



Planetary Interiority: James Hillman & the Archetypal Psyche

by Safron Rossi

James Hillman's writings provide an invaluable foundation for understanding the bridge between psychology and astrology. Yet Hillman's theoretical frame and mythopoetic perspective are rarely mentioned in astrological circles, despite the rich opportunity for cross-fertilization his work offers. This article explores these fertile possibilities by introducing the four movements of Hillman's groundbreaking opus *Re-Visioning Psychology*¹ –

1. Personifying or Imagining Things,
2. Pathologizing or Falling Apart,
3. Psychologizing or Seeing Through, and
4. Dehumanizing or Soul-making.

At the core of the conversation between Jungian psychology and astrology is the notion of the archetype. C. G. Jung saw the archetype as a deep universal psychological pattern and he studied the archetypes in relationship to mythology and comparative religion. From an astrological point of view, these principles that we study – the planets/signs/houses – are all archetypal factors.

James Hillman studied at the Jung Institute in Zürich in the 1950s, spent time with Jung in the last decade of his life and then became the Institute's first Director of Studies in the 1960s. What Hillman begins to see is that in practice working with the psyche has a lot to do with the imagination and it has a lot to do with the way we look at things. He takes this idea of archetypes and develops what he calls an archetypal psychology, which is concerned with the question as to how do we actually come to see things with these universals in mind? If they are always shaping our perspectives and our imagination, then what are some of the implications?

Astrologers can easily relate to this because we're always looking at life through these archetypal principles in terms of what's going on with the planets. What

Hillman is underscoring in his psychology is what it means to approach life through one or another of these archetypal patterns--how lived experience is illuminated by these deep patterns, which he studied through myth, particularly Greek myth, and that we study through the planets, which, of course, also overlap Greek myth. Even more importantly, Hillman was concerned with how the soul is enriched and how we come into a sense of soul when life is imagined through these archetypal principles.

Originally written and delivered as the Terry Lectures at Yale University, Hillman's *Re-Visioning Psychology* was his magnum opus. It is the point at which he declared a need for psychology to make a radical shift, an idea he had been leading up to in some other works, but this was a turning point. In this book his key concern is how to cultivate a sense of soul in life.

For Hillman soul is not a thing, rather it is a way of seeing, what we could say is seeing with the eye of soul. Thus soul is a perspective, a quality of perception. He writes, "This perspective is reflective...makes meaning possible, turns events into experiences, has a special relation to death, is communicated in love (*eros*) and has a religious concern"².

Soul is a perspective that mediates between that which is understood and directly experienced, and that which is mysterious and ultimately beyond our conscious grasp. This middle ground, let's say between what is conscious and unconscious, relies upon symbols and images which has always been the language of deeper realities. Thus coming into a more soulful vision of things has everything to do with our capacity to work with symbols and images, with the ability to imagine.

In Hillman's view, soul relies on imagination and thus what he calls *soul-making* is the deliberate cultivation of that imaginative perspective. In the broadest sense, we're making soul when we find a good metaphor to describe something; we're making soul when we have

Image above: *The Alchemist* by Cameron Gray
<https://parablevisions.com/>

insights; we're making soul when we write a piece of poetry. Soul-making is a kind of psychological crafting or reflection in terms of those images and ideas that help us see into the hidden reaches of life. So, of course, it involves becoming more conscious. But the thing Hillman comes back to again in that regard is that what we are most unconscious of in our modern rational and literal outlook are the way these archetypal patterns, also known as gods, are influencing our perspectives on, and experience of, what happens in life.

Think about what we do in astrology. With its time measurements, cyclic computations and symbols, astrology's technical side has to be brought to life for the person for whom the reading is done. As astrologers we're opening up that soul ground between the client's personal life experience and astrological events. But just what goes on in this meaning-making and discovery of fitting images and metaphors to translate planetary principles and movements into life? How often do we think about what we're doing?

For Hillman, therapy's aim is the cultivation of the archetypal imagination. What he called a "restoration of the individual to imaginal realities".³ I think this is also what we're doing in astrology, for it brings images in to connect us back to those parts of our life that have gone underground. Soul-making is what occurs when these forgotten or unconscious pieces are brought into conscious awareness. In this way we can see astrology as a form of soul-making.

We cultivate the astrological imagination, which is also the archetypal imagination, expanding a person's way of envisioning their relationship to the hidden, cosmological dimension of life. For me, our work as astrologers is to expand the client's psychic capacity so that they have a wider and deeper way of being with the events of life and the traits of their character, so the way they story their lives touches into what Hillman would describe as a divine drama.

