

FEMININE INDIVIDUATION: TRANCENDER  
THE MYTHIC TALE OF PSYCHE, EMBRACING SOUL

Life is a journey that ends when Crossing the Bar. In Analytic Psychology, this journey is called “individuation” that has an end goal of ego merging with soul. Careful examination of the Psyche myth may lead to the conclusion that individuation entails not only the unification of ego and soul but also their merger with Eros (Love). While the myth has something to say to everyone, its content relates mostly to feminine psychology. It is believed that women and men experience the ‘way of individuation’ differently. The fairytale, “White Snake,” and the Myth of Parsifal provide wonderful examples of masculine individuation. The fairytale, “Twelve Brothers” as well as the myth of Psyche provide excellent renditions of feminine individuation. (It should be brought out that feminine individuation does not only concern women, it also pertains to males in that the process enables them to develop their inner feminine component. Likewise, masculine individuation provides females a way to integrate their inner masculine component.)

Although Robert Johnson and Erich Neumann have analyzed the Psyche myth thoroughly, the myth is so multifacete that there is opportunity to add a few additional insights to the overall understanding of the myth. The myth traces how the feminine ego approaches the soul. The myth is also about how Psyche (Soul) comes to claim her name. While the tale covers a short time frame, the myth symbolically outlines the life-long effort that individuation entails. Psyche represents the heroic feminine ego that overcomes the trials and tribulations of life, and projects a viable model for following the twists of feminine individuation.

The Myth of Psyche underscores that Soul is strongly tied to the feminine principle. Neumann adds that the myth documents the evolutionary development of the feminine. It records a shift from an encounter of fertility to an encounter of intimate relationship. Aphrodite, the protagonist of the myth, personifies the encounter of fertility while Psyche labors to forge an encounter of relationship. But Psyche’s tale is more than etching the encounter of intimacy; it outlines how a woman’s individuation enables her to delve into the deep feminine where she encounters the soul and accesses feminine grace. The tale also provides commentary on the details of Eros’ or masculine individuation. The myth highlights how he matures from the boy-child, or son-lover stage and pawn of fertility, to mature lover who is committed to relationship. The mature Eros becomes the Spirit of Love; the Animus Mundi, the masculine spirit that guides the soul to the Theosphere; in short, the Spirit of Divine love. The tale traces the evolution of love from fleeting feelings of sexual attraction to steadfast devotion of love. This evolution contains two joinings or psychological marriages: the earthly marriage between the genders that secures the next generation; and the marriage of Soul and Spirit of Love. (The ‘marriage’ of ego and Self is indirectly referred to in the tale. This joining of ego and Self occurs when Psyche makes the decision to open the box. At that moment her personhood is whole; she knows who she is and therefore no longer needs to abide by what another, in this case, the Tower, advises.)

## MAIDENHOOD

Maidenhood is a time in women's individuation when the persona is entrenched, character largely fixed and self-identity rudimentary. For many young women the patriarchal order distorts their self-image and the image of woman. Consequently, many women have to play catch-up in order to correct the contradictions that are formulated in this period of life. For maidens already in contact with their inner beauty (or divine child), the material external world may be experienced as foreign if not lonely.

In the tale, Psyche, the youngest of the king's three daughters, is still in maidenhood and her beauty is the object of great adoration by the people. Aphrodite rages because humans have begun to adore Psyche more than her. Although Psyche cannot be said to represent the average maiden, she nonetheless conveys the innocence that many maidens possess. Psyche projects what can be called an "anima figure," that is, Psyche is able to reflect whatever projection is placed on her. Again, this is not uncommon with young women. In Psyche's case, she reflects the projection of beauty. Given her name of Psyche, that is, of Soul, the projection of great beauty is not unwarranted. But Psyche as maiden only carries the potential of soul; she holds the promise of soul. The myth highlights that point in human development when consciousness esteems the beauty of soul more than the beauty of body. Although Aphrodite resists the change, she nonetheless becomes the vehicle for Psyche to earn the right to be called Soul. In the myth Aphrodite, as a way of punishing Psyche, calls upon her son, Cupid, an instigator of lust and mayhem, to cause Psyche to fall in love with a vile creature. Thereafter in the tale Psyche reacts to Aphrodite's demands and, in doing so, works through her individuation and becomes Soul.

## MARRIAGE

With the coming of the menses all young women have in common the capacity to birth. In earlier times, on the inception of menses, a large number of females were paired in marriage by their parents largely without much input from the daughters. Psyche's father, the king, concerned that no suitor for marriage had approached and fearful of the Goddess' wrath, decided to consult the oracle at Delphi. The oracle instructed the father to marry Psyche off to one of the "dragon seed." This notation of "dragon seed" suggests the primal swamps of fertility that Aphrodite and Cupid convey. Afraid to disobey the oracle, the king orders his daughter to a mountain crag to await the coming wedding and deflowering by her fierce and wild bridegroom.

