sheep motif came to represent the idyllic balance between the forces of wilderness and civilization.

However, what is viewed as an ideal balance, is actually depleted soils without the natural rejuvenation. In addition, do we also became dumb and blind meek creatures (without the divine blindness of Tiresias) following each other over a cliff to our doom?

As Derrida says, “abstract notions always hide a sensible figure” (“White Mythology,” Margins 210). If we go back to Greek Mythology we find the figure of Pan, who was also a Shepherd’s god. Ironically, as it is, the Shepherd’s god was once a sure-footed, wild, smelly, frenzied, and very instinctive creature in his noisy and musically goatish world.

To discuss Pan, we are required to descend into the cave where he lives. And it seems, he is also one of those gods, who live repressed in our obscure and hidden psyche. In digging into Pan’s landscape through James Hillman’s words, we find: “His original place, Arcadia, is both a physical and psychic location. The “caves obscure” where he could be encountered (“The Orphic Hymn to Pan”) were expanded upon by the Neoplatonists as the material recesses where impulse resides, the dark holes of the psyche whence desire and panic arise” (Pan and Nightmare 17).

The word, “Arcadia,” has classically represented a landscape with both the qualities of freedom, (freedom from both the fear of the wilderness, as well as from the equally dangerous corruption of the city), and innocence. Perhaps we see it in another way, as a place and quality of pseudo-innocence limited in its spontaneity. It is an unfortunate result of our addiction to clear away the wilderness, which is where our true innocence and freedom arise. In the arcadian landscape, we have reduced Pan to a sick,

masturbating, raping devil. Does this god need our help to rejuvenate the glory of his wildness into our lives?

We, as descendents of Pan, still require evocative places with goatish longings. Yet, the desire for freedom followed by the obsession for security to save us from the fear of wilderness remains. Furthermore, Pan brings panic! Repress it! How could we not repress it? How could it be possible to “allow” to be raped by panic, masturbation and madness expression of the goat-God Pan? We are asked and “educated” to repress those areas of our lives that lie hidden and obscure within. We keep going, automatically, like good meek sheep, as the “perfect” self-centered egos of christian-ism shepherding. Ironically, we no longer know what we are afraid of. We become anxious with the absence of a specific object to fear. Then, the obsession for security arises and we shut down the body’s instinctive intelligence, not watching the puzzle: Pan is sick! Maybe a “psychological release” is needed here (acknowledging that we have had *100 years of psychotherapy and the world is getting worse!*):

The more susceptible we are to instinctual panic, the less effective our paranoid systems. Further, as first corollary, the dissolution of any paranoid system will release panic. [...] any complex that brings on panic is the *via regia* for dismantling paranoid defenses. This is the therapeutic way of fear. It leads out of the city walls and into open country, Pan’s country. (37)

Instinct? I suggest making another experiment, another imaginative laboratory. Take a moment to bring your imagination to Sheep/Shepherd’s tools. Just imagine, or smell.

\_ “Did you forget the dogs?”

\_ “G-o-d-s?”

\_ “s. -d-o-G.”

The dogs come together, and it is easy to forget them! But, yes, they go all the way along the borderlines -- of fear? It seems fear is rooted in our instincts of human nature, and seen very negatively in our culture, we even try not to admit its presence. Lets play: the dogs must play with Pan. "Play" in David Miller's sense of play is to give and to take, neither too little nor too much, neither too tight nor too loose. The dogs must "play" at the edge of the sheep's panic. Too much and the sheep would flee, dispersing the unity of the flock and any control the shepherd would have over them. But if there were no threat on the part of the dogs, how difficult it would be to motivate the herd! (Napoleon, who knew how to manipulate the masses, said that only two things motivate people: self-interest and fear). (*Obviously not a lover!*) The shepherd must lead the flock; he cannot do so without the threat of some sort of dangerous influence from the outside. I suspect that this play with fear, with perhaps panic, follows the shepherd/sheep motif all the way down. Is not the minister the one who lead his congregation "not into temptation" from the wolf or evil? Is the dog to the minister his words? His sermon? Is it a barking and nipping from the pulpit, exhorting his flock to do this or that, go this way or that way? Do the sheep learn from the teeth of dogs?

