

THE MYTHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE
AND THE UNFOLDING OF THE DIVINE LIFE

RUNNING HEAD: Mythological Perspective

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ABSTRACT

In this paper I discuss the way of the heart, indicating that it involves coming to terms with shadow values. I begin with observations on talks given by Marion Woodman and Robert Johnson. I then discuss myth as revelation of a divine life, following a statement made by Jung in his autobiography. Myth has traditionally played several important functions for society, including describing a meaningful cosmology, relating consciousness to the awe and mystery of life, supporting a moral order and guiding people psychologically in their quest for knowledge. The two creation myths of Genesis are the two most significant myths of the Western psyche. During the Middle-ages, the fall and redemption of humankind through Jesus Christ became the major guiding myth. Today we have no myth unless one takes science and technology driven by consumerism as our guiding principle. I briefly discuss Tolkein's *The Lord of the Rings*, seeing it as indicative of a new myth with the need to integrate qualities of light and darkness. I then discuss Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri*, which I see as the most important visionary revelation of our time and the embodiment of a new guiding myth. What is essential today is the assimilation of the major opposites in life, including dark shadow values, without losing one's connection to our higher cultural attainment and maintaining one's own identity. The goal of life is to become increasingly conscious of the opposites in the Godhead while becoming a vessel for divine conflict.

"Myth is the revelation of the divine life in man." C. G. Jung

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Introduction

I recently attended a talk by Robert Johnson at a conference dedicated to Marion Woodman. Robert Johnson is an elderly Jungian Analyst, who used to visit the Ashram and Auroville over a number of years. In fact, I met him the first year he visited the Ashram, sometime in 1972 or 1973. I invited him into my room and he eventually came in although I felt that I pushed him too hard. He was very shy and still claims to be shy, although he is, he said at the talk, "working on my extraverted side." He liked coming to India because he experienced the warmth and graciousness of Indian people. He refers to himself as an introverted feeling type person, which is also the way he experienced Indians. He sees India as being a culture that is essentially introverted and feeling, and presumably of an intuitive nature.

The Way of the Heart

His presentation was entitled "The Nobility of the Feeling Function." In case you are not familiar with Jungian jargon, the feeling function does not refer to emotions or feelings but is evaluative in nature and says "I like or I don't like" something. Knowledge comes through feeling, especially with introverted feeling, like Sri Aurobindo explains the functioning of the psychic being. I would call this focus the way of the heart (Exhibit 1). Marion Woodman, a popular Canadian Jungian Analyst and champion of the feminine principle, especially the 'Black Madonna', the body and feeling, possibly in a more extraverted way than Robert Johnson, recounted a dream she had when she was studying to be a Jungian

Analyst. She walked up a set of winding stairs in Winchester Cathedral in London, and opened the door to the beautiful singing of a man seated at the organ. She joined in the singing. The following year she met Robert Johnson and they began to attend conferences and make presentations at the same time over the next several years. She exclaimed to him on their first meeting "you are the man in my dream!" She said they have been metaphorically singing together ever since.

I dare say it has been an important aspect of each of their personal myths. This is the way of the heart. Woodman claims that her life underwent a major change many years ago while she was in India. In fact she was on her way down to the Sri Aurobindo Ashram but events transpired including involvement in a Tantric ritual that made her change her mind. As Don Juan, the Yaqui sorcerer and guide of Carlos Castaneda (1968) says: "...there is only the traveling on paths that have heart, on any path that may have heart." That is what is essential.

A Canadian woman in her late middle ages dreamt that land is now being reclaimed to enlarge the bay. When I heard that dream the first thing that came to my mind was the end of Goethe's Faust, where, essentially the opposite took place, land was re-claimed [cleared] for the sake of development and, although Philemon and Baucis were told they could stay, in fact, their land was reclaimed as well. In addition to land clearing, in Faust, there is much praise given to the active man. Philemon and Baucis was a humble old couple who, in Ancient

Greece, welcomed the Gods, without knowing who they were. Goethe lived in the Age of Reason just prior to the coming of the Industrial Age in the West and his rendition of Faust reflects that time in history.

Today, of course, we live in a different time and the task, at least for some of us in the second half of life is to open up to the Gods and Goddesses or the archetypes of the Collective Unconscious, and reclaim the land in order to extend the area of the bay. Jung had the following words inscribed on the lintel of his doorway, *REPENTENCE OF FAUST, REDEMPTION OF PHILEMON*. This refers to the Philemon-like humility needed to welcome the gods and goddesses, to make a connection to the archetypal worlds and the myth making psyche.

