

Earth Wisdom: Not Plato's Preformed Forms up in the Sky

I. Drama and Reflexive Change

My friend Andy HARMON took over my class on models of therapy today, and talked about Carl Gustav JUNG's notion of the Shadow. Andy did not follow JUNG all that closely, because his interest is in the meta-order undergirding drama. What makes any story, play, novel, 'dramatic'? This is the question Andy has been exploring, out of his experience as a theatre director, and latterly out of his experience using the insights of drama to help leaders facilitate change in organisations. Andy has noticed that the process of change a leader tries to instigate in a moribund organisation can be represented by the dramatic story line of the hero or heroine's journey of change.

Andy has drawn on JUNG's follower Joseph CAMPBELL, and ARISTOTLE, but has gone in an existential direction that makes his account of drama close to what I call the 'Dæmonic'. The Dæmonic works dramatically; and as Andy stresses, drama is not just about clashes, or protagonist-antagonist battling, but is really concerned with the clashing of forces that brings about change. This is the whole thrust of the Dæmonic: to bring about change.

If Eros is about 'natural' growth, unfolding, development, flowering, all of which fall under Saint ANTHONY's famous dictum: "Become what you [already, latently] are", then the Dæmonic works through conflict to bring about dramatic and world-shaking change, the ultimate of which is the redemption of the entire world process, from start to finish. The Dæmonic is full of tension, pressure, edginess. It is like the storm that builds energy, and then explodes. But at the end of the storm, says BLACK ELK, is released the healing rain.

The paradox of the Dæmonic, and this holds for drama as Andy nuances JUNG and ARISTOTLE into a more existential direction, is twofold: confrontation with the External brings about internal change; confrontation with the Internal brings about external change.

Always these two, in dramatic stories about the journey of change, happen at once. We can restate these two as follows: the pressure of the world changes you, so you can put pressure on the world to change it.

Or put it like this: the pressure exerted by the Dæmonic breaks and remakes you, but in doing this it actually empowers you with its terrible power, so you can change the world.

The storm attacks you, to rid you of your Lie. This grounds the storm in you, so that with its revelation, its power, its truth, you can rid the world of its Lie.

I wrote of this paradox in speaking of the warrior: the warrior must fight and overcome himself if he is to fight and overcome the world.

But I added the other point of the paradox in my second statement on Flamenco: when you fight the Dæmonic on the rim, even if it destroys you, in this fight you assimilate the properties and energy of the Dæmonic, and therefore your resurrection is to become like what you fought.

Or: what you fight as Dæmonic becomes your power as a fighter. He who is wounded by the Dæmonic is raised from that wounding as Dæmonic.

Do you understand this paradox? It is make or break for those who live the way of the Dæmonic. It is the secret of the drama that existentially blesses and curses, but dynamises, their lives, their deeds, on the ground, in this world.

II. Wisdom's Presence and Form

But in Andy's presentation, which was lively and highly participant, I was suddenly given to understand the presence of a more feminine wisdom that accompanies the Dæmonic. This realisation is to do with the mystery I think JUNG was trying to articulate, but failed. I can barely find words for what I saw clearly, suddenly. The example that conjured it up had to do with the acceptance of our Shadow. But other cases could illustrate the same point. What hit me, out of the blue, was something like this.

Accepting the Shadow is not simply a choice we make, to do it or not do it. The way it came to me was: accepting the Shadow is not arbitrary, but accords with some inner necessity that is deeply lodged. This then became: a wisdom latent in life guides our 'necessary' developmental steps, if we will cooperate with it. Something knows better than our conscious mind or conscious will that we need to

accept the Shadow, or we will not grow, not move on to the next stage of the journey. What is this mysterious something? I call it 'wisdom'. I think JUNG called it by a plethora of names, because it has no name really: sometimes he called it the 'Unconscious', sometimes he called it the 'Psyche', sometimes he called it the 'Self' (my least favourite name for it). This mysteriousness is not literally our self, our psyche, our unconscious, because it is not 'our' anything. It is 'other' to us, feels uncanny as it draws nearer to us, and retains a certain alien quality of something not reducible to us, yet working through us. 'Wisdom' is my name for it, and my other name is 'providence'. It is not ours, but it is rather a gift offered to us, and in some sense it does indeed approach us from the inside, not from the outside. The Dæmonic always hits us from the External; it is the Radically Other, and it is always like this whether coming at us as the Dæmonic God pure and unadulterated, or working through events in the world. Friedrich NIETZSCHE was speaking in Dæmonic voice when he said: "the world is deep."