Symbolically, marriage ends a young women's freedom from fertility. With marriage a woman submits to fertility, which symbolically suggests a death process; the death of maidenhood. It marks the end of feminine innocence and beginning of feminine responsibility. While the soul exists aside from fertility, the myth indicates that women's individuation enjoins that first fertility must be given its day before soul can have its own day. Of course, this does not hold for all women. But it does for most even for those who do not bear children, in that they lend their energies to nurture others.

It is not uncommon that women enter marriage without truly knowing who the husband is. A woman is carried forward by her projections of him and if positive, joyfully participates in an extended honeymoon period. But a period eventually arises when "honeymoon," is not enough;

when not knowing begins to have an artificial flavor. This may be particularly true when the woman is pregnant as Psyche becomes.

#### MESSAGE FROM THE SHADOW

Eros, on gazing on Psyche, is instantly drawn to her (he is pricked by his own arrow). He sends the gentle Zephyr Wind to sweep Psyche off the cliff and take her to his palace in the meadow where he takes her for wife. Eros instructs Psyche that she is not to see him in daylight and if she does, he must part from her. As time passes in an unconscious bliss, Psyche begins to miss something. Cupid warns Psyche that her sisters may cause trouble. The sisters symbolize Psyche's inner shadow; in a positive manner they represent the impulse to know, to understand what is missing, but not always for the right reason. There are women, however, who prefer not to know or who lack ability to assert themselves and therefore remain unconscious. In a negative manner, Psyche's shadow harbors revenge and entertains the feelings to kill him (symbolized by her approach with knife in hand) for his betrayal.

Psychologically, Psyche knows something is wrong with her not being able to see her lover in daylight or inquire about his ways. This "something wrong" in the woman comes with the evolutionary development that has been going on for some time: women and men are not restricted to a sexual encounter, there can also be an encounter of intimate relationship. This the evolving feminine has come to desire. In the tale, Psyche's ego is not yet sufficiently conscious. But this feeling of something wrong arising from the shadow is slowly making her conscious of what is missing. In Psyche's case what is wrong is the absence of intimate relationship.

In the tale, Psyche meets with her sisters who prompt her to shine light on her husband who must be of the dragon seed. She is told to bring a lamp and knife and if he is a beast, to slay him. Clearly in a quandary, she nonetheless proceeds to shed light on the situation; she is ready to know. (Wanting to become more conscious perhaps is the most crucial aspect of individuation.) Cupid's demand not to be seen causes Psyche to fear the worst. She is so unsettled by anxieties that she decides to disobey her husband's instructions and heed the qualms coming from her shadow. What allows the feminine to establish intimate relationship is a willingness to risk security. Moreover, this act of disobedience is a major step in the individuation process; it represents that moment in development when the woman begins to claim her personhood. (Psyche's full claim of personhood occurs when, contrary to what she was told, she decides to open the box that Persephone was sending to Aphrodite.)

One night, Psyche approaches Cupid while he is asleep with lantern and knife. On gazing on Cupid's beauty, she stumbles and a drop of hot oil falls on him and he awakens. The myth indicates that maleness would be content to remain unconscious about personal commitment and sexual encounter. When light (consciousness) is shed on the relationship, the male, Cupid, flees. In this case Cupid flees back to his mother's protection (psychologically he employs the defense mechanisms of regression and avoidance). Even though this myth is several thousand years old, the situation for males has not changed much; they still prefer to avoid intimacy of relationship. It still is incumbent on the female to teach the male how to relate.

The knife symbolizes the ability to cut through the unknown and ignorance. But the knife is also destructive. Here the problem of shadow rears its head and cause much confusion. The shadow holds that something is being avoided. The shadow, in a constructive mode, urges Psyche to become conscious of the circumstances. The shadow also urges Psyche to take vengeance, to destroy what betrays her expectation. She approaches her love with intent to slay him if he is false. And in a flash love can turn into hate. Had Cupid been hurting her, it would make sense for Psyche to carry a knife to defend herself. But the suggestion of the knife comes from her sisters who are jealous of her prosperity and wellbeing and would deny Psyche her contentment. In this case the knife symbolizes the destructiveness of anger and jealousy in relationship. It is no simple matter to dissimulate the shadow's positive stirrings from the destructive ones.

In modern times many women opt not to marry and deal with masculine impunity, on the one hand, and masculine avoidance, on the other hand. Yet the majority marries. In this context, the myth frames woman's individuation within a marriage background. In addition to managing the household, holding jobs, rearing children, and teaching husbands the way of relationship, modern women labor to individuate. The myth sets forth the labors that women need to undertake in order for the ego to embrace with soul. The myth identifies four main labors of individuation: differentiate, deftness or pliability, spiritual orientation, and focused consciousness. These four labors prepare her to let go of external authority and proceed forthwith under her own authority.