Hillman's understanding of what leads to soul-making helps us grasp and understand this critical aspect of what we're doing in our astrological work. My interest is in developing a field of ideas where astrology is conversant with the ideas in archetypal psychology – an archetypal psychological astrology. The four main movements in Hillman's *Re-Visioning Psychology* are best understood as processes of imagination. They are both implicit in the nature of the psyche or soul, but also something that can be cultivated, lived into, and made more conscious.

DEHUMANIZING OR SOUL-MAKING

The term dehumanizing is challenging because it is generally understood to mean a deprivation of human qualities, and it is also used to denote a negative experience. What Hillman means by dehumanizing is essentially depersonalizing.

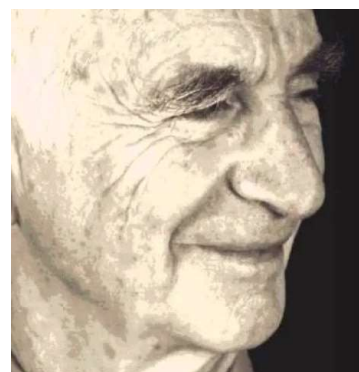
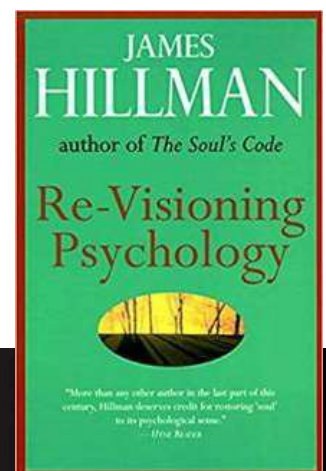
Dehumanizing can be difficult for psychologists because they tend to look at the world and what happens in personalistic ways, as they're always bringing it back to the person and to subjectivity. Dehumanizing is really pointing towards something more cosmological as the basis of mind, that the soul, as Hillman puts it, "has an existence beyond life and apart from the human being... there is much of the psyche that extends beyond the nature of man. The soul has inhuman reaches"⁴. The soul is larger than and goes outside the bounds of this life and a purely humanistic framework.

Hillman believed that this therapeutic orientation needed to be rethought for what it does is make its patients individually responsible and personally guilty for the universal archetypes. Archetypal psychology attempts to envision emotions less personally, less as resultants of human forces. Rather, our strongest emotions and motivations are expressions of Nature. This perspective understands Nature as having an order to it, a structure that also has a cosmological aspect. If the Nature flowing through us has intelligence and purpose, then that connects to the religious aspect of soul-making.

The Religious Aspect

Hillman underscores the religious dimension of psychic life in a very particular way. He invokes the essence of religion in the way Jung described it, as being about the careful consideration of the forces that impinge upon life. Here religion is not at all a creed or an organized movement but a very innate way of experiencing and understanding life. This was one of Jung's main points, that you can't understand the human psyche without understanding the religious instinct, and Hillman argues that you can't separate this religious mode from being psychological.

What makes meaning in our lives is connecting the small personal details to larger frames of reference. This is essentially a 'religious mode' imagining, as the larger forces that have an effect upon us, whether we call these



James Hillman

spirits, gods or planets, are being acknowledged. The religious attitude also includes awareness of the ancestors. Plotinus, Hypatia, Hermes Trismegistus, Ficino, Plato, Blavatsky, Jung, Rudhyar, Hillman, whoever it is for you - they personify the soul's need for spiritual ancestors, those who guide and mentor us beyond our personal narrowness.

In thinking about this from within astrology, I understand this religious attitude at work when the symbolism and charts are understood to be bridges or connections between the everyday world and that of the transpersonal archetypal energies, which carry a sense of purpose or sense of a spiritual path, an unfolding and deepening of the self. I think this is more than what the 'as above so below' concept communicates. From this perspective what we astrologers are working with is the bit of cosmic nature that is flowing through us.



The Sun, Edvard Munch

So if we really track this dehumanized and religious perspective, the value of astrology isn't about self discovery and self improvement, which are subtle forms of egocentrism. Rather, soul-making is concerned with how we are working on the god's entry and appearance into life. For example, how we relate and work with the energy and character of a 12th house Mars, or the needs and challenges of Venus square Uranus. What are these cosmological images asking of the individual who is subject to them?

The danger we face in astrology, as in psychology, is that of reducing the gods to parts of ourselves. We humanize the gods. They become personality descriptions, issues to work through, get over and transcend - parts of ourselves, me, mine. When the planetary gods as imagined as "metaphors for modes of experience and as numinous persons"⁵ then we can begin to relate with these intelligences with a different attitude—more humbled and more attuned to the sacred.

