

Addressing Planetary Pathology

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I hope in this paper to engage with two distinct ideas. I wish first of all to tackle the question of diversity in psychotherapy from the perspective of archetypal psychology as represented by Carl Jung and by post-Jungians such as James Hillman and David Miller. Secondly I want to tackle the question: *What happens to therapy when we abandon the egocentric and anthropocentric assumptions on which it is conventionally based?* In thinking about this I intend to draw on person-centered thinking of Carl Rogers, on the one hand, and the systemic thinking of ecopsychologists like Theodore Roczak on the other.

There is one very strong thread which connects the perspectives of archetypal psychology and ecopsychology. Both advise us to look outside the the psychology of the individual when seeking understanding and engaging in action. Ecopsychology draws our attention to the planet and suggests that we should see our individual selves not as centres of value and meaning in themselves but as cells of a greater organism. Archetypal psychology argues that, for all our sense of personal uniqueness, our lives are embedded in ancient patterns which are collective and cultural. The contribution of person-centred theory to this line of thinking is the notion, implied in Rogers' later writing, that the basic therapeutic conditions of empathy, acceptance and congruence apply not only to our relations with the individual client but to our relations with the species and the planet.

If I want to talk about the pathology of the planet I need to clarify a couple of things first, I need to state my understanding that human beings are not outsiders on the planet but part of it. The planet is not a lump of largely lifeless matter which we happen to inhabit, but a complex system of which we are (currently at least) an essential part. One element in this dynamic system is consciousness, and human beings, to the best of our limited knowledge, represent this in a unique way. We tend to see ourselves as subjects and address the planet as object. This is an attitude which has, in many respects, brought us to the present planetary emergency.

I also need to state my understanding that pathology is not an aberration, in contrast to some supposed normality, but is part of the deal. I have no supposition that there can be perfect health in the planet, any more than there can be perfect health in the individual - or perfect beauty or perfect goodness, for that matter. What we call pathology is omnipresent and is just an aspect of the way we are. Moreover, when we talk about the pathology of the planet it is our own pathology that we are talking about.

Thirdly, I want to declare that when I talk in this way I do so on the premise that I am not stating facts about the planet or pathology, but rather presenting ways of imagining them.

When we refer to the pathology of the planet, we find it easy to slip into the medical metaphor and diagnose the planet as a patient. We will see all sorts of sickness, much of it apparently terminal: advanced environmental degradation ; stockpiles of deteriorating nuclear weapons waiting for terrorists or a computer bug to detonate them; widespread

starvation, famine and disease; corruption of political life, where even leaders of intelligence and good will are unable to make the decisions which desperately need to be made; savage ethnic wars; the collapse of ethics; an out-of-control financial system which no one really understands; and so on. We can pursue the medical metaphor, formulate a treatment and set out to cure the disease, or at least alleviate the symptoms. We know that there are many people doing that already: engineers, agronomists, economists, medical researchers, ecologists and the rest. We may designate a role for counsellors in this.

However, I want to say that this is just one perspective on the question and suggest that we enlarge our view. The notion that we can treat the planet as object, see what is wrong with it and fix it, has to be relativised. There are many perspectives on the question, and if we cannot view it from all perspectives at once we can at least try not to be trapped in a single one of them.

A Polytheistic View

In attempting to gain a multi-perspectival view of the pathology of the planet I am assisted by Jung's notion of archetype, particularly as it has been developed by Hillman.

For Hillman, the proper work of psychology is *seeing through* our personal and collective experience to the archetypal image behind it. He argues that we always see the world metaphorically, that all consciousness depends on fantasy images. All we know about the world, about the mind, the body, about anything whatsoever, comes through images and is organised by fantasies into one pattern or another. These patterns are archetypal, and we are always in one or another archetypal configuration, one or another collective fantasy

Hillman's argument takes him inevitably into a multi-perspectivist understanding of reality. As a framework for his multi-perspectivism he takes the gods of the Greco-Roman pantheon. Each of the gods personifies a mode of apprehension which gives a distinct and observable shape to our encounter with the world. Hillman takes the classical Greek pantheon as his preferred set of images because these images are embedded in European culture - even in the culture of positivist science.

Jung suggested that the gods have become our diseases.