For some women raising consciousness causes them to recognize that their husbands are not truly there for them in the way they wish. For many this is heart-wrenching as it was for Psyche. Her first reaction was utter despair. She threw herself headlong into a nearby river to end life and her great suffering. This gesture may indeed imply suicide or it may symbolize that the feminine, when greatly distraught, flees from the rational conscious world and reverts inwardly to intuitive understanding and the wisdom contained in the million-year-old inner woman. After the river's current safely deposits Psyche on the river's bank, she meets ancient Pan, a demi-god of nature. This meeting supports the contention that a woman benefits from tapping the ancient sources within the psyche. Pan advised that she address Eros with prayers and win him with tender submission. Although Pan is ultimately correct, the initial struggle is intra-feminine; in this case between the archaic and unfolding, between Aphrodite and Psyche. Later the toil is between Psyche and Cupid. In the end, Psyche does win Eros back but only after confronting the powerful Goddess of Love and Fertility, solidifying the ground of relationship, and the maturing of Cupid into Eros. After wandering haphazardly, she finally meets with Aphrodite who, in turn, gives Psyche four tasks to accomplish. In a subtle manner, Aphrodite, through her demands, sets the stage for intra-feminine development; she sets the stage for the encounter of relationship to evolve from the encounter of fertility; Aphrodite sets the stage for Psyche to go beyond her and gain access to the deep feminine and soul.

Every woman has an inner Aphrodite although most women are afraid to express her. Every woman carries inwardly the deep feminine and source of grace but most are unaware of their contents and nature. Every woman has a soul metaphorically residing in the silent depth of the psyche but few are able to transcend from an ego-based existence to a soul-based existence. Although the myth suggests that high value is given to Psyche's nature it would be a misnomer to undervalue Aphrodite and the joy, beauty and pleasure that she conveys to human existence. The rise of Psyche does not mean the demise of Aphrodite. The rest of the myth describes

symbolically the labors of feminine individuation that enable women to access the deep feminine and uncover the soul.

## DIFFERENTIATION

When Psyche is placed in Aphrodite's hands, the former is buffeted and scorned by the latter. To underscore Psyche's incompetence, Aphrodite orders Psyche to "sort that disordered heap of seeds, place each kind of grain apart in its own place and see that you show me the work completed before the evening." Psyche is stupefied and overwhelmed by the enormity of the task. But a woman does not necessarily freeze when overwhelmed. Psychologically she may take no action. This lack of action generally relates to waiting until the inner wisdom brings up a response. One may even say that great desire or need, such as found in Psyche, finds a way to transform something overwhelming into something doable. This first challenge teaches the feminine the way of differentiation symbolically by applying ant qualities of diligence and patience.

Chronologically, the more advanced differentiation process in women begins to take place after the last child sets off for school, that is, in their mid to late 30s. Today, in contrast to the period when the myth took form, women have done much to develop a differentiating capability, particularly among women who complete college studies. The myth relates that setting off on individuation requires the woman to develop differentiating ego capabilities as personified by the ant. If not already passed on by parents, these ant qualities are difficult for a woman to develop later in life, but developing them is critical. Even women who have developed the ant qualities of diligence, patience and thoroughness may benefit from advancing their differentiating skills in order to ensure that a "defused" type of consciousness becomes "focused." (In a manner of speaking, this task is part of a woman's effort to develop her inner masculine component.)

## DEFTNESS AND PLIABILITY

Psyche second task is to procure a wisp of wool from sheep that the blazing sun maddens. Psyche again withdraws inwardly. This is depicted by her abandoning hope and deciding to throw herself from a cliff overhanging a river. Rather than attempt suicide, metaphorically throwing herself over the cliff, Psyche turns to tap her inner wisdom. Ancient wisdom in the form of a river reed provides advice. The key is to assume the pliability of the reed; Psyche is to act with deftness. She is to wait until the heat of the day subsides and sheep fall asleep and then gather from a nearby grove bits of golden wool that cling to the branches.

If Psyche is initially advised to develop the masculine forte of differentiation, she is advised not to adopt the masculine "ramming" action posture. Rather, she is advised to acquire what she needs indirectly with dexterity and deftness. If done otherwise she is likely to be rammed mightily. Women do best with pliability; to wait until the time and circumstances are propitious for action.

Modern Women have been able to sharpen their differentiating skills and also have toughened themselves to participate in masculine ramming modalities; in recent lexicon this has come out to mean "man-up." But the myth advises against this. Women gain little by participating in

ramming interactions. They are apt to gain much more by practicing the pliability of the reed; to act with subtle deftness where calmness abounds. Chronologically women in their early 40s, that is, after devoting enormous energy to daughterhood, wifehood and motherhood, are open to develop personhood. At such time women not only need to integrate differentiating skills but also self-assertion, but again, in a feminine mode rather than in a masculine manner (which often is experienced as ramming).

## DEMURE FOCUS AND SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

After completing the second task, Psyche is told to bring water in a crystal cup from a black stream (River Styx) high up a treacherous mountain that works its way downward to the underworld and then back up the mountain. On approaching the mountain and noticing the impossibility of climbing and the many dragons that inhabited caves throughout the mountain, Psyche is overwhelmed by the task. At this moment she again turns inwardly and activates the eagle-spirit energy within her. An eagle associated with Zeus and considered a symbol for spirit, takes the urn in its beak and obtains the water when it is flowing on the upper reaches of the mountain.