Ok. If too tight, let's loosen it up a bit. Can you smell Pan as an imaginal figure, and instinctual as an imaginal force? Infernal images seek embodiment, as the souls of Hades give voice to our fantasies. James Hillman says: "To be fearless, without anxieties, without dread, invulnerable to panic, would mean loss of instinct, loss of connection with Pan" (37). Do we want to be instinctive? Compulsive? Undifferentiated? Unreflective? Instinct is a complex challenge! Some regard instinct as, "a primordial intelligence knowing more about life than we can ever learn", others take it as the "opposite of

intelligence, something mechanical, archaic, and without any possibility for transformation” (28).

A good metaphor to this complexity is masturbation. Pan invented masturbation (*there are gods in our ideas!*). Being goatish: masturbation is a way of engaging nature, in our concrete bodies, “in here”, in our nature, with self-conscious creativity:

By intensifying interiority with joy – and with conflict and shame – and by vivifying fantasy, masturbation, which has no purpose for species or society, yet brings genital pleasure, fantasy, and conflict to the individual as psychic subject. It sexualizes fantasy, brings body to mind, intensifies the experience of conscience and confirms the powerful reality of the introverted psyche – was it not invented for the solitary shepherd piping through the empty spaces of our inscapes and who reappears when we are thrown into solitude? By constellating Pan, masturbation brings nature’s urgency and complexity back into the *opus contra naturam* of soul-making. (43)

Pan is a monster, and therefore does not exist in the natural world; yet, his nature may be very present as an imaginal force. By working with imagination, we may copulate with nature within, and awaken instinct as an imaginal force. To quote James Hillman again:

The imaginal is never more vivid than when we are connected with it instinctually. The world alive is of course animism. That this living world is divine and imaged by different Gods with attributes and characteristics is polytheistic pantheism. That fear, dread, horror are natural is wisdom. In Whitehead’s term “nature alive” means Pan, and panic flings open a door into this reality. (38)

Pan turns nature into instinct. Pan brings body; thus is a physical attentiveness into an imaginative life transforming an otherwise impersonal experience into a personal experience. The instinctual nature desires fantasies to make it aware of itself, and once

the body is connected, the imaginative life is more alive. Finally, the “in here” and the “out there” are in search of soul awareness of how, when, and what to do – instinctively!

Fear and desire.

Pan’s music recalls musing fantasies

in concrete and shaped instinctive nature.

Reflecting (in) H E A R T Fleeing (out)

eyes to listen,

ears to see,

nose to contact,

teeth to engage,

feet to unearth.

The dogs, ancient figures and guardians of the underworld, may help us to smell it more closely- such long noses, they have. “The dog has two hundred and twenty million cells with which to smell, whereas we have only five million. [...]. This to say, the psychological “nose” may help us to get some intuition and instinct, some soul and body, into our thinking and feeling.” (Christs 73) To David Miller, nose is a wonderful thing to this postmodern moment of wits defeat. Noses:

Containing little coils of arteries, duct and blood vessels, as it does, it raises to body temperature the air that give us life, moistening on the cilia hairs of the soft, mucous membrane a *spiritus* from which we would otherwise die a death of airy pneumonia. As a result of its circuitous passages, the nose enables us to smell inhaled breath, but not noxious exhaled odors of our own personal-ego breathings. It lets the fluids pass by way of paranasal sinuses, with which it also connects to our tear’s lacrimal ducts. Its olfactory receptors, unlike the buds of taste which only handle four senses – salt, sweet, sour, and bitter – detect innumerable odors, thereby differentiating the infinity which not only taste, but also sight, touch, and hearing confuse. In short, the nose warms and moistens that which gives us life, bringing it in and down, individuating spirit into soul by way of body. Warming

the cold, and moistening the dry! – perhaps this is what the clown knows, what his nose wants of us. (80)

Clowns?

Clowns meaning humor

(including ennui, rage, and depression)

and wits

(including fantasy, imagination, memory, intuition)!

Humor together with wits balances terror and connects

body,

soul,

beauty,

and eros.

logos/heart.

To moisten what is dry and to warm what is cold.