We look at Kosovo or Sierra Leone and find Ares, god of war, in a fit of uncontrollable rage. Or we find him in the bullying which passes for management in many organisations or the obsessive competitiveness which passes for professional relationships. And we note that Ares, in Greek mythology, is rather stupid and not very brave. Or we might look at the abuse of power and the oppression and enslavement of millions and see the pathology of Zeus. There are plenty of political leaders and CEOs whose values and behaviour are embedded in the myth of Zeus. The old stories are more powerful than the individuals who play the parts.

Counselling, like any other human activity, is enmeshed in such narratives. However, while counsellors may be bullies or autocrats like any one else, my experience suggests that there are other gods currently dominating the profession.

We can readily talk about a counselling theory and practice formed in the image of Hera, queen of the gods and goddess of the family, which guides clients towards a recognition of their social responsibilities and an adjustment to the demands of their social environment. Or we can talk of a very different theory and practice made in the image of Dionysos, god of new life, which privileges spontaneity and self-fulfilment. Or the relationship therapy of Eros, the seductive therapy of Aphrodite, the rational therapy of Apollo, the commonsense, normalising therapy of Athena. And, of course, we can recognise the benevolently directive therapy of Zeus and the challenging and confrontative therapy of Ares, for all the gods are both healing and destructive. And so on for the dozen and more key god-figures in the Greek pantheon.

In this paper I want to discuss only three of these gods. They are currently powerfully at work in our culture and in this profession. They represent quite different ways of addressing the pathology of the planet.

Prometheus

The first of these is Prometheus. The Prometheus myth is a version of the hero story.

Prometheus is a Titan, one of an older race of gods who ruled the cosmos before Zeus and his family took it from them. Prometheus is the scientist and technician, the hero who liberated human beings from the power of the gods, who stole the gods' fire to bring light and warmth to humanity, who taught men how to take control of their worlds by technology, who refused to allow women a place in the scheme of things, who set out to improve the lot of humanity and was punished for it by Zeus. The culture of the scientific-industrial era has worked itself out within the Promethean fantasy of individuality, autonomy, control of nature, rationality, progress, liberation, and salvation through technology, in spite of accumulating evidence that science and technology do not inevitably make people freer and happier. It is only now, when it is becoming apparent that the Promethean project of controlling and improving the planet is faltering, that there is serious challenge to the Promethean version of truth.

Counselling psychology, whether seen as a science or an art or a craft, has from the beginning been framed by the Hero myth. We can find the Promethean project in developmental psychology, in psychiatry, behaviourism, psychoanalysis, ego-psychology, rational-emotive therapy, person-centred counselling and practically anywhere else we care to look. Counselling as a profession starts with the assumption that both therapist and client live in a world which is essentially distinct from them, a world which must be dealt with as "other". Individuals act in and on this world as separate and distinct identities. They may be linked by empathy and relationship, but their separateness is not challenged. The therapist acts so as to liberate the client from the power of impulse and compulsion, from conditions of worth, from a poor self-concept, from inappropriate self-talk, from dependence on the therapist, or whatever. The therapist supports the client on a hero's journey, past beasts and barriers, out of darkness into light, from powerlessness to empowerment. All good hero-stuff.

The centre of this psychological world is the heroic ego. For Freud it was obvious enough that the differentiation of self from environment was a necessary and significant

achievement for the species and for each individual infant. We have to give up our infantile sense of undifferentiated oneness with the world. The self stops at the skin. We are on our own in an alien world of objects. The clearer the boundary we build between self and other, the more heroic the ego, the less miserable we will be.

The embeddedness of counselling in the Promethean myth is manifested not only in the individualistic values of conventional therapy but also in the modernist privileging of technique over anything else that might distinguish one counsellor from another. We find the Promethean fantasy powerfully present in the skills orientation which emerged from Carl Rogers' "necessary and sufficient conditions", and has come to dominate conventional counsellor education. This orientation owes its development to the Hero-stance of Carkhuff, Truax and Egan. Carkhuff, in particular, theorises within a narrative of intellectual control over the messy field of human communication and human personality change. He assumes technical control over input and outcome and over the process of bringing people to "higher functioning" and thus enabling them through their increased "effectiveness" to take responsibility for social and political change

The problem with this, which is only gradually being recognised, is that when we look at the bigger picture, it seems as though it is our collective domination by the Hero narrative which is responsible for the plight of the planet and our personal pathology. We no longer assume as a matter of course that science and technology will inevitably produce a better world, and we no longer assume absolutely that a "strong ego" is the most appropriate personal goal. From this perspective our focus on the Hero narrative begins to seem not just problematic but pathological. James Hillman is by no means alone in referring to the "ego-pathology" of our "normal" ways of being in the world.