The crystal urn appears fragile in contrast to the mountain's harsh terrain. The amount of water which the eagle gathers seems small in comparison to the amount of water in the river. Both the small quantity of water and fragility of the urn pertain to a demure feminine psychology: take a small amount at a time and nurture it well.

If the first task called for developing masculine differentiation skills and the second for deepening feminine pliability of action, the third task calls for development of the feminine principle and spirituality. This is to say, that after activating ant-like differentiation and reed-like pliability a woman needs to activate a spiritual orientation projected by a heavenly bird. With a spiritual practice the feminine can drink deeply from the River of Life. In that the water is to be put in a crystal goblet infers that her spiritual practice in the beginning will be fragile and accordingly, it should be modest until it takes root in her everyday life.

During the three tasks Psyche, in an intuitive manner, gains access to primal feminine wisdom (personified by ants of the land, reed of water and eagle of the sky). Chronologically, life experiences enable a woman in her mid to late 40s to appreciate and access the depths that abide within, that is, if she has not already lost contact with her intuitive nature (which is happening increasingly to contemporary women). The myth suggests that access to her intuitive side becomes for women a base on which to process consciousness and direct will. At this point in their individuation women are ready to soar not grandly but somewhat demurely (as symbolized by the fragile urn).

## PLANNING: ATTENTIVE CONSCIOUSNESS

Finally, Psyche is tasked to descend into Hades and return with Persephone's beauty ointment that Aphrodite needs in order to restore her beauty which has been worn off by attending to her injured son and trashing his uncouth wife. Again, Psyche apprehends the impossibility of the task. There is no other recourse but to plunge head first off a tower. Metaphorically, she needs to

leap into the consciousness that she has acquired and think out a plan to obtain the ointment. She now must rely on reason symbolized by the human made tower, in order to accomplish the task. Chronologically at mid-life, a woman may shift emphasis from body to mind. It is the time of mind, 'time of tower.'

Although mid-life may shift priority to the intellect, the myth instructs women that pursuit of individuation at mid-life requires a descent into the deep feminine, the Underworld Court of Persephone, Queen of Souls. Her consciousness (tower) tells what she needs. She needs coins in order pay the ferryman for the ride across the River Styx and cakes to fend off the hound that guards the entrance to Hades. Psychologically, coins and cakes imply that the woman has the resources (for example, a mature ego) to plunge into the depths of the unconscious. (Needless to say, the psychological journey to the deeper levels of the unconscious should not be undertaken until the ego is sufficiently mature and grounded.)

The myth further instructs women that passage to the deep feminine may not be possible until after the menopausal period. In the myth, the menopause is a time to let go of the creative but nearly obsessive grip that fertility and mothering hold on the feminine. The tower instructs Psyche not to assist the lame cart driver who will ask for assistance, nor attend to a hand that rises up from the water beseeching help, and thirdly, not to join women who are spinning a web. The tower also informs Psyche that under no circumstances is she to open the box that contains the ointment Persephone sends to Aphrodite. The menopause is time for a woman to enter the metaphoric 'well' which now has run dry and where the ancient wisdom of women may be revealed. Psyche is instructed to let go during the menopause the acts of nurturing and social involvement, if only for a period of time, that were called for during the time of menses. If able to experience the menopause as a letting go episode, a woman arrives at the boundary of the deep feminine, the Court of Queen Persephone, or better said, the Silent Blue-Lit Land of the soul. And on gaining the deep feminine, Psyche nears the final round of individuation, namely, the merging of ego and soul. But in order for this linking to occur, the ego must first remove itself from the psychological center stage and realize that it is but a component of the Self. This removal and realization occur slowly as the obstacles to individuation are worked through.

## REALIZATION OF SELF

It is essential to inquire why Aphrodite desires Persephone's beauty ointment. Does not Aphrodite have her own wondrous beauty ointment? Or does Persephone's beauty differ from that of Aphrodite? Persephone's beauty is of another kind. Aphrodite's beauty is that of body while Persephone's is that of Soul. At this point in the myth Psyche still represents ego rather than soul. Psychologically, Psyche's achievement of reaching the deep feminine indicates that her ego has greatly strengthened. Whereas Psyche always followed the advice given to her, she decides to act on her own authority to open the box which contains the ointment. Why did she disregard the Tower's instructions?

To answer the question another question must be asked: Why did the Tower instruct her not to open the box? Most likely the Tower understood that the box pertained solely to the Gods. For humans to transgress what belonged to the Gods would be disastrous. The Tower cautioned a

human not to flout the instructions. What the Tower did not know was that Psyche was nearing the end of her individuation and ready to join with soul, the transpersonal component in humans.

Yes, feminine vanity may have been the reason why she decides to open the box. But more relevant Psyche has reached a point in her individuation where the realization of Self occurs. Self-Realization does not occur if the ego remains egotistical and refuses to abdicate the center stage. In short, until the ego becomes conscious that it is part of a larger entity, namely, the Higher Self, individuation cannot proceed to the final round of ego merging with soul.