No longer held accountable for the doings of the gods, I can begin to relate to them, which we will take a closer look at next in the topic of personifying. In recognizing the autonomy of these powers and that they have their needs, and those needs must be fulfilled, opens a way

to live in more accord with these parts of the psyche. It is not my role to question, judge, invent, or perfect the Gods or Goddesses. Becoming conscious of what moves through me awakens my sense of duty and purpose.

From an archetypal psychological perspective, our calling is to dehumanize or soul-make in the sense of recognizing soul as something that extends beyond the personal imagination and thereby remember that we are in service to making awareness of the deeper nature that lives through us. This would be an astrological practice that serves Nature.

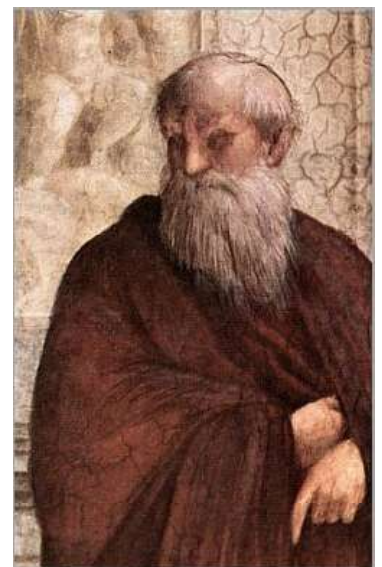
Return to the Renaissance

For Hillman archetypal psychology has two historical places that are also imaginal places that provide for its roots: ancient Greece and the Italian Renaissance. It is in the Renaissance that he identifies an expanded imagination of what it means to be human that also brings back a sense of the gods and cosmology.

"A care for the contents of the intellectual imagination",⁶ as Hillman puts it, became the central discipline across many fields: science, language, medicine, love, rhetoric, art. And it was the discovery of the pagan Greco-Roman myths that gripped the Renaissance imagination like nothing else. What we find is that "Renaissance 'care of soul' looked less to social context and human experiences for its models and insights into soul than to the archetypes of the imagination disguised in antique texts".⁷

Emblematic of this Renaissance of the imagination, and a powerful example of the way soul making and astrology come together can be found in the work of Marsilio Ficino (1433-1499), the Saturnian melancholic genius who translated Plato, Plotinus, and the Corpus Hermeticum from Greek into Latin, and reformulated Neoplatonic ideas in his own writing. As a Doctor of Soul, his concern was healing through relation to the divine principles that the planets of astrology personified.⁸

Ficino's move with the symbolism of astrology was to locate its "truth not in concrete proofs but in the infinite spaces of the imagination," writes Angela Voss.⁹ Influenced and drawing directly upon the writings of the Neoplatonic philosopher Plotinus, Ficino says that the *symbolic* power of the stars far surpass any other power they may have. Plotinus set the tone for Ficino's



Plotinus

approach, believing the causal attitude to be incorrect, a misunderstanding and misaligned relationship to the heavens. He wanted to preserve a distinction between the “physical literal existence of the stars and planets and *the human activity of symbolizing*, seeing them as representatives of archetypal principles on the cosmic level”.¹⁰

In other words, for Ficino and Plotinus the relationship between the heavens and earth, the gods and humans, is a symbolic one. We can resonate with the heavens through the imagination because in the Platonic cosmos the imaginative faculty of the soul corresponds with the world of the planets and stars. The key here is more about sympathetic resonance or archetypal correspondence.



The Stars of the Heavens, Bob Patterson

Here’s a list of Neoplatonic attitudes Hillman saw at work in the revival of the imagination, which strike me as relating to attitudes we might cultivate in our astrological work, if we don’t already do so:

- It “abhorred outwardness, literalistic and naturalistic fallacies.”
- It sought to see though the literal into the metaphorical and had a preoccupation with the search for “depth in the lost, the hidden, and the buried,” hence the pagan antiquities it was obsessed with including texts, images, art, and words.
- It regarded the soul as ever in movement, somewhere between spirit and matter.
- It stayed close to melancholy, depression, sadness, aberration and death. “Never denying depression or separating melancholy from love and love from intellection.”
- It was often contemptuously negligent of contemporary science and theology.
- It recognized the “signal place of imagination in human consciousness, considering this to be the primary activity of the soul.”

- It referred to Greek and Roman mythic figures as modes of reflection, not as allegories.

In my own astrological practice I find I am uninterested in the astronomical issue of the precession of the equinoxes; the fixed stars versus wandering planets. Or for that matter the tracking of natural phenomenon like earthquakes, tsunamis, volcanic eruptions to astrological transits. I follow NASA for the beauty of the images and not for scientific sureties. And I am uninterested in empirical studies of astrology. This may earn me the ire of some of our colleagues, but in my heart and mind I am wholly on the side of Plotinus and Ficino.