Though Promethean values are no longer so much a part of mainstream thinking that they are unchallengeable, we still resist letting them go. We are still inclined to assume that we *ought* to be able to understand and control our world and we have some nostalgia for the days when we dwelt happily in the fantasy that one day we would be able to. In so far as we practise our profession within this culturally approved narrative we take certain things for granted. Our notion of successful therapy is built on the images of progress, emancipation, technique. We are inclined to assume that understanding leads to liberation. We work within the fantasy that healing comes from the effectiveness of our intervention, that our skills matter more than relationship, wisdom, personality, moral integrity or anything else that might distinguish one counsellor from another. We readily conclude that if our counselling is not effecting any change in the client it is because we are not doing it right. We overlook the part of the Promethean narrative which tell us that our emancipation from the power of the gods is illusory and that every technical solution brings new problems.

Old stories are true. Otherwise we would have stopped telling and believing them long ago. Our dwelling in the Promethean story for the past couple of centuries has brought us benefits which we would be very loath to abandon. The Promethean story is true. But, like the other old stories, its truth is incomplete.

Gaia

The Gaia story is the mother story, the oldest story of all. Gaia is the personification of the earth, the great mother from whom we are all born and to whom we all return.

In this story, human beings are not terribly important. We are part of a larger system, which will continue to live and renew itself when human beings wipe themselves out. The given universe does not exist for human beings, for all our arrogant assumption that there is something special about us. The universe exists, and we are a not-terribly-significant part of it. Or, more poetically, the earth is our mother and we live in union with her. This is an image which has dominated many pre-scientific cultures and continues to dominate some contemporary philosophies, both Eastern and Western.

Ecopsychology, which has its roots in deep ecology - a perspective first developed by the Norwegian ecophilosopher Arne Naess - is framed within the Gaia fantasy. It challenges the anthropocentric assumptions on which most therapies are based. It abandons any essentialist notion of a boundary between self and the world. It does not perceive the world as "other". In such a perspective, adequate human functioning demands a congruence not just between one's behaviour and one's self-concept, or between one's self-concept and one's "real self", but a congruence between self and Nature. It demands an expansion of the notions of "self" not only to the species but to the whole of reality. If subjective, individualised experience is acknowledged and valued, it is acknowledged and valued as a manifestation of the "mind of the world". In its most radical expressions, the uniqueness and value of the individual is illusory.

Stephen Aizenstadt asks the question which I am attempting to address in this paper: "What would a psychology look like if it is based on an ecocentric worldview rather than an egocentric one?" (1995, p.98). He suggests that we might, for instance, view depression as a natural response to the manic condition of the world. We might see the condition of the world being projected in the behaviour of human beings, rather than human beings projecting their pathology onto the world. We might give up the notion that psychological health is solely a function of individual wholeness and nurturing human relationships, and imagine rather that both physiological and psychological illness is connected to our damaged relationship to nature. Theodore Roczak develops the essentially Jungian argument that we are deeply implicated in nature, that the integration and emergence of the whole self, conscious and unconscious - a process which Jung called individuation - is simply harmonising oneself with the natural world. Ecopsychology, as he understands it,

holds that there is a greater ecological intelligence as deeply rooted in the foundations of the psyche as the sexual and aggressive instincts Freud found there. Or rather, the psyche is rooted **inside** a greater intelligence once known as the **anima mundi**, the psyche of the Earth herself. (1995, p.16)

Whether Gaia is for us a goddess, an organism animated by soul, or a biocybernetic universal system, we are in the Mother story as soon as we shift our focus of significance from ego to eco.

On first reflection, there doesn't appear to be much connection between the conventional individualistic theorising of counselling practice and the great web of life.

There are plenty of people prepared to argue that the care of the worried well and even the mentally suffering is an indulgence and an irrelevance in the current ecological emergency. Our efforts should be spent on saving the planet. After that we can worry about whether we are happy or not

We can argue that any boundary we put to the self is arbitrary. Once we relativise the atomistic individualism which has characterised conventional modernist understandings of therapy and imagine ourselves as parts of a single unfolding reality therapeutic practice takes on an extra dimension. We find, for instance, that Carl Rogers' proposition that a condition of successful therapy is that the client must be anxious or at least vulnerable to anxiety, has implications outside the domestic problems of the client. Personal anxieties exist in a context of collective anxieties; collective anxieties - family, workplace, profession, society, nation, culture – are an expression of species anxiety; species anxiety speaks for a suffering planet, which is itself an element in a larger system.