Early on during her ‘honeymoon’ with Cupid she disobeyed his directive not to gaze on him. That disobedience was based on fear, and self-doubt. The Psyche that disregards the Tower’s instructions has traversed the long road of individuation which has taken her to the Underworld. Symbolically entry into the Underworld implies the ego’s death while her return highlights a rebirth process. This death-rebirth process underscores that the ego no longer occupies the center stage; it realizes that it is but a component of the Higher Self. Psyche has arrived at her Selfhood.

Although the tale points to vanity it might be more correct to say psychologically that it is her sense of wholeness which she achieves after completing Aphrodite’s tasks that empowers her to open the box and embrace soul. Had she obeyed the Tower and not opened the box which contained Persephone’s beauty, Psyche would not have encountered the soul; meaning that the process of individuation had not yet progressed to the point of ego joining with Self. So long as she lent her will to what others asked of her, Psyche did not possess sufficient Selfness to claim the right to be called ‘Soul.’ To claim that right she had first to experience the wholeness of Self and the authority vested in Self. In the end, Psyche, on her singular authority, opened the Box and took in the essence of soul. And at this very instance Psyche opened herself to become Soul.

## EMBRACING SOUL

After Psyche opens the box a deep sleep pours all over her. Metaphorically, it is the beauty of soul that has poured over Psyche. At this instance she finally can lay claim to the name of ‘Soul.’ Where her shadow (not the ego) informed Psyche that something was wrong in her initial relationship with Cupid, in the fourth task it was her ego-Self that makes the decision to open the box. And it is in this sense that it can be said that Psyche was ready to become Soul. The deep sleep which descends on Psyche represents the soul’s state of withdrawn wholeness, timelessness and vast silence. The material world does not add to the soul’s completeness. The deep sleep that she enters suggests that Psyche’s Being rests in a cut off state. She has no need to leave her new ‘state’ but it is a state more fitting to the Pre-Creation Void than to human existence.

Aphrodite belongs to the material world: its woes and joys. But in sending Psyche to the Underworld, the Land of the Deep Feminine, Aphrodite sets the stage for the feminine ego to contact the deep feminine. In doing so the feminine is now open to raise love to a spiritual level, which in turn, allows the encounter of fertility to be transformed into an encounter of intimate relationship. But such will not occur if Psyche remains in her blissful inner retreat.

How did the soul end up in the Underworld? To arrive at some sort of answer it needs to be asked: what is soul and from where does it come? Soul, it is held, is a self-contained component



of Being; in itself it is complete. In the pre-creation void (before the Big Bang), Soul was One, the Universal Soul or Soul of the Creative Source (Anima Mundi). When creation occurred with the Big Bang the Void, the undifferentiated mass of everything, was distributed throughout the Cosmos. Each fragment of matter inherited an essence of the pre-creation Universal Soul. This is to say that every human through *Homo sapiens*' DNA inherits a bit of the Universal Soul. Although the soul's location remains unknown to the ego, it is held that the soul resides in the 'deep recesses of Being or metaphorically, in the Underworld (unconscious). It is not until individuation proceeds forward that the ego begins to attend to the messages that the soul sends regarding its presence.

In the end, it is the ego's task to bring first the Self into consciousness and then the soul, and it is this uncovering and merging with soul that constitutes the end point of individuation. A feedback that the ego is on track of the soul can be detected in the manner in which an individual shifts from an ego-based life to a soul-based life. The intellectual understanding of realizing Self or of ego linking with soul is not the end. The critical aspect is behaving in a manner that reflects a soul-based existence and in sensing a wholeness that reflects the Self has been realized. (Carl Jung postulated that the soul possesses by nature a religious function. By religious function Jung meant the conveyance of the God Imago archetype. In short, the soul's roots in the original Void underscore its nature to serve as a bridge between the individual and the God Imago.)

At this time, some commentary on what Realization of Self and soul-based existence might look like behaviorally seems appropriate. Feedback that the Personal Self has been realized can be found in the ego's knowing who it is and in its experience of wholeness ("the who that I am is I"), (I know who I am). It is also found in its awareness of the shadow's contents, in the way life unfolds synchronistically, and in behavior that manifests self-empowerment. The individual would exude authenticity in that there would be little discrepancy between how she or he lives and what the persona projects onto the external world. There would be a heightened sense that the ego is not in control of life's events; that some other greater entity is at play.

A soul-based life should shift the ego's historical orientation and linear mode of apprehension towards a broader more timeless orientation, species or planetary if not cosmic in scope. A soul-based life honors the work of the ego but does not over esteem it; it also promotes creativity, and gives preference to silence and radiating love of life. It would deepen the contemplation of Being, be conversant with the transpersonal, express the Life Force imaginatively, moderate the pace of everyday life, enhance the beauty of life, and amplify the ability to love. Overall, a soul-based life would cause life to be experienced as a 'now,' while living lightly on the planet and pursuing "geo-justice" (which Jim Conlon in his work *GEO-JUSTICE*, defines as liberating the earth from all that oppresses it). Finally, but not ultimately, a soul-based life espouses loving-kindness and compassion toward humans and respect for all sentient life. (In his *SEAT OF THE SOUL*, Gary Zukav holds that other animals have a group or species soul rather than an individual soul as humans do.) Even in a soul-based existence, the ego still attends to every day requirements that sustain the life force, but the soul's ahistorical modality shields the ego from having to participate in the frantic pace that has overtaken modern life.