In sum, when we are moving from the personal to the divine, we are in that mode of perception Hillman called dehumanizing, where a shift of perception occurs and interest and concern moves to the soul rather than myself.

It is our psyche that takes its form (or ways of seeing) from the gods, the archetypal powers, deep Nature. And so our work may not be about making ourselves better, more whole or complete but rather to attend to the nature that flows through us, as symbolized by astrology. In Hillman’s words, “Our lives are on loan to the psyche for a while. During this time we are its caretakers who try to do for it what we can”.¹¹ Or in poetic terms, we turn to W. H. Auden, “we are lived by powers we pretend to understand.”¹²

PERSONIFYING OR IMAGINING THINGS

What the move away from the personalistic opens up is the revival and reclamation of the persons of soul. Who are those persons of soul? They are the ancestors, spirits, daimons, gods. Personifying is a natural mode of imagining wherein life becomes a psychological field populated with these soul figures, and the events of life are imagined as accompanied by one or more of these inner, imaginal persons. Something about the imagination itself that loves to personify, and this is something poetry illustrates magnificently.

*Night’s broken wing
and its wide untorn one
hobble across the paling sky
dropping black feathers down on black trees.
Day is still forming itself.
This is the gap,
the time between the sagacious, taciturn wolf
and the plain dog who will yap into place
when dawn has flared and faded.*¹³

Here Night is a wounded presence, and Day also has its own personality. This time between the night’s flight and the day’s emergence is personified as the time where an animal shape is indiscernible, wolf or dog, a danger or companion?

Dreams also illustrate how personifying is a natural

mode of imagining. Each and every night in our dreams we witness how the psyche spontaneously personifies. So while it is a natural occurrence, we can also embrace personifying, lean into it, cultivate it. Something soulful happens when we imagine the planets as persons, presences, intelligences and not just principles.

The planets are personified as gods of the Greco-Roman pantheon. When we are working with them as figures that have claims upon us, who have their needs, their natural areas of best expression, and their challenges, then we are personifying. In essence this is moving from principle to presence.

A tiny story to illustrate: one of my clients has an 11th house Mars-Moon-Chiron conjunction in Capricorn. This Mars-Moon configuration appears through mastery of emotions and issues of controlling emotions, either too much or too little. The presence of Chiron adds another aspect that points to sexuality as a mode of healing. In our discussion, I described this configuration as a wounded warrior-king and mentioned King Arthur. It as an incredible synchronicity, as she watched Camelot earlier that morning. As we talked about Arthur she began to cry because she has always felt him to be one of her animus or inner masculine soul figures. This opened up a whole new way of her to explore who Mars is in her psyche and what he needs.

This shift of perception is a move into the personifying mode of imagining. And something profound happens in these places. As this Mars story demonstrates, part of what happens is that personifying moves us into relationship with the figures of the astrological imagination. Soul is made by developing relationships with the archetypal themes, events and energies of our lives which the psyche personifies because this is how we experience such proddings and callings from beyond our egoic sense of things. Through these personified figures we enter into a relationship with what has become unconscious. Hillman writes, "Personifying not only aids discriminations; it also offers another avenue of loving, of imagining things in a personal form so that we can find access to them with our hearts".¹⁴

One of the things that becomes evident is how personifying imagines in specificity. Think about the details in your dream figures and places, the houses and all the rich details the dream reveals. Or dream persons and the minute memory we have of the color of their skin, their way of looking at you. These details convey all the nuances of life, light, mood.

Akin to this, astrological charts are highly differentiated symbols of our interior body politic. The specificity of personifying comes into play with how planets are each located in a sign, in a house, in aspect/relationship with other planets. Each layer adds nuance and complexity, and gives detail to an animating figure if we can imagine

into it. Let alone how we will relate to these symbolic figures over time. But not only does personifying differentiate the energies, it also invites us to *relate* to all the figures. No longer in that habitual mode of the ego me, astrology shows us the others that are a part of our inner world.

Earlier I discussed how in the Renaissance the imagination was understood to be where divine meanings were given form and could then be understood and integrated into a person's consciousness. The power that allows for this connection to occur, for the Neoplatonist, was eros or desire. Eros was understood as the force that moves the soul "ever closer to union with its source".¹⁵ Eros unites, draws together by desire for closeness or union. Hence, Voss notes, Hermetic texts emphasize the role of desire or longing of the initiate in the awakening of the soul to its true nature. And the etymological root of desire is *sidere* which means 'from the stars'.