It seems to me a given that we are currently experiencing a massive collective anxiety about the incomprehensible danger we are in. We repress this anxiety both personally and collectively, but it manifests itself in collective pathological behaviour. It seems to me that it is the essential work of therapy to challenge the lies we tell ourselves, not just the personal ones but the shared ones. The counsellor who attends fully to the client will be listening not only to the private pain but also to the pain of the species and the plight of the world. Hillman comments on his experience as therapist attending to the pathology of the world:

I find today that patients are more sensitive to the worlds they live in. I mean that the distortions of communication, the sense of harassment and alienation, the deprivation of intimacy with the immediate environment, the feelings of false values and inner worthlessness experienced relentlessly in the world of our common habitation are genuine realistic appraisals and not merely apperception's of our intra-subjective selves. My practice tells me that I can no longer distinguish clearly between neuroses of self and neuroses of world. (1982, p.72)

Daryl Reaney describes gravity as “the yearning of divided matter to again be one - the desire of fragmented energy to restore the union that was violated by the act of its birth” (1994, p. 132). On the human scale, we can describe the drive to relationship, whether manifested in lust, loneliness or the therapeutic conditions, as grounded in a drive to union not just with a specific other but with Gaia, mother of us all.

One of the key concepts in deep ecology is self-realisation, a concept Naess borrowed from Spinoza. By it he means the basic motivation which can be considered the essence of all things, ie. the tendency to persist in their own being. Such a notion resonates strongly with Rogers' statement that “the organism has one basic tendency and striving - to actualize, maintain, and enhance the experiencing organism” (1951, p. 487). However, it is central to Naess' understanding that this self-realisation is realisation of the whole, since there is only one substance, of which we are, individually and collectively, specific expressions. Our self-realisation is not the realisation of a separate autonomous self, but of a more and more expansive and non-egoic sense of self, a self which is to be identified with “all there is”.

When Rogers expands on his notion of an actualising tendency, a tendency to become “that self which one truly is” (1961, p.181), he originally does so within the Hero-narrative, asserting that the organism “moves in the direction of greater independence or self-responsibility. (1951, p.488) However, by the time he wrote *A Way of Being* (1980) he had developed a transpersonal notion of growth and communication and he described his group experiences in phrases like “participating in a larger universal formative tendency” (p.128) and “an awareness of together being part of a broader universal consciousness” (p. 197). He suggests that there might be a non-anthropocentric base for theorising growth and change.

I hypothesise that there is a formative directional tendency in the universe.. This is an evolutionary tendency towards greater order, greater complexity, greater interrelatedness. In humankind, this tendency exhibits itself as the individual moves from a single-cell origin to complex organic functioning, to knowing and sensing below the level of consciousness, to a conscious awareness of the organism and the external world, to a transcendent awareness of the harmony and unity of the cosmic system, including humankind. (p.133)

Rogers came to see client and therapist as together caught up in a process of becoming which includes everything in the universe. The drive to maintain and enhance the experiencing organism is not something operating within the client or within the client-therapist encounter. Rather, the “unfolding process” is something bigger than them, and they are inside it.

This is not to deny the significance of individual human life and experience. Whitehead (1978) whose “process philosophy” has had some influence on the way the deep ecological position has developed, took the view that all aspects of the universe are moving towards the realisation of ever greater richness of experience. Murray Bookchin (1980) argues that evolutionary processes strive towards the realisation of ever greater degrees of individuation, freedom and selfhood. The same perspective is behind Rogers’ notion that organismic choice is “guided by the evolutionary flow” (1980, p. 127). Like Naess, Whitehead and Bookchin, he is perceiving the universe as a living organism. As Hillman suggests, we are always in one archetypal fantasy or another, and this is the fantasy of Gaia.

Thus, when we provide a climate that permits persons to *be* - whether they are clients, students, workers or persons in a group - we are not involved in a chance event. We are tapping into a tendency which permeates all organic life - a tendency to become all the complexity of which the organism is capable”. (Ibid. p.134).