## INCORPORATING EROS: ANIMATING SOUL

In the myth, after he has healed and matured and no longer incites licentiousness, the God Eros descends from Olympus to awaken Psyche/Soul from her self-contained isolated wholeness. Once Eros permeates Psyche/Soul, the latter becomes animated. This suggests that the final challenge of the species' Individuation is the animation of soul, that is, a soul that engages in a deep and profound relationship (the basis for the concept of Soul Mate).

Had the myth ended with Psyche asleep, the reader might well have felt somewhat cheated of a better ending. The somnambulist image suggests an undifferentiated wholeness that belongs in the pre-Creation Void. While in this quasi-Void condition there is no relationship because the soul is not animated. The tale infers that the human soul is quite willing to stay in self-sustained isolation. That she reached this stage of Individuation intimates that the ego has the wherewithal to animate the soul. Furthermore, it is thought that with the evolution of Homo sapiens, the human soul, when encountered by the, ego is readily open to animation. (It is possible that certain individuals, such as a mystic hermit, might wish to keep the soul in a non-animated repose.

Animating the soul marks the final stage in Feminine Individuation. Such development can be traced as follows. First, that the ego is able to enter the Underworld suggests psychologically that its Individuation has progressed deeply. Second, that the ego opens the box on her own authority demonstrates that she knows who she is, meaning, that the ego has merged with the Personal Self. Third, that inhaling the beauty of Persephone's soul when the box is opened infers that Individuation has reached the reified stage of ego embracing Soul. Fourth, that Eros (Spirit of the Passionate Feeling) wipes off the isolation (death-sleep) from Psyche's eyes causes the animation of soul (and ends Individuation).

This animation has another aspect, namely, the passing the essence of Eros' love to soul (Psyche). After this passing it is Psyche/Soul that will evoke the nature of eros and no longer Eros. In short, eros/love becomes the central core of the soul and critical feature of the feminine principle. This incorporation of Eros' attributes by Psyche or of love by soul needs further elaboration. In the passage of eros' attributes from Eros to Psyche, Eros is transformed into the Spirit of Love while Psyche/Soul radiates the characteristics of eros. (Once the soul became animated, the ego, for all practical purposes, reverted to servant or 'temple keeper' and a psychological shift from an ego-based to a soul-based existence became possible.)

In romantic love external appearance, rather than the state of Being, is the initial if not primary attraction that brings about a sense of intense connection which, in turn, is taken to be true wholeness, the feeling of being fully alive. On rare occasions romantic love entwines soul mates which is experienced as authentic wholeness. But romantic love fails to provide full wholeness, something is still missing. What? Some might claim what is missing is love of the Divine; that only a love relationship with the Source of Creation provides true wholeness.

Once awoken (animated), Psyche borders on deification. She brings Persephone's box straightforwardly to Aphrodite. Meanwhile Eros approaches Zeus in order to claim Psyche as wife and to clear the way for soul to enter the Theosphere. In so doing, mature love replaces the

former immature forms of love practiced in Olympus. The mature Eros links love with the divine; this linkage gives substance to the “mantra,” ‘God is Love.’ While the Soul entertains great silence, it also dispenses joy when engaging others. (How frivolous and sterile the Theosphere must have been with an immature Cupid and without soul!)

## MASCULINE TRANSFORMATION

The tale clarifies that only profound committed love animates the soul and not the beguiling and often mischievous love that the infantile Cupid inspires. Although the myth does not provide details of masculine individuation, we become aware of Eros’ heightened maturity when he decides to break out from his mother’s control. Although the myth of Psyche and Eros says little regarding masculine individuation, Eros’ individuation plays a central role in the myth. The tale, in part, traces masculine growth from Cupid, the immature boy to Eros, mature lover. (Eros as a concept is associated with feminine psychic relatedness such as caring/nurturing, and stands in contrast to the masculine logos, and embodies the Life Force in contrast to the Death Force. Eros also projects shades of the Spirit of God) We first meet Cupid when Aphrodite calls upon him to revenge her on Psyche who is replacing Aphrodite in human adoration: “I implore you by all the bonds of love that bind you to her that bore you, by the sweet wounds your arrows deal and by the honeyed smart of your fires, avenge your mother, yes avenge her to the full and sternly punish this rebellious beauty [Psyche].... Cause the maid to be consumed with passion for the vilest of men...” Given his immature level of consciousness, Cupid willingly if not eagerly complies. This is a far cry from the more sedate interaction between mother and child reflected in Madonna and Child (Isis and Horus or Mary and Jesus). In this first encounter Cupid’s mischievous character is underscored; he is a boy who enjoys pranks but unwilling to accept responsibility for the damage or hurt that they produce; in short, a spoiled mama’s brat. Similar to his mother, Cupid, at this point of human evolution, links love with the encounter of fertility-sexuality. Cupid reflects little of the Great God of Love or Great Spirit of God. In terms of masculine development, he is at the stage that Erich Neumann called ‘son-lover’ of the Great Mother; more a pawn of fertility than an independent male life force.