This link between desire, eros and the stars I think suggests that what we desire is given with the stars. Our psychological and astrological work is to find the roots of our desires and their archetypal background. The myths that personify those desires point to their larger significance and support movement from the personalistic to the transpersonal. Returning a planet or sign to mythic images, stories and figures, we move from a static idea or principle to a dynamic story and figure that brings the archetypal patterns to life. And there are various versions of myths and various viewpoints within myths that we can explore. This multiplicity in myth evidences the multiplicity of archetypal configurations.

Plotinus said that soul's "presence will be secured all the more readily when an appropriate receptacle is elaborated, a place especially capable of receiving some portion or phase of it, something reproducing it, or representing it and serving like a mirror to catch an image of it".¹⁶ Astrology is just such a mirror. When astrology is imagined and practiced as a vessel for soul it becomes a metaphorical altar for the gods, those imaginal figures who display the configurations of our psyche. In sum, personifying ensouls. It imagines life, substance and purpose in the psyche's experiences as depicted in astrological images.

PATHOLOGIZING OR FALLING APART

Hillman's use of the term *pathologizing* means something very different from the generalized use of pathological which means regarding someone or something as psychologically abnormal or unhealthy.

Hillman's sub-title for this mode of imagining, *falling apart*, helps us. We have all fallen apart one time or another. Suffering belongs to the soul. Therefore, suffering is not an aberrant experience; rather it is archetypal, universal, and deeply human. So Hillman is

taking this term and spinning it so that we begin to be curious about the suffering, the difficulties that come with life, rather than immediately respond by trying to avoid or fix them. This spirit of curiosity is captured by the poet Rumi in *The Guest House*.¹⁷

*This being human is a guest house.
Every morning a new arrival.
A joy, a depression, a meanness,
some momentary awareness comes
as an unexpected visitor.*

*Welcome and attend them all!
Even if they are a crowd of sorrows,
who violently sweep your house
empty of its furniture,
still, treat each guest honorably.*

*She may be clearing you out
for some new delight.
The dark thought, the shame, the malice,
meet them at the door laughing,
and invite them in.*

*Be grateful for whoever comes,
because each has been sent
as a guide from beyond.*

*Welcome difficulty.
Learn the alchemy True Human
Beings know:*

*the moment you accept what troubles
you've been given, the door opens.*

*Welcome difficulty as a familiar
comrade. Joke with torment
brought by the Friend.*

*Sorrows are the rags of old clothes
and jackets that serve to cover, and then are taken off.*

*That undressing and the beautiful
naked body underneath is the sweetness
that comes after grief.*

These visitations are given in each chart: squares, oppositions, conjunctions, certain planetary combinations, signs in detriment and fall, retrogrades. Can you imagine regarding squares as abnormal, a mistake of nature? And Chiron as unhealthy? I think this is one of the most astounding things that depth psychological astrology does, it rejects nothing of the difficulties, the suffering, the seemingly immovable complexes that we bear in our lives. There they are, right in the chart.

From this valence, astrological work becomes one way by which we are working on recognizing, becoming more aware, and developing strategies to working with our wounds so to bring about change. Abnormality is impossible in this practice because all configurations belong. Archetypal psychological astrology shows us that what has been considered problem configurations or personality issues have their archetypal points of

reflection. In other words, challenge and difficulty belong to the hidden reaches of life.

Our job then is to investigate the suffering, to explore how these influences show up in our lives and how relating to them changes our relationship to it. So at first, it's not about trying to make it go away, but to imagine into it differently. Hillman would ask, "What door is opened into soul through our wounds?" This perspective sees there's soul involved when something goes wrong.

For the sake of the parts

One of Jung's meta-concerns was with becoming more conscious. He felt that that was the best candidate for the real purpose of life. But how do we become more conscious? We don't become conscious when we're an undifferentiated, monolithic lump of experience and everything is egocentric. We become conscious when we discover that there is something else at work in us, something that defies our consciousness. That's what Jung called the unconscious. Hillman's version of becoming conscious is waking up to the great polytheistic nature of our lives.

If a primary imperative of life is becoming more conscious, the way we do that is by differentiating our experience and becoming aware that there are these other forces and dynamics within us. That generally doesn't happen unless through experience we come into conflict or a split within ourselves.

When a person comes for a reading, we're helping them host these parts, these inner divisions that are in conflict, helping them to into mode of imagining that sees their life as a multiplicity. This monolithic thing that we call the personality or the ego, a person's general sense of self, is actually a kind of gathering of these different energies



and forces at work. But we're not moved into this way of imagining things unless something is falling apart, which is generally what is happening to people when they come to astrology. People come to astrology when they fall apart in order to relate better to the parts.