Caring for our client and caring for our planet may be not so much an expression of our morality as they are an expression of our identity. If we can occasionally escape from the Promethean mindset which asserts our autonomy and defines both our client and the rainforest as “other”, we may find that accepting that we *are* our world has inevitable consequences in how we treat it/us - in all its/our human/nonhuman manifestations. Rogers was able to express the cosmic paradox in human terms. He was convinced that human beings have a natural tendency to care for one another, to submerge ego in the oneness of relationship. Paradoxically, he was convinced also that a caring relationship fosters creativity and diversity. He placed a high value on creativity and diversity, on the uniqueness of the individual’s response to her world when no longer constrained by fear;

yet his experience and observation of this uniqueness convinced him that it is grounded in the universal.

In conventional discussions of therapeutic empathy, the separate identities of the therapist and client are taken for granted. However, if we cease to assert this essential separateness as axiomatic, our notion of empathy can change. If, moreover, we allow ourselves to abandon the modernist assumption that all knowledge originates in seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling or touching objects outside the boundary of our skin, we can contemplate the possibility that we can know another person's subjective experience directly. Rogers himself suggests in his later writing that we recognise a transpersonal, boundary-crossing experience of empathy. We can think of empathy, not as a leap of imagination by which we come to understand the experiencing of another person, but as the dissolution of the boundaries by which we assiduously maintain our sense of self, in order to let the experience of the client be our own experience. We can think of empathy not as communication but as identification, not just with a particular client but with the "unity in process" which is manifested at this moment in this client. Rogers remarks in more than one place that the more intensely personal and individual a communication is, the more universal it is. In *A Way of Being* he comments on the peculiar satisfaction to be found in really hearing somebody:

It is like listening to the music of the spheres, because beyond the immediate message of the person, no matter what that might be, there is the universal. Hidden in all of the personal communications which I really hear there seem to be orderly psychological laws, aspects of the same order we find in the universe as a whole. (1980, p. 8)

Our psychology has trouble in expanding the notion of empathy beyond the one-to-one interaction between humans. We think we can talk about empathy with human beings well enough, but what could we possibly mean by empathy with the planet, empathy with animals, empathy with rocks and stones and trees? And are we really capable of unconditionally valuing the rainforest (mosquitos and all) for its own sake, rather than because it serves us in some way?

Those whose basic assumptions are grounded in the Mother story have no problem with such questions. The systemic ecologist whose world is a wholly material web of life, sees the oneness of the system in which human beings are intrinsically connected with all material existence, and she may have no interest in the meanings which individuals attribute to their experience of this. The pan-experiential philosopher sees subjectivity as in the essence of all being, and deep empathy with the planet as the natural condition of human beings. The nature mystic cherishes and celebrates the experience of transcending of the boundary between the part and the Whole. From such perspectives, the sense of separateness which turns empathy into a deliberate act of cognition or imagination is an aberration, and the notion that empathy only exists in relationships between two human individuals is a nonsense.

It seems to me that Rogers got it completely right when he developed a model of therapy in which the means and the end are identical - congruence. We are used to dealing with this idea on the individualistic level. However, in the ecological perspective counsellor and client need to become congruent not only in thinking and feeling and behaviour, not only in awareness and unconscious processes, and not only each within

their own organism. We need also to be congruent with what we call the "natural world". We need to be in harmony with the rhythms of nature. So does our culture, so does our species. Humanistic therapies have always been grounded in the notion that the separation of mind and body is pathological. We are now becoming aware of the deep pathology that has come from the modernist separation of culture and nature

Yet we can't be seduced into giving all our worship to Gaia. We are both one and many. To be carried away by the regressive wish for symbiotic union with the Great Mother is no solution for the planet's condition. To mistake the "unity-consciousness" of infantile regression for transpersonal experience is no less pathological than to deny altogether the transpersonal dimension of human life.

The Earth Mother has many names. As Demeter, her preferred name in classical Greece, she is domesticated as the goddess of motherhood and agriculture. As Themis, goddess of cosmic order, she is mother to Prometheus, who does much to destroy that order by championing human beings, but is reconciled to her at the end. As Maia, she is mother to Hermes, another god who is particularly friendly to humans. It is Hermes that I wish to discuss next, not only because his narrative appears to be the dominant narrative of late capitalism, but because he warns us that all the gods must be worshipped. We cannot adequately address the pathology of the planet by replacing the total and uncritical worship of Prometheus by the total and uncritical worship of Gaia.

