

Psyche as Postmodern Condition: The Situation of Metaphor in James Hillman's Archetypal Psychology

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This article examines James Hillman's notion of psyche in relation to metaphor as the foundation for his archetypal psychology. In pushing Jung to his imaginal limits, Hillman provides an archetypal corrective to the Cartesianism inherent in modern scientific psychology in order to understand all aspects of contemporary psychological life. He proposes an ontological view of metaphor that locates psyche beyond language and mind to places in the world, thus seeking to establish a postmodern archetypal psychology. In the end his notion of psyche is not radical enough in its critique to advance archetypal psychology into acknowledging its postmodern condition.

I will use the term *modern* to designate any science that legitimates itself with reference to a metadiscourse of this kind making an explicit appeal to some grand narrative, such as the dialectics of Spirit, the hermeneutics of meaning, the emancipation of the rational or working subject, or the creation of wealth.

The Postmodern would be that which, in the modern, puts forward the unrepresentable in presentation itself; that which denies itself the solace of good forms, the consensus of a taste which would make it possible to share collectively the nostalgia for the unattainable; that which searches for new presentations, not in order to enjoy them but in order to impart a stronger sense of the unrepresentable [italics mine].

—Jean-Francois Lyotard, 1984

An old soldier fights his first campaign again and again, in every new engagement. The last of life is filled with repetitions and returns to basic obsessions. My war—and I have yet to win a decisive battle—is with the modes of thought and conditioned feelings that prevail in psychology and therefore also in the way we think and feel about being. Of these conditionings none are more tyrannical than the convictions that clamp the mind and heart into positivistic science (geneticism and computerism), economics (bottom-line capitalism), and single-minded faith (fundamentalism).

—James Hillman, 1999

Prelude to Hillman's Archetypal Psychology

James Hillman is no doubt one of this country's most scholarly and thoughtful critics of contemporary psychological life. His more than twenty books, spanning nearly fifty years, have chronicled a life and career of intellectual battles that he has waged against all forms of psychological oppression. Despite his modest lament of not having won a decisive victory

against mainstream psychology, his work has exerted more influence on the field of depth psychology since Carl Jung than any other thinker in the 20th century. Yet his writings outside Jungian circles tend not to be taken seriously either by the academic community, which questions the rigor of his scholarship, or by popular audiences who struggle to understand its implications for living a full and rewarding life. In short, Hillman's texts appear to frustrate both kinds of audiences, each no doubt looking for something more or something different in their desire to find meaning in his work.

During the course of his life's work, Hillman has kept his focus on the achievement of a single, critical objective: to provide an archetypal corrective to a modern Cartesian consciousness that pervades every aspect of American culture. For Hillman, whose archetypal approach seeks to advance psychology by way of radical critique, this corrective takes the form of articulating the structures characteristic of a post-modern consciousness (Hillman, 1983). From this critical vantage point, these structures are not to be understood as being knowable substances or things in themselves; rather, they refer to the perspective one chooses to have toward things, a perspective Hillman calls "soul," the activity of which he terms "soul-making." "It is a style of thinking," he writes, "a fashion of mind, a revisionist engagement on many fronts: therapy, education, literary criticism, medicine, philosophy, and the material world" (Hillman, 1975, p. 54). Such a perspective "mediates events and makes differences between ourselves and everything that happens. Between us and events, between the doer and the deed, there is a reflective moment—and soul-making means differentiating this middle ground" (p. xvi).

In this context, the work of soul intends to return the attitude of psychology to its rightful place in the space "between" things, in the midst of a Cartesian difference that would constitute the "middle ground" that exists between any subject and its object. Wherever intelligible differences arise as "visible" and "real," Hillman's notion of soul is lurking somewhere beneath the surface, and his body of work, by necessity, traverses ever-expansive contexts of human experience in order to show us exactly that. The "middle ground" between any visible differences is the battleground over which Hillman wages his war against modern psychology, for this is the place where the metaphysics of Cartesian thought imposes its will. It is, without reflection, the place of lost soul, torn asunder by the unintended violence of a Cartesian epistemology, where image is sacrificed in and to

conceptual thought, all for the sake of knowledge. But at the same time in this very place we should not deny the irony at work here: that what amounts to Hillman's critical engagement with psychology leads quite naturally to an outcome far less violent than the "civilizing" or "disciplining" effects of a mainstream psychology founded on the principles of Cartesian thought. Here the meaning of "war" refers to the kind of conflict that restores, everywhere and always, the place of body and soul, where body and soul are understood as being joined together to share one and the same place. Indeed, for Hillman to "win" this war, in a certain sense, must mean that his battles can never be "won" decisively, because a decisive victory would accomplish little more than simply recapitulating the Cartesian divide in psychology that his efforts at "soul-making" strive to overcome. Instead we should view his battles as "victories" to the extent that his critique reveals the apparent decisiveness of the threshold between things to be *in*-decisive in nature as if it were Janus-faced or under the governance of the Roman God, Janus. For it is only in the face of such "soul-making" criticism that body and soul can be seen as successfully re-connected, where soul can find its expression once again in being a metaphorical body.

Psychology participates in "soul-making," Hillman argues, when it contests the mere appearance of any given phenomenon in order to retrieve the imaginal ground otherwise concealed in and by the appropriation of that phenomenon. Its work must be at once a critique and retrieval of the images lost to the literalisms of a modern, scientific consciousness whose appropriative nature is fundamentally metaphysical. That is to say, "soul-making" occurs the moment at which critique reflects on the conceptual language used by scientific reason to define the parameters of the particular object under study. In this sense Hillman demands that psychology find meaning in the image of the things we see, in the metaphors we live by, where soul once again can be realized as the proper home of psychology. Insofar as modern psychology has been forced to sever itself from the imagination in order to establish itself as the rational, knowledge producing discipline it claims to be, Hillman is quick to point out that all forms of literal, abstract thought have a poetic foundation. The appearance of one, the "literal," necessarily presupposes the existence of the other, its image: The former presents itself as that which is manifest to the eye; the latter, as latent in being parasitic to what is most apparent, the subtle body of its figurative side, perceived best by the ear. According to Hillman, therefore, modern consciousness can only gain access to the image by becoming more

psychological; that is, consciousness must recognize the relation between individuals and the world through creating the kind of meaningful “depth” that makes us aware of that relationship. This particular move betrays what seems to be a certain philosophical orientation toward psychology: one, it could be argued, that is influenced by existential–phenomenological thought and that has consequently prompted some commentators on Hillman to characterize his approach to psychology as “postmodern¹.” In just what sense Hillman’s text should be construed as “postmodern” depends on answering the fundamental question that gives meaning and shape to his work: namely, what is the place