Jung developed the notion of the psychological complex early in his career. A complex is a thematic grouping of psychological contents: memories and emotional responses that usually originate in childhood; hence the common terms mother and father complex. Complexes are normal, creative and have a purpose. What's interesting however is that Jung eventually came to understand that archetypal or universal themes lay deep within our personal complexes. This is one of the doors that opens when considering the astrological tradition.

The important piece for us astrologers is that our complexes, those knotty and oftentimes difficult and charged psychic/emotional pieces of our lives, have a purpose. The psychological attitude to problems that Jung encouraged was to find within them the seed of new potential or growth and not simply focus on the cause. Rather than seeing our symptoms as accidents or our problems as wrong, these difficulties are the royal road into soul—and as Hillman points out, we neglect their importance in soul-making.

Soul-making begins with wounding. The gods force themselves *symptomatically* into our lives. Wounding is how we grow into a larger sense of who we are. So what happens when we regard astrology and the deep well of its wisdom as a place where falling apart is honored as a primary way of soul-making?

Pathologizing as a sensibility is evident in Liz Greene's approach to Saturn in her classic *New Look at an Old Devil*.¹⁸ Symbolizing a psychic process as well as a quality of kind of experience, Saturn is representative of pain, restriction and discipline. She symbolizes the psychic process by which an individual may utilize the experiences of pain, restriction and discipline as a means for greater consciousness and fulfillment. Saturn, the Dweller at the Threshold, is the keeper of the keys to the gate and it is through him alone, Greene writes, that we may achieve eventual freedom through understanding. This way of seeing Saturn is to value him and the work and goals he has set out as being in service to the crafting of a deep inner authority. In other words, there's value in what is difficult.

There are three forms of denial in pathologizing that Hillman treats. Let's take a very brief look at each one.

Nominalism: this is where the healing is thought to reside in the labeling of symptoms and sufferers of those symptoms. It focuses on classifying the complaints of the soul and having no concern with the nature, reasons or meaning of the suffering. In psychology this occurs with the excessive investment

in diagnosis, as if coming up with a label more or less takes care of the problem. The astrological version of this would be for example naming the transit and passing over the person's history, experience, subjectivity of the principles associated with that planet.

Nihilism: an existential doing away of the suffering by an anarchic denial that is a reaction to nominalism and its classifications. This is kind of counterintuitive in astrology because the whole point is to fill the void of existential reality, but I think fatalism is a subtle form of nihilism--'It's written in the stars' (natal Pluto in the 4th house means one will always be dealing with the pain of family trauma or Saturn transiting my 7th means I will not find meaningful relationships during this period so I won't even try to connect with others) and so one takes a passive attitude, taking no responsibility in making choices.

Transcendence: instead of going into the suffering in a soulful way you rationalize it away with some sort of spiritual explanation. When our astrological imagination falls into a 'nothing but' or literal perspective then it's as if we're not helping ourselves or our client into genuinely suffering a more conscious position, we're simply giving them a spiritual explanation for their suffering. How many times do we hear (and mumble to ourselves): "When will this transit be over?" or "I keep waiting for



Melancholy, William Blake

Jupiter to bring me something, how come nothing's happening?" My Neptune/Moon always has me fall for the wrong person. I can't communicate well because I have Saturn in the third house. In other words, this is a kind of spiritual bypass, a metaphysical rationalization of something rather than living in the genuine tension and difficulty of it, and suffering into a deeper, more complete awareness. As Hillman puts it, "Pathologizing must be met by imaginal thinking".¹⁹ Our problems call out for fresh metaphors, a shift in seeing in order to move from the old perspective so to see them anew.

Hillman's point here is that the deepest things in life don't have a resolution but they are full of images. We all hear these ideas about the way suffering is part of the soul, but our default position is very often that suffering means there's something wrong that has to be fixed, transcended, medically treated because it really doesn't belong to the existential fabric of being. So how does astrology help us hold an understanding that our sufferings, wounds, issues belong to the existential fabric of our being? Astrology's images provide us an imagistic container.

PSYCHOLOGIZING OR SEEING THROUGH

All of this brings us to the final theme. Like dehumanizing, psychologizing or seeing through is a natural fit for astrology. In the opening pages of this chapter Hillman writes that seeing through happens whenever you look at something that is in one set of terms and you translate it into another set of terms. I think this is why people love astrology and to have their charts read, because the soul loves to go from the obvious to the less obvious, from the immediate to the hidden. This movement is something the soul loves.

Divinatory symbolic practices like the tarot and I Ching are pathways we take in order to see through to something. And what we're really trying to see through to is from the literal to the metaphorical and from the personal to the archetypal. So what we're aiming for is something that not only is fitting for that archetypal level, such as something mythical, spiritual, or astrological, but the archetypal means something *qualitative*.