But the wisdom I am trying to invoke here is different. It retains an 'interiority', whether it works deep within one person's psyche in that psyche's deepest unconscious and rises to consciousness from that hidden cave far down in the Earth or works between several persons as something they share in culture, like a story. This wisdom I am trying to evoke is like the women spinning and weaving at the loom, ravelling and unravelling and re-ravelling the threads of our fate, in so far as this fate guides the soul in the steps she takes to let go of much and go through much in order to step into new terrain.

There is a natural and organic necessity in certain promptings from the soul, and this too is illustrated in story and narrative, both that told by the campfire in the tipi during long winter nights, and that which is lived and gets built into the fabric of our lives.

As with the wisdom that lies behind the 'necessity' for facing our Shadow, so in further developmental steps beyond the Shadow, that necessity guides if we will listen to it, respect it, and in every manner possible, cooperate with it. If we deny this inbuilt wisdom that seems to know things the conscious mind and conscious will, the whole conscious ego structure, cannot know or ever find out, then we remain high and dry in that wasteland of the ego. But if we simply give in to the otherness and alienness of the wisdom, reifying it as an impersonal force to which we bow down like a superstitious 'god' – and this was JUNG's own personal reaction, which led him to many mistakes in understanding and formulation – then we drown in its deep waters, becoming psychotic, mad as a hatter, crazy as a

coot: a raving lunatic. There is, as JUNG argued, an in-between point, where the soul has one foot deep down in the water and another foot up on dry land, and thus can 'use' the water to nourish the famished deserts of existence. A part of this nourishing effect is the 'weaving things for good' that this wisdom does via the soul's receptivity to wisdom's promptings.

Wisdom does not want to take us over, bully us, direct us like puppets on a string. Wisdom does not want to play 'god'. JUNG overplayed this wisdom I am describing with his somewhat Platonic, and certainly pompous, theory of 'archetypes'. The wisdom I am alluding to here is more elusive and allusive than that. Concealed and revealed at once. Subtle. In shadows, in dark corners, in caves, in pools, in lakes, in the deep dark sea. She has no desire to be worshipped, reified, overdramatized, or anything of that pretentious Germanic-metaphysical nature. Wisdom is retiring, wisdom is a helper, a friend, a mentor, a good companion. The uncanny feeling you have when alone that you are not alone comes from Wisdom being there, with you. She is the 'being with', not just the 'within'. Even when within you, she is in fact with you, which is why her fruits prompt you and move you to share her life-energy with other people, creatures, things. She is hidden, because she is humble, not grandiose. Of all the misdescriptions of her in the world, the Platonic and the Germanic-metaphysical are the very worst. PLATO makes her too heavenly, a woman without breasts, without vagina and womb, without feet and hands; a pale star in the sky, an ethereal perfection, from which everything that happens on the ground is but a falling away, an imperfect copy, a merest faint reflection, or poor echo. This could not be more wrong as an account of wisdom. Or the Germanic-metaphysical bent, from which JUNG suffers, is to make wisdom a tin pot dictator, an overblown, pompous and pretentious god. In fact, JUNG's Gnostic god, the self as god and the unconscious as the god's temple, is precisely a false development of wisdom into delusive, mad and deadly territory. The lone genius, in his tower by the lake: a more false representation of wisdom is hard to find. JUNG was so close and so far away. JUNG could not finish what he began. He lost the plot. He lost his way. He did not listen to and cooperate with the wisdom whispering in his soul, as she does in every human soul.