Before I go any further, I feel a need to point out that there is considerable darkness and ignorance in the “way of the heart”. In this path one meets individual and culturally repressed aspects of the psyche that need to be assimilated to consciousness. It comes, in other words, with shadow, as indicated in the black portion of the image of the heart I showed you earlier (Exhibit 1). By way of illustration a sophisticated middle-aged German woman recently told me this dream.

“I am living in a city, and identify with the privileged people. There is also a servant class, who are there to serve the privileged. They felt that they were not treated equally. Eventually, they decided to rebel and stop working, perhaps even to the point of killing the dominating privileged people. I woke up in a fearful start.”

A dream such as this is, of course, primarily meant for the woman herself, although there is a message for the collective as well. It suggests that the servant side of the psyche, the side that lives close to the earth and the natural mind, is being used and dominated by her main way of functioning, whatever that may be. In fact, I have no idea what this refers to in the case of this particular woman. But, in principle, it could be something like the natural religious mind being organized for the sake of spiritual prestige, or to add to her bank of ideas or idealism. Or, perhaps, it means using the practical intellect to organize a money making service-venture that takes her into an area where she is ill-prepared and ill-suited.

From a psychological perspective, her actual task is to become conscious of the part of the psyche represented by the servant values and to befriend it. Otherwise it will take over her psyche in an *enantiodromia* [change into the opposite] and her main cultural attitude to life will be repressed. That is generally what it means to kill in a dream. Here it is a potential killing of the ego and conscious values. It is possible that she will then experience a self-critical, self destructive voice, severe depression and a sense of worthlessness, which, in fact, she confided in me, is often the case. The main point to remember here is that when a shadow aspect of the psyche is charged with energy, it wants to be assimilated to consciousness on its terms. The conscious ego needs to assimilate these new values in a reasonable way without totally losing its own standpoint.

Myth as Revelation of a Divine Life

In Jung's (1965, p. 340) autobiography, he wrote "For it is not that "God" is a myth, but that MYTH IS THE REVELATION OF A DIVINE LIFE IN MAN." "It is not we who invent myth," he says, "rather it speaks to us as a Word of God" (ibid). The divine life today involves relating to the universal aspect of the psyche, the archetypes, which Jung (1975, p. 130) refers to as the "organs of God". It ultimately means becoming a vessel filled with divine conflict, including both light and shadow.

Myth plays the role of connecting us to the cosmos and universal psyche and, therefore, most deeply to ourselves. Myth which connects us to the cosmos and which satisfies both one's conscious and unconscious nature brings meaning to existence. The 'mythical person' in each of us seeks realization and, says Jung (as reported in Aniela Jaffe, 1989), it demands that we exceed normal limits. To give you an idea what I mean, it involves going beyond the five levels of needs that the psychologist Abraham Maslow always wrote about, survival needs, security needs, social needs, status needs and the need for self-fulfillment. The individuation process, the unfolding of one's unique personality relates one to meaning through what, for want of a better expression, I refer to here as one's personal myth.

From a more collective point of view, from the point of view of the unfolding *zeitgeist*, the spirit of the times, Myth has traditionally had the function of

describing an ordered and meaningful cosmology; relating consciousness to the awe and mystery of life, so that life is experienced as sacred; supporting a moral order with social laws and; guiding people psychologically through life and in their quest for self-knowledge (Joseph Campbell, 2004a). In the West today, generally speaking, there is no discernible collective guiding myth unless you consider it to be the focus on science and technology supported by a consumer oriented society. Indeed, the cosmological function of myth has been replaced by science, the sociological and moral function by a belief that morality belongs to individual judgment, the psychological function with an ego-centered psychology concerned with successful social adaptation, and the numinous experience of life with alcohol and both recreational and pharmaceutical drugs. As a matter of fact, in the present post-modern world, one could say there are several individually defined personal guiding myths, some more or less articulate, others less so.