The presence of an archetypal piece of life always comes with emotion. Archetypes have an emotional possessive effect which is why they are personified as gods. It is something that also has a feeling of universality that belongs to the fundamentals of the human condition. From this frame, the astrological quest becomes one in which we are asking: how do I help a person connect the personal to the universal in a meaningful way, a felt way, an imaginative way? There are three ideas I want to look at in terms of how and where this happens in astrological practice.

Images that are Alive

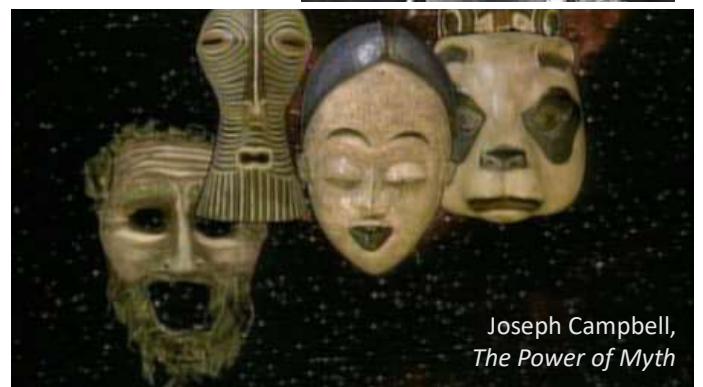
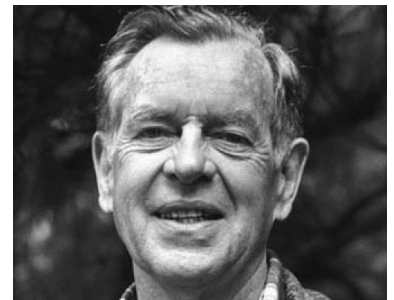
Myth is primordial, visceral and full of imaginative power and on some level we feel and know that it tells a truth. Myths acknowledge the powers that live through us, that compel, fascinate, haunt us. Myths also place us in larger imaginative containers where we participate in something deeper and more vast than our personal story, and that is part of why myth is healing. If you are feeling like you need a hit of this, watch Joseph Campbell's "The Power of Myth" series and listen to the way he translates ordinary facets of life into mythic dramas.

We love myths and their vital, animated, wild images that bespeak the archetypal realities in which the soul participates. It is in this vein that Hillman says, "Let us reimagine psychodynamics as mythic tales rather than as physical processes; as the rise and fall of dramatic themes, as genealogies, as voyages and contests and respites, as interventions of Gods."²⁰

See, the translation of a literal problem into another set of literal terms is not helpful. Someone's difficulty with love and continual falling for the wrong person explained as Neptune square Venus doesn't touch the soul. It gives the mind other language, but offers no soul-food if the image isn't opened up. The parallel is the psychologist with the diagnostic handbook who thinks that in diagnosing something they've gone deeper into the problem.

If we're really working the terrain we have to continually translate the abstract language of astrology into images that are alive that a person can connect to. The fitting images of astrology come out of the specific context of the reading, for the work is fishing for the right image. So from the astrological concept of Neptune square Venus we move into images.

Perhaps it's abduction by a mermaid or merman, or Ariadne's abandonment by Theseus, or a Selkie calling out to her family unable to return to them



Joseph Campbell,
The Power of Myth

without her sealskin. The bottom-line is whether the move you make opens or closes the situation. If you leave them with more openings so to imagine into their situation, then we've done some soul work. If I've left them with a nice neat package, then I've not done the work.

Planets offer symbolic perspectives

The most elementary understanding of planets is that they are symbols, but Hillman might say that planets offer *symbolic perspectives*. This would be looking at a person's experience *through* the symbolic perspective of this or that planet. In this way we return experiences to the planet's needs, the god's needs in our lives. Having a rough time with Pluto transit to Mars? How do we explore the situation through Mars? What does one's Mars need? How is that occurring, being enacted, explored in the person's life?

So what we're proposing here is the idea that planets are conduits of imagining rather than points of arrival or principles of order. Recall the story of my client and King Arthur. We're not working to see through to an explanation or a bottom line; rather, we're seeing through to a more soulful way of holding something.

Imaginal Persons

Seeing through the narrative experience into the archetypal astrological dynamics at play is to move from asking 'how' or 'why' to 'who' and 'what'. Who is here? Who is making claims on me now? What in terms of the essence of the situation is taking place here? Half the work is asking the right question so as to discern what needs to be considered, whether transits to birth chart or progressions. Sometimes we're helping the client know what to focus on.