Hermes

Just as it makes some sense to argue that the modern, industrial era has been inordinately devoted to the worship of Prometheus, we can look at post-modern, post-industrial society and find evidence of a very different god at work. The Age of Prometheus may be as good as over. The Age of Hermes may be just beginning.

In the past thirty years we have had numerous cultural philosophers pointing out that the sensibility of the final years of the twentieth century is quite different from that of the era preceding it. They point to the explosion of information, the universal commodification, the dominance of image, the collapse of the "grand narratives" and the consequent relativisation of truths and values, the challenge to the fantasy of control and the fantasy of progress, the shift from a focus on substance to a focus on image, an all-pervasive experience of illusion and deception.

I suggest that if we try to *see through* these phenomena to the image and god behind them, we will find Hermes.

The Greek myths are full of stories about Hermes. Whenever the gods wish to send messages to one another or to mortals, whenever they need to negotiate with some one, or to placate some one who is annoyed, we find the task given to Hermes, who flies in on his winged feet, does the job and flies out again.

This slippery, deceiving, seductive, non-heroic character has many names and takes many forms: the god of travellers, the god of shepherds, the god of merchants and markets, the trickster, the god of lies and deceit, the god of gamblers, the god of thieves, the god of cowboys, the god of illusions, the god of shamanic medicine, the god of the crossroads, the god of consultants, the god of connections, of quicksilver, of fast footwork and smooth

talking, the bringer of good luck. He is the divine entrepreneur, a con man without ethics and without malice. He has no values of his own, no concern for substance. He enjoys doing deals, being clever, playing the game. He loves paradox, trickery and risk. He is ambiguous and cynical. He is everybody's mate

The information society is guided by a fantasy of the marketplace, in which exchange is an end in itself - a fantasy of deregulation, free interchange, the commercialisation of knowledge, and the replacement of social relations based on bonds of family or loyalty by social relations which are loose, temporary, and freely traded. In this marketplace the temporary contract is rapidly taking the place of the permanent institution. The consciousness of the marketplace permeates all areas of life. The profession of counselling fits easily into such a culture. Indeed, it can only exist in such a culture. Healing, wisdom, guidance, care, are now commodities to be purchased in the marketplace rather than rights or responsibilities determined by social roles.

Another characteristic of the post-industrial era is the decline of orthodoxy. The "grand narratives" of the modern, industrial era - Marxism, Rationalism, Christianity - are now supposed to be obsolete. The notion of common or shared meanings seems to be in the process of disappearing. Any system of cultural meanings can be "deconstructed" until all semblance of substance has dissolved. The past forty years have witnessed an increasing relativisation of values, which allows for a diversity (and tentativeness) of belief and behaviour in mainstream culture which is in strong contrast with the previous era. Most of us are no longer driven by the need for an all-encompassing ideology. Nor, as professionals do most of us feel the need for a single all-encompassing theory and practice of therapy.

We find in the late twentieth century a general abandonment of the heroic fantasy of control of nature. This is reflected in contemporary psychologies which challenge the notion of egoic control of personality and behaviour. Promethean, positivist science is gradually being supplanted by a Hermetic, postmodern science characterised by incomplete information, catastrophe and chaos, indeterminacy, paradox, discontinuity, and a tendency to uncover new questions rather than new answers. The postmodern counsellor's mode of dealing with this reality is aesthetic rather than rational, more comfortable dealing with images than with ideas.

All of these symptoms of the "postmodern condition" can be readily perceived as manifestations of the Hermes archetype. We seem to be deeply embedded in the myth of the "Bringer of Dreams".

The Greeks did not have a sense of a cosmic conflict between good and evil. They had nothing in their mythology which approximates to Satan. The destructive or nasty or pathological aspects of behaviour were shared out among all the gods. Archetypal images have both negative and positive aspects, and this is manifested in the personalities of the gods. Zeus is both punitive and benevolent. Ares engages in passionate activism as well as mindless violence. Prometheus is the arrogant and sexist saviour of humanity. Gaia both nurtures and devours her children.

Hermes is no exception. He is the god of deceit and manipulation and groundlessness. He is also the god of magic and dialogue and transformation. At best the postmodern counsellor

is imaginative, tolerant, pluralistic and flexible. At worst she is superficial, nihilistic eclectic and slippery.