The great myth of the Western psyche began with the two creation myths of Genesis. In the first story, God created earth and heaven out of an act of separation of Light from Darkness. Separation puts the emphasis on duality, not on unity of being as in the case of India. Then, in the second creation myth, the snake, which tempted Eve, was accursed and Adam and Eve were told they will get to know good and evil because they ate the apple. Eve was told she would bring forth children in great pain and that she was to be attracted to her husband who would rule over her. Adam was to live a life of toil. They were also kept

away from the tree of Life by a cherub with a flaming sword. Thus, there was the birth of the Western patriarchal mind away from the Sumerian tropical garden. In sharp contrast to a patriarchal myth, the mythology of planting people is based more on a unity of life, which is experienced as growing out of death and decay. As a matter of fact the development of the written word and widespread literacy, which promotes mental development and dualistic thinking, first took place amongst these early Hebrew people.

During the Middle-Ages, the guiding cultural myth became the fall and redemption of man, through the second Adam, Jesus Christ (Joseph Campbell, 2004b). This myth informed all life in the Christian world at this time. Because Christ was depicted as all light, the dark side was split off and projected onto the devil. This led to a sharp division of good and evil and considerable repression. This took place during the Age of Pisces, the age of the two fishes. The first fish was Christ and he was all good. The second fish, the shadow or "evil," which entered life around the 1100 CE, initiated an emphasis on ego development, the extraverted world and matter. Today the task is to assimilate the dark side of the Godhead to consciousness, without losing the human values gained during our collective religious and cultural development. For Westerners this requires the development of a wider container for the nature of the manifest Godhead than has hitherto been the case, as well as an understanding of how its collective psyche has been affected-and is still affected by its religious and cultural history.

Mythological development in India has been very different than in the West. The Vedic creation myth, for example, states (Raimundo Paniker, 1977):

“Discovered the connection of Being in Nonbeing.

A crosswire line cut Being from Nonbeing.

What was described above what below?” (Rig Veda X.129)

These lines depict a much more unified field between Being and Nonbeing than the Biblical dualistic myths of Genesis. What I am trying to emphasize here that the myths of a people guide psychological, social and cultural development. In Sri Aurobindo's Savitri, he expresses similar sentiments at the beginning regarding creation as do these lines from the Rig Veda. In fact Savitri is a myth that not only connects people to antiquity, but reflects today's unfolding psyche, a point I will elaborate later. This connection to the cultural past is important. As Auroville, according to its charter, “wants to be a bridge between the past and the future”, in my estimation this means going forward by way of conscious relationship to the past and to our world cultural heritage and our respective mythologies.

When there is need of a new myth, visionary artists turn within and, through their creative powers, they give birth to new guiding story. Today in the West, as I already indicated, there is no real guiding myth and we consequently live in what is referred to as a post-modern somewhat rudderless world. In my estimation, the most interesting of the visionary material that has come out of the West in recent times is Tolkein's The Lord of the Rings. In fact it has a grand mythic

quality to it. I assume you are all acquainted with the story through the movie if not through the books. I won't go into too much detail but only say that it refers to the heroic quest and the need to give up the ring of power, which is only possible for a lowly, humble hobbit to do. Hobbits are beings that live embedded in nature and have a natural religious mind. After an intense struggle between the heroic Hobbit, Frodo, and the greedy Golem, his shadow, the ring of power along with Golem fell into the fire to be consumed. Frodo's, pointing [guiding] index finger was also sacrificed to the fire as it was bitten off by Golem. There was then a marriage of King Aragorn and the Elf woman, Arwen, who sacrificed her immortality for the sake of the love of Aragorn. This earthly wedding of the true king and his soul spelt the doom of all the evil powers. At that time all the good beings also left the earth and it was the time for the rule of man [humankind].

The new ruling consciousness, represented by King Aragorn, is now based on truth and the ruling Eros and feeling values, represented by Queen Arwen, on relationship to the infinite. In other words, the strong dualism of good and evil was over and it is now time for human rule directed by the psychic being, the incarnated soul and the way of the heart. Once one has given up the ring of power and ego ambition, it now becomes the time for Sri Aurobindo's Savitri and the myth of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. The task is to assimilate qualities of both good and evil, without identifying with either.

“Savitri,” writes Sri Aurobindo (1972, p. 265.), “is the Divine Word, daughter of the Sun, Goddess of supreme Truth who comes down and is born to save. Satyavan is the soul carrying the truth of being within himself”, and Aswapathy is Savitri’s father and “the Lord of Tapasya” (ibid). There are two heroic quests depicted in Savitri, the main one being that of Savitri herself and the other being the quest of Aswapathy. For purposes of my presentation tonight, I would say there are both a male quest and a female quest. The quest of the male Aswapathy culminates in knowledge of different levels of being. He realized, however, that that this was not enough in order to fully realize his aspiration, which was to bring saving truth to all of humanity. There was also a need for an incarnation of the daughter of the Supreme Truth. The interrelationship with all life and its transformation is the province of the feminine.