Cupid flouts his mother’s instructions and becomes infatuated with Psyche’s beauty. It is at this moment that fertility begins its transformation into relationship. He carries her off as bride but wishes her to view him through her projections and fantasies. He prefers to remain unconscious of what relationship actually entails; he is content with a sexual rendezvous. As is often the case, women can take so much of a ‘honeymoon’ relationship until the need to relate with ‘body and soul’ and not just sexuality comes to the fore. A woman wants to know the ‘he’ who her partner is. In her attempt to ‘see’ Eros, a drop of hot oil from her lantern falls on Cupid. On awakening he cannot deal with direct intimacy and true to masculine immaturity, flees and ‘regresses’ back to mother.

On his return, Aphrodite locks Cupid in a room to heal from the wound. While in that locked room a transformation occurs: Cupid gives way to Eros, boy to manhood. The tale does not describe the path of Eros’s individuation, but during the period that Psyche undergoes the four trials, Eros grows into his name, Spirit of passionate creativity. Eros reappears in the tale when Psyche is about to complete the fourth labor imposed by Aphrodite: return from Hades with Persephone’s beauty ointment. During Eros’ transformation Psyche endures many tribulations in

order to establish an intimate relationship. Her suffering underscores the difficulty women face in creating a deep relationship with the masculine. It is often overlooked that Eros matures only after Psyche teaches him, partly through her caring and suffering, the “Encounter of Intimate Relationship.”

It is assumed that Eros took on some of the characteristics of his father, Ares, the God of War. In becoming his own man, he combined a joyous temperament inherited from his mother with a steadfast temperament inherited from his father. By the end of the tale, Eros has freed himself from the regressive mother’s ties and is keen to enter relationship. He no longer is the prankster and has taken wing as Spirit of Love. Instead of sending arrows of lust here and there, Eros sets loose shafts of committed love, or put differently, he becomes the Spirit Messenger of Divine love. He now dispenses committed Love rather than sexual passion. In this context, Eros becomes the Animus Mundi, the Holy Spirit of Love that binds all souls in a cosmic web. The love associated with Eros is the fundamental ingredient of a popular refrain ‘God Is Love’ or reversed, ‘Love is God.’ In short, Eros is transformed into Spirit dispensing love and grace throughout the Cosmos. His joining with Psyche conveys an essential truth: love falls short when soul is absent and soul cannot truly be engaged if the spirit of love is absent. Eros and Psyche’s joining represents the mystical union of the Animus and Anima Mundi.

The myth indicates that once a masculine figure symbolized love. Yet in modern times, eros is associated with the feminine principle whether connected with passionate love or in seeking wholeness. This cross over from a masculine to a feminine principle occurs when the God of Love awakes Psyche (Soul). At that moment Soul incorporates Love which thereafter is associated with the feminine principle.

#### THEOSPHERE: THE TRANSPERSONAL

Whereas in the beginning of the tale Eros, under the guise of Cupid, reveals no sign of being the Divine Child, the tale ends in a manner which supports the contention that Eros embodies the Archetype of Divine Child who ushers in a new era. The riddance of Cupid’s mayhem implies change in Olympus. In the tale, Zeus acknowledged that the passion stirred by Cupid’s arrows caused him to behave disgracefully by turning him into bull, swan and so on. The entry of soul into the Theosphere gives hope that in the new era the GodCenter will reign with soul animated by the Spirit of Love.

Although few Life Forces, at the present level of human evolution, successfully joins ego and soul, practically all egos, in one manner or another, embark on the journey. In the Psyche myth, earthy individuation is successful. Thereafter she ascends to the Theosphere and becomes deified. This ascension suggests that the soul’s labors may continue in the Theosphere (Buddhist thought would support such contention). The soul, unlike the ego, is not earth-bound and may pass onto the transpersonal realm in order to carry out what may be called Cosmic Individuation: the joining of All with the Cosmic Soul which is then animated by the Holy Spirit of Love (projected in the guise of the Paraclete or the mature Eros).

In bringing Psyche (Soul) to the Theosphere, Eros (Spirit) discloses its transpersonal role: to lift souls upward where they link in a cosmic web that binds all souls in relationship. In this manner,

the original undifferentiated mass that preceded the ‘Big Bang’ is reconstituted but in a differentiated fashion. This binding, in turn, enables Eros to link the Universe in love.

The most striking account of the soul’s labor in the Theosphere is the theory advanced by Teilhard de Chardin which holds that the soul continues the labor of individuation after the ego crosses the Bar by way of building the noosphere or “mind” sphere (a follow on to the evolutionary development of geosphere and biosphere). Such theorizing places human life in a Universal relationship even though the cosmic mysteries seem way beyond human comprehension. In short, it may not be too speculative to advance that the soul, at the transpersonal level, participates in the individuation of the Theosphere/Cosmos.