In so far as our assumptions are embedded in the Hermes story, we will find in our personalities and professional practice a tendency to privilege image over substance, seeming over being. We will find a reluctance to commit ourselves to structures, ideas or relationships. We will be inclined to see ourselves as companions in the client's journey, rather than as healers, advisers or nurturers. We will "facilitate" or "manipulate" rather than direct or even guide. We will be hesitant to face and declare our own values, to fight for our beliefs, or to pass judgement on any one's behaviour. We will be pluralistic in theory and technique. Perhaps this will be manifested in a groundless eclecticism. On the other hand, perhaps it may indicate that we are genuinely polytheistic in our values, perceiving truth to reside, not in either Prometheus or Gaia or Zeus or Eros, but in all of the gods at once and together, in the whole polyphony of voices.

Postmodern thinking is often nihilistic. If nothing is to be valued above anything else, then nothing is to be valued at all. This is one form of Hermes pathology. The counter to this is the message of the myth that *all* the gods are to be worshipped, that the squabbles between them, the conflict of values and the clash of perspectives, are to be accepted simply as manifestations of the way the world is. Unfortunately, when the one god lets us down we tend to redirect all our worship to another, not realising that our problem may derive not from our worship of a particular god but from our unwillingness to worship all the gods at once. An obsessive, monotheistic worship of Hermes or Gaia is no more a solution to the problems of the planet than the monotheistic worship of Prometheus.

Yet we need a Hermes-consciousness to confront the urgency of our situation. It is Hermes who challenges Prometheus' assertion that it is he who is the true saviour of mankind, and argues that he should take a more humble stance towards the eternal order of the cosmos. It is Hermes who subverts and destabilises the patriarchal order when he steals the cattle of the gods. When Maia, the earth mother, scolds her child for causing such trouble the infant Hermes replies: "Mother, I did it for you."

There are echoes here of Hermes' origins as a god of an oppressed rural people whose land has been taken from them by invaders, and who do not have the means to challenge their oppressors except through theft and trickery. There are echoes also of the oppression of the native earth-worshippers by the worshippers of the sky-father, who had seized political and religious power and who have had it ever since. In Hermes' assertion that "I did it for you, Mother," there is a suggestion that Mother will have her day of honour once again, and that it is her son, the Trickster and Rogue, who will bring this about.

CONCLUSION

The Hero stories of the great classical mythologies, and the Hero stories of modernist science and psychology depict the struggle for egoic consciousness to emerge from the darkness of unconsciousness, the chaos of Nature, the tumult of uncontrolled energies. By contrast, the Mother stories of religious traditions, Nature philosophies and ecological science do not see chaos and darkness and tumult but an order which may be beyond our

comprehension. The Hermes story tells us that the way forward is not to assert the legitimacy of one of these stories and belittle the other, but to hold the two in tension

The mythologies of the great classical cultures represent a world where each god has his or her distinct truth, and all must be acknowledged. I am not suggesting that we can live in the kind of symbiotic union with the planet which seems to have been experienced by our stone age ancestors, any more than I am suggesting that a focus on personal development and technological progress will find us a way out of our present social and environmental predicament. However, I do believe that we must learn to acknowledge both the primacy of the individual and the primacy of the planet. We have to learn to live simultaneously in both the Prometheus fantasy and the Gaia fantasy, and to do this we need a Hermes consciousness.

Each archetypal image represents, to use Jung's phrase, a distinct "mode of apprehension". In attempting to address the pathology of the planet we can apprehend the task intellectually, emotionally and imaginatively in a number of ways. From the Promethean perspective we can deal with the planet as a machine of which we are (potentially at least) in control, just as we deal with ourselves therapeutically as machines of which the ego is (potentially at least) in control. From the Gaian perspective we deal with the planet as a living organism, and our therapy is directed at restoring the union between the individual and the greater organism. From the Hermetic perspective, we deal with the planet and our place in it as flux and process, not seeking to ground ourselves in any truth as absolute, but opening ourselves to the possibility of transformation through the immediacy of experience.

The reader will readily *see through* the assumptions and argument of this paper and find there a reiteration of the Hermes myth. I have no apology for that. I am stuck in it, as our global culture is, and risk the pathology that goes with it. There are many things which excite me in a postmodern consciousness, and many things which worry me deeply. However, they all belong to the same story. We need to follow Hermes' own advice and example and dwell very lightly in his world. He's a friendly god, but he can't always be trusted.

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