Savitri was able to fulfill her destiny by following Satyavan into the realm of death and ultimately defeating Death through Love. In the process she met her tripartite soul-forces and each of their different animus figures, or distorting and perverted voices. There was the ‘Mother of the seven sorrows’ and her animus depicted by the ‘Man of Sorrows’ who states “To enjoy my agony God built the earth” (Sri Aurobindo 1970a, p. 505). There was the ‘Mother of Might’ and the perverted voice of the ‘dwarf-Titan’ who claims “What God imperfect left, I will complete,” the powerful animus that believes it is the doer and creator, not the Mother (ibid, p. 512). Finally, there was the ‘Mother of Knowledge’ and her perverted animus shadow, “the all-discovering Thought of man,” who whines that

“Human I am, human let me remain” (ibid, p. 520). There is a stubborn aspect of human nature that prefers to stay what it is and not suffer the necessary sacrifice for the Divine realization.

In Aswapathy’s yoga, in addition to gaining knowledge of the different planes of being, he entered the world of Falsehood and faced a “shadowy Will” that is “Immense and alien to our universe, and beings that assume “names divine” and “guide and rule” (Sri Aurobindo, 1970b, pp. 223, 226). During the course of Savitri’s journey, she met different aspects of herself both supremely light and supremely dark. She debated with Death, she met the three aspects of her soul-force and these perverted animus figures. She also experienced the Supreme and His everlasting Day but says, “I climb not to thy everlasting Day, / Even as I have shunned Thy eternal Night” (Sri Aurobindo, 1970c, p. 686). She took the decision to remain on earth in order to lift man’s soul to God and to bring the immortal down onto the earth. She rejected release in Turya in order to bring the unmanifest into manifestation. Savitri, of course, was embodied in the Mother.

One very important, perhaps most important expression of her realization is, as you all know, the unfolding reality of Auroville. Whenever people participate in a heartfelt way in a ritual concerning Auroville or the Mother or Sri Aurobindo, they are participating in the myth of the new creation, the new world. This surely gives one a sense of meaning that fosters life and makes the most difficult trials bearable.

What I would like to emphasize now is that Aswapathy and Savitri experienced and assimilated their relationship to all major opposites in their spiritual quest, while *maintaining their own identity*. In this regard, I find it is very interesting and relevant that Jung writes: "In the experience of the Self it is no longer the opposites "God" and "man" that are reconciled, as it was before, but rather the opposites within the God-image itself. That is the meaning of divine service, of the service which man can render to God, that light may emerge from the darkness, that the Creator may become conscious of His creation and man conscious of himself (C. G. Jung, 1963, p. 338)." As with Savitri and Aswapathy, in addition to the light aspects of the Self, there is a need to assimilate one's relationship to the dark god, each at one's level of individual readiness, without losing connection to our higher cultural attainment or, as Jung (as reported in Aniela Jaffé 1989, p. 88) says, "without perishing", because he "also wants to become man." These observations lead one onto the task of the evolution of individual consciousness and the discovery of one's personal myth, a story that is most completely contained in the larger collective myth, today, as expressed in Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri* and the reality of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

Regarding Jung's observation about the service human's can render to God, he continued, noting: "That is the goal, or one goal, which fits man meaningfully into the scheme of his creation and, at the same time, confers meaning on it" (C. G. Jung, 1963, p. 338). The goal is to become increasingly conscious of the

opposites in the Godhead, to become a vessel for divine conflict. That means conscious individuation or individualization and becoming highly organized in oneself, potentially at all levels of being. One effect of this is that one does not come under the influence of the organized mass or collective psyche, wherever that is, in the world or in Auroville. That is no easy task and, above all, it means turning within to the heart Self or psychic being as well as the archetypal aspect of the collective unconscious, that is to say the universal psyche, while taking one's responsibilities in the world seriously.

The Personal Equation

We each need to find our own personal expression of our involvement in this new myth of consciousness. I will now show you what this might look like by way of several images of my paintings. I ended the presentation with an image of two heads (Exhibit 2), one male and one female, kissing, and then an image of the cosmic man (Exhibit 3), a symbolic depiction of an important goal of the individuation process. The head is the seat of meaning and understanding. The kissing heads then refer to the alchemical *coniunctio* or meaningful union of the male and female principles, Eros and Logos, experientially, consciousness of differentiated relatedness in everyday life. The archetype of the cosmic man refers to the true individual, the heart-Self behind the natural man, who lives in harmony with archetypal powers. The alchemists referred to him as the *filius philosophorum*, the son of the philosopher; and considered him to be the product of a seriously engaged alchemical life (Edward F. Edinger 1994).