Back to personifying: Astrology serves Nature when we recognize that the tools of astrology have their own "enlivening spirits". Not just the planetary gods and asteroids as personified archetypal forces - the houses are places of life; the signs are qualities of being and expression; aspects are kinds of relationships, interactions and processes. Each house has a spirit, or perhaps 2 or 3 depending on one's chart. Listen to how Liz Greene phrases this, "When a house is tenanted by a planet in the birth chart, this sphere of life becomes a *templum* inhabited by a deity".²¹

Whenever we ask, "what does this god want of me", astrological gods/mythic figures become modes of reflection, ways of entering and exploring the issue at hand, the phase of life we are in. I think Saturn's transits through the houses is one of the most potent and direct ways to shift into this mode of imagining. This is because the work he asks us to wed ourselves to is so concretely evident, and requires doing (earth/matter) rather than thinking. It is a doing that needs to be dedicated to soul



The Reunion of the Soul and Body, William Blake

work, having to do with development, maturity and our relation to the very core of who and what we are. But those spheres of life do not preclude action. For Saturn invites the question: what *offering* do I need to make? What do I need to do?

I am also very interested in how we imagine ourselves in our practice. How do you imagine yourself when you are working with your own or someone else's chart, seeing through life experiences to the underlying themes, dynamics and archetypal patterns? Are you a detective, a researcher, a healer? What's going on in your imagination about what you are doing? Who is it working through you? What archetypal figure animates your work?

Finis

James Hillman's writings provide an invaluable foundation for understanding the bridge between archetypal psychology and astrology. I've endeavored to show how his way of speaking about these innate movements of the psyche open us up to imagining into our art and craft in fresh ways.

These four imaginal moves are not distinct boxes, they overlap, metamorphose and shape-shift. This is in keeping with the nature of the psyche which does not seem to be interested in clear definitions or classifications. As the novelist Elena Ferrante notes, "linear explanations are almost always lies." We know

that the psyche needs deep principles upon which to orient to life, which is what myth and the archetypal patterns within them, has always provided. This is one of the primary ways I understand the psychological potency of astrology, and what leads me to want to pull these perspectives together in what I call an archetypal psychological astrology.

Astrology is efficacious in working with the soul's troubles because it brings images, Gods, journeys and cycles to the fore. In other words, it brings a symbolic sensibility. It reveals ancient, and transpersonal depth in our lives, it connects us to the ancestors, both imaginal and historical. As a way of engaging with what is presenting itself in life, astrology makes possible insight and revelation. This too is efficacious because the cultivation of the imagination makes soul. This is something I continue to experience in my studies and practice - that astrology is a soul practice that cultivates the imagination.

Safron Rossi

¹ James Hillman, *Re-Visioning Psychology*, Harper & Row, New York, NY: 1975.

² James Hillman, *Re-Visioning Psychology*, p. xvi.

³ James Hillman, *Archetypal Psychology: Uniform Edition of the Writings of James Hillman*, Vol.1, Spring Publications, Putnam, CT: 2013.

⁴ James Hillman, *Re-Visioning Psychology*, p. 173.

⁵ *Ibid*, p. 169.

⁶ *Ibid*, p. 194.

⁷ *Ibid*, p. 195.

⁸ *Ibid*, p. 202.

⁹ Angela Voss, *Marsilio Ficino*, North Atlantic Books, Berkeley, CA: 2006, p.8.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 22.

¹¹ James Hillman, *Re-Visioning Psychology*, p. 180.

¹² W. H. Auden, W.H. "In Memory of Ernst Toller", from W.H. Auden, *Another Time*, Random House, New York, NY: 1940.

¹³ Denise Levertov, "Entre Loup et Chien" from *Evening Train*, New Directions, New York: 1992.

¹⁴ James Hillman, *Re-Visioning Psychology*, p. 14.

¹⁵ Angela Voss, *Marsilio Ficino*, p. 13.

¹⁶ Plotinus, *The Enneads*, translated by Stephen MacKenna, Larson Publications, New York: 1992, IV, 3, 11.

¹⁷ Jalal al-Din Rumi, "The Guest House", translated by Coleman Barks from *The Essential Rumi*, HarperOne, San Francisco, CA: 2004.

¹⁸ Liz Greene, *Saturn: A New Look at an Old Devil*, Weiser Books, York Beach, ME; 1976.

¹⁹ James Hillman, *Re-Visioning Psychology*, p. 79.

²⁰ *Ibid*, 146.

²¹ Liz Greene, *The Astrological Neptune and the Quest for Redemption*, Weiser Books, York Beach, ME: 2000, p. 385.



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