Al'che.mis'ti-cal

If we bring those two functions of the actual nose to our world we would raise again humor and wits to our inner world. But watch out! Enrique Pardo, director of The Alchemical Theatre, making archetypal riddles in baroque solutions of Pantheatre, adds some salt to this idea. To him, the clown may also be an escape, “a get-a-way through protective infantilism, a seductive manner of failing that ‘wins’ the audience ‘over’. This is a refuge in humility which is too often linked with shame and shyness. It is a humility that can impede access to the imaginal.” Moreover, the antidote, he says, is obviously, *arrogance* -- indispensable to the actor:

Theatre that think in terms of spiritual initiation too often damage the whole ego complex in their onslaughts against the so-called individualistic ego. Arrogance is



an essential aspect of the alchemical oratory – “arrogare” means to “claim for oneself”, it should be seen as a rogatory gesture of prayer. “Rogare” also means “to pray”. This is not arrogance as *hubris*, a Promethean defiance of the Gods, thinking one can outwit them, but rather the graceful self-composure necessary to ‘face’ the Gods, to accept their inspiration and to ‘act’ on it. Humility bows our faces to the dust, the *humus*, so that we cannot image the Gods. (“Inspiration, Eros and Error” 175)

This is good salt! No pseudo-innocence here! Arrogance lifts the nose a bit, so that, the soft round red-nose is still round – “*it is a rounding of that which is straight!*” David Miller asks: “What do these moistures and warmings of my life smell like? There may be soul’s intuition waiting for us in these passions: something rude and real, but not quite literal. Some odor! [...] Could it become our body’s intuition of soul’s meaning? Something smelled! (Christis 101).

Once smelled, lets face it! David Miller completes:

Facing the clown within helps us to expect that – grotesquely, erotically, physically, sensually, mortally, painfully, violently, and passionately – things may well go white in our lives. But if we were to stay with that white, whatever it may be, facing it firmly, as it were, then we might begin to sense in that very experience a little round redness surfacing out of the depths: as if, in the middle of the white, there were a small sunrise! (103)

Facing this perspective it may recover our wits bringing, among other gods, Eros -- erotic, physically engaged, and carrying *logos* sensually. Eros? Love? And *logos*. I add: vitality of *heart*, in its double beat – real personal feeling (opposites struggling together in intimacy, not excluding bleeding hearts) and the place of imagining (display revealed!). In polytheism all things are full of gods, and I suggest not to leave the achievements of the embodied body-soul we are already here with, but to *extend* it. Doing this, we are also giving “cheers” to polytheism: adding, not excluding; not killing Pan and arising Love; but giving space to both (and others), *playing* with them. If Love with the

embodied body-soul in body is acceptable, then we may go on in our imaginative quest: how can we bond Pan-Eros and deliver them into this cynical world in the direction of love and wilderness? By reintegrating the instinctual animal nature making mythopoesis!

We can have this idea at work in the art of Pompeii. Even though we bombed Pompeii in 1944 (not satisfied with the ferocious eruption), the mythic Pompeii is still alive, as if it is asking us to be touched by the images, to act and to see through it with mythopoetic expression. No nostalgia, nor *mimesis*! But acting, re-creating, transposing, and making stories. Freedom within! Expressing it! Even in failure -- there is failure's logic too! Connecting images to our life is a divine work. As to say: "To tell what it [the soul's immortality] really is would be a theme for a divine and a very long discourse; what it resembles, however, may be expressed more briefly and in human language." (Plato, Phaedrus 246)

Yes, my nose smells Life in Pompeii. A metaphor to be articulated.

The images of life in Pompeii are full of imaginative expressions. Sex and Love. Poignant. Those qualities are expressed by heart in the daily life: lamps, dishes, amphora, mirrors, vases, sculptures, walls, even drinking bowls for birds, are all painted with erotic scenes. Bizarre figures such as Priapus, Stupidus, Sanniones, Moriones, Dancing dwarfs, all had their spaces in the passion of ideas at the busy life of Pompeii. No potatoes, but mushrooms cooked in honey! Wool, wine, jewelry, baths, AND roses.

Ideas. This paper remains unfinished. And I am cheering and emptying my cup. For you I disclose the fullness of letting GO, for-GETTING.

Gooaaaalllllllllllllllllllll !

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**Class Notes.**