I am not a professional artist but do art for the sake of consciousness, for the sake of life. In addition to paying close attention to my dreams, I do a lot of art as a way to relate to the archetypal psyche. I always feel a need to detach the image from the canvas in order to relate to it as a living symbol for my own life. That, along with reflecting on the symbolic nature of dreams and observing them being lived out in one's life is the way, at least one way, to discover one's personal myth. It is a way to discover the 'word of God' as it imprints itself directly on one's personal life. This process actually leads to detachment from the power of the archetypal image, which is essential for attaining a more conscious relationship to a privatized Self.

EXHIBIT 1



EXHIBIT 2

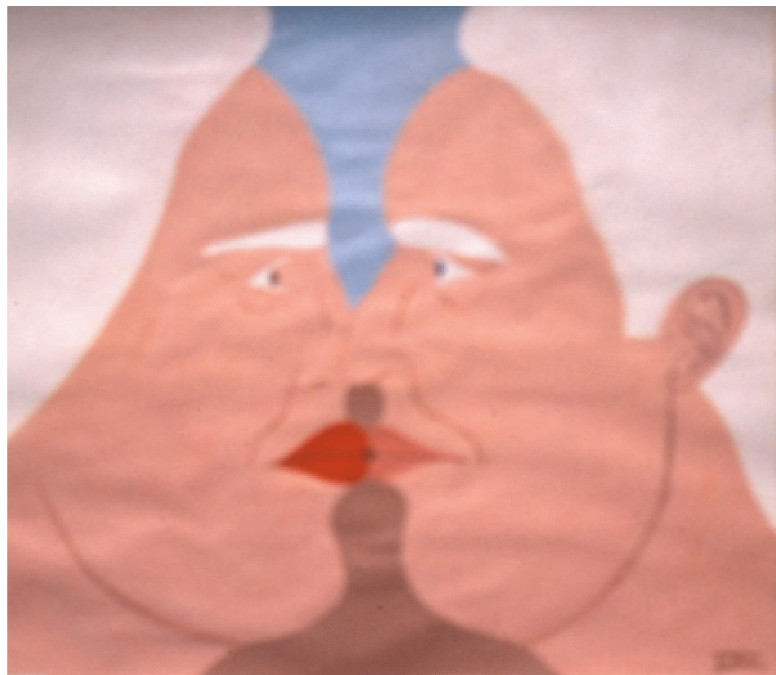
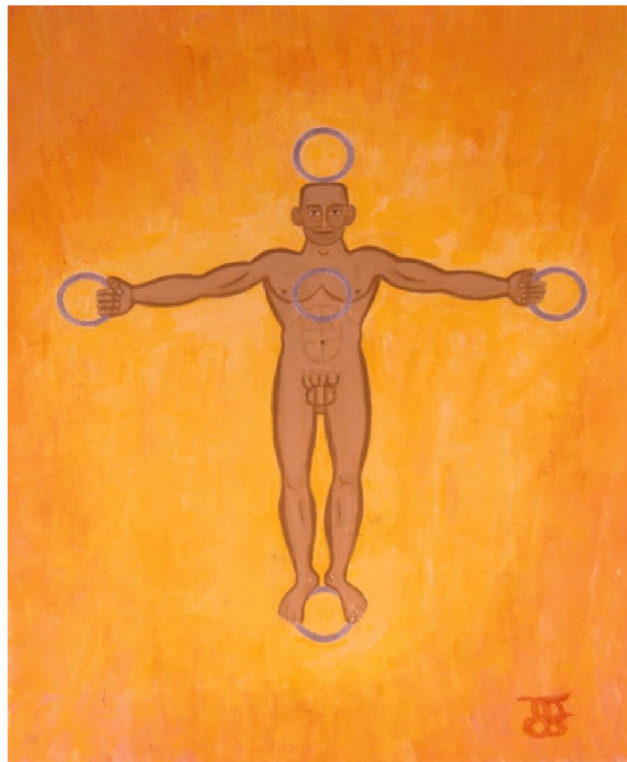


EXHIBIT 3



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