III. Wisdom within and without

Two things, all too briefly described, on which to end. First, the nourishing of our more superficial psychology from the deeper places where wisdom hides and lives helps us respond to wisdom's sense of inner necessity, or inner prompting, so we can be guided – not dictated to or drowned in a wave – towards new terrain of the soul, new steps on the journey, in which soul and heart go through existence on the ground, together. What are archetypes? I think the heart makes the steps. But the soul supplies something vital to this: the soul's wisdom points those steps in a 'wise' direction, along a 'wise' path, even into tangles and complications, which can get rough and be ugly, that are 'necessary' for our growth in the journey on the road. What JUNG termed archetypes are figures and constellations of meaning we meet in our soul growth on this road. They fill out the story. Indeed, I see this wisdom that is a providence going with the world on its vast track, like a caravan crossing a wilderness, as not only the weaver, but also the storyteller. Certain characters and certain constellations between them, certain situations are 'archetypal', because they are met with whenever and wherever the soul is led by her mentor, her guide, her helping companion, wisdom. The soul is a fountainhead of stories, and archetypes are simply hard-wired and recurring patterns of meaning in the stream or river of meaning that constitutes the story of our life in total. The heart cannot be taken over by, and live out, these archetypal elements in the soul's story-telling; that is not how it works. The stories do not take over and dictate like gods inflating our poor human flesh, with all its fallibility, fragility, vulnerability. JUNG never found the medium place in the soul between water and land; but equally, he never realised how stories work, as they are told to the heart. Stories do not dictate, they encourage; they tell us we are on the right track. Yes, they do prompt steps we actually take – but these steps are often inner, and thus more to do with clearing the inner vessel, making it a better receptacle to mediate wisdom; they are not the existential steps the heart takes in the arena of the Dæmonic. But stories are like the Biblical description of a real wife: the good friend, the support and help, the 'enabler', as E. Graham HOWE, my mentor, called the soul's wisdom. Stories facilitate, enrich and add something vital to the steps that are most existential and of the heart. Such stories cannot take the place of our actual steps, but in encouraging us that we are on track, they afford a mysterious blessing. And naturally, they benefit us with much wisdom. And perhaps even in the throes of the life and death battle on the rim, in

the arena of the Dæmonic, the beautiful dark woman, who is wisdom is there, whispering some helpful encouragement.

Whether we take this help is up to us, and so it does not absolve us of personal responsibility, either in the soul or in the heart. The notion that the heart simply 'lives out' an archetypal story is the fallacy behind speaking of, for example, the 'inner warrior' as an archetype. The warrior appears in the stories of the soul because he is so crucial to the destiny of the world; but only the heart, by carrying a weight and bearing a pain, can perform the existential action of a warrior.

So, archetypes are not the little Aryan gods that JUNG made them out to be. For him they replaced his relationship, as person and as heart, with the Dæmonic God radically Other to him, as to all of Creation. JUNG fled the father, and by doing that, turned the mysterious soul friend, wise, healing, philanthropic (a lover of humanity), into some ghastly 'great mother'. Wisdom is more humble, fey, retiring, than that monstrous nonsense to which JUNG more and more subscribed. The wisdom I am trying to clear a space for here is Taoism's 'spirit of the valley', the dark feminine that always lies low, and never pushes itself up, or pushes itself forward. PLATO denies this wisdom its true 'life' on Earth, while the Germanic-metaphysical tradition denies wisdom her real power, which is ability to be the 'low laying' mystery, by absurdly blowing up her power in the wrong way, like a balloon that needs to be popped.

Second, the wisdom woman, who dwells in, and will come forth from, our soul is earthy, not heavenly. She is of the Earth, even if she came from the sky. This is the final point about her nature I want to make. I need to circle round this, until the core is reached.

Though there is a sort of archetypal meta-structure that wisdom always weaves, which appears in her stories whenever and wherever she tells them, this meta-structure is not a reflection here below of some heavenly preformed set of patterns in the sky. Those Platonic patterns are too rigid, too fixed, for all eternity. Moreover, they cast what happens 'below' in a purely negative light, regarding matter and time as 'degenerations' from the 'spiritual perfection' of form that exists forever only above. But I see wisdom as all about matter and time. Her dynamic is on the ground, committed to the ground, and thus she tacitly values below more than above. She is the helper and companion, the facilitator and enabler, in the journey through time, on the ground. She is the little mother of what is coming to birth through our soul, and thus she is pushing us in our journey, not wanting us to be cut-off from that journey – as happens to people of the ego.