## CLOSING COMMENTS

The myth of Psyche offers a concise rendition of feminine individuation. Conceptually the tale can be separated into five critical stages of which the first three stages concern feminine individuation): unfolding of the feminine, rising of consciousness, encounter with the soul, animating soul, and individuation at the transpersonal dimension.

Unfolding of the Feminine Life Force. The first part of the tale underscores a girl’s ‘normal’ development. She fashions a personality and obtains a more or less viable identity. She prepares for an adult feminine life. Of particular note is the adoration that people give to Psyche. This enthusiasm infers that every girl harbors a beautiful soul. For some women, childhood may be the time when they were closest to sensing the soul. The toils of womanhood, for the most part, offer little occasion to encounter the soul unless they purposefully set out to seek the deep feminine or have a mystic orientation.

Raising Consciousness: Wanting to Know. While Psyche experiences a joyous interaction with the immature Eros, the relationship is lived mostly unconsciously. One day, so to say, it came upon Psyche, as it often does to many women, that she wants to know: What is going on? Something is missing! “Something is bothering me!” It is a time when the personal shadow sends messages that personal flaws and contradictions need to be addressed. It is precisely this wanting to know that activates the hard labor of individuation to become conscious. Psyche’s four labors, in one manner or another, pertain to raising consciousness. The first labor, sorting seeds, represents an enhanced ability to differentiate. Differentiation enables a woman to apprehend what she needs. The second labor, obtaining a spool of the sheep’s wool, instructs the woman how to apply differentiation skills in order to get what she wants or needs. The tale instructs a woman that her act would benefit from being deft and indirect rather than direct and ramming as is often the case with men. The third labor, to obtain a cupful of water from the Blacken River (which the eagle procures), calls upon women not to be fearful of the River of Life, and to be open to spiritual development. The third labor also tasks women to sharpen their focus (as an eagle’s sight). In the fourth labor, a human-made element, a tower, is instrumental in heightening feminine consciousness. In a manner of speaking, the Tower provides rational planning for getting to Hades and the deep feminine. The Tower emphasizes the sensible injunction not to open the box that contains Persephone’s beauty ointment (which would be absolutely correct for those whose ego has not united with Personal Self). After all is said and done, these four labors represent, in part, the feminine effort to develop her inner masculine

component. Up to this point in the tale, Psyche follows counsel but exercises her own authority when she decides not to heed counsel and open the box. This is not the same Psyche who disobeyed Cupid's command not to see him. This act of discarding external counsel is of critical importance for it signals that the woman on reaching the deep feminine is ready to advance toward the final and most difficult step in individuation. Her ego has achieved the maturity and competency to embrace soul.

Raising Conscious: Realizing Self. Psyche's process of individuation has taken her to the Underworld (to the deep dimensions of the unconscious) where in its dark recesses the soul is said to reside. (And soul, as stated earlier, is a bit of the essence of the pre-creation void's Universal Soul that is passed on to each bit of creation. All are heirs to soul.) Psyche's labors have brought the individuation process to its furthest point. But before doing this, the ego needs to uncover the Higher Self and become conscious that it is an innate component of the Self rather than a separate entity. With each added level of consciousness, the ego comes closer to realizing its intimate relationship with Self. In the myth, the defining event that denotes such understanding occurs when Psyche, acting on her own authority, opens the box that beholds Persephone's beauty ointment. Psychologically, this act of selfness points to realization of Self.

Encountering Soul. As mythic representative of the Universal Soul that dwells in the deep dark hollows of the Underworld, Persephone's beauty ointment carries the essence of soul. Up to this point in the tale, the name Psyche cannot yet be said to mean soul; she has to earn the right to her name. Psychologically, it is Psyche's ego that enters Hades and on departing from Hades, the ego merges with Self. Then at the instance of opening the box, Psyche intakes the beauty of soul. At this moment, the name 'Psyche' acquires the meaning of soul; the ego has joined with soul.

Animating Soul. In the Underworld, the Soul wanders peacefully along the dark shadows. The ego by itself does not have a sufficient aura to animate the Soul and the soul is content not to be animated. In the tale Psyche, after opening the box, enters a void and experiences a contentment of timelessness, but her healing grace remains unused. The myth clarifies that the integration of ego and soul, although critical, does not end the feminine individuation process. The soul still needs to be animated. This infusion occurs when Eros wipes sleep off Psyche's eyes. At this point it can be said that individuation has ended, at least theoretically. The soul has fully "awakened" and healing grace activated. And it is this animation by love that transforms the encounter of fertility into the encounter of relationship.

Individuation at the Transpersonal Dimension (Theosphere). Eros and Psyche consummate a marriage on earth. But the grand marriage occurs in the Theosphere. This double wedding (in the Below and Above) hints that what is not consummated fully Below has opportunity to be consummated in the Above. It is possible that the soul involvement with individuation continues in the Theosphere.

In summary, the Myth of Psyche brings attention to the overall feminine labor to establish the encounter of intimate relationship which is so important in human development. More specifically, the myth instructs women about the process of individuation. It outlines the way to the soul and its animation through love. A side but critical feature of feminine individuation is that any masculinity that is open to it matures.

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