But this has a stunning implication. Thus, the meta-structure in wisdom, though it has certain constants in it, is not defined essentially by those constants; its essence is caught in a word that came to me, as the accompaniment of ‘necessity’: ‘suppleness’. In short, wisdom does not simply impose constants, top-down, from above on the below. Rather, dwelling deep down in the below, being by nature its ‘lowliness’ (no grandiosity or omnipotence of a narcissistic kind), wisdom is supple and adapts constantly to changes in circumstance, in situation, in context. You could say of this – and I know it sounds paradoxical – wisdom is so latent it does not even exist until it is constellated in the particular, in the complex, in the changing, on the ground. Wisdom only comes into real existence, only becomes crystallised, in the concrete, the here and now, the ambiguous and messy specificity of this person, this group, this culture, this stage in the journey – not any other. Wisdom is mainly, in her dynamic, supple, adaptable, different in different settings. She must not be a boss and a dictator. It was part of JUNG’s pathology that he saw in wisdom only the constants, not the suppleness always changing, always different, always meeting the new with the new. Yes, the constants exist, and if it helps you to call them ‘archetypes’, fine; but wisdom is not mainly archetypal, in either the Platonic or the Germanic-metaphysical sense. Wisdom is fluid. Wisdom is about the particular, the complex, the messy, the changing. Wisdom is the water in mud that grows the lotus, or the rose. Yes, of course, wisdom’s weaving of story is always the old themes, but always in genuinely multiple and new embodiments.

But this leads to the most surprising conclusion. Wisdom is herself on a journey, wisdom herself is changing.

The water in the valley is what I have here tried, all too imperfectly, to point to, not box in.

The Celtic goddesses of sex and fertility, of war, of death and rebirth, the ‘dark feminine’, this is the wisdom I respect, and am not afraid to honour with my inadequate words.

Jamie MORAN was born in the United States of America (USA), of Red Indian and Celtic descent, but he married and now works in England. At 22, he converted from Tibetan Buddhism to Russian Orthodox Christianity; he works as a therapist and senior lecturer on counselling and psychology at a university in London. He is writing a novel on the conflict between settlers and indigenous peoples in the American West of the XIXth century, and he is a sub-chief in the Cante Tinze (Brave Hearts) Warrior Society of the Oglala Lakota (Sioux) at Pine Ridge, South Dakota. His email address is J.Moran@roehampton.ac.uk.

Jennifer STILES

United together in Praise (Psalm 148)

Psalm 148 is an imperative hymn seeking to unite Heaven and Earth in praising the name of the Lord. Its two-part structure reinforces the psalm’s message of unity: all creation, heavenly and earthly, is called to praise the Lord. Psalm 148 does not conform to an anthropocentric worldview. Instead, it unites Creation in a common task, joining together in a harmony of praise for its exalted Creator.

(v1) Hallelujah!¹

*Praise the Lord: from the heavens,
praise Him in the heights.*

(v2) *Praise Him, all His angels,
praise Him, all His hosts.*³

(v3) *Praise Him, sun and moon,
praise Him, all the stars of light.*⁴

(v4) *Praise Him, heavens of heavens,⁵
and waters that are above the heavens.*

1 This phrase – composed of a Piel, Imperative, 2nd, masculine, plural verb ללה and proper noun – can be translated into English as “praise ye Yah” (BROWN Francis – DRIVER S. R. – BRIGGS Charles. 219. 238). Here it stands as “Hallelujah”, a term familiar to the prescribed audience. The Hebrew verb-root ללה carries the meaning of “shine, be boastful, praise,” though in the Piel form and within the formula of worship, “praise” is the thrust of the meaning. (BROWN Francis – DRIVER S. R. – BRIGGS Charles. 237–238.)

2 The personal name of God [יהוה] or “the proper name of the God of Israel” (BROWN Francis – DRIVER S. R. – BRIGGS Charles. 217).

3 The *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* Hebrew text contains a note on this verse. Likewise, ALLEN writes, “The plural in 103,21 supports Q” (ALLEN Leslie C. 312). In light of the textual note and cross-referencing Psalm 103, האבצ is here translated “hosts”.

4 The *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* Hebrew text contains a note on this verse. This expression is a *hapax legomenon* (appearing only once in the Bible), which the LXX interprets as indicating “stars and light” (ALLEN Leslie C. 353).

5 The phrase “heavens of heavens” indicates an upper, raised region of the World associated with the divine realm (SEYBOLD Klaus – DUNPHY R. Graeme, *Introducing the Psalms*. Edinburgh, 1990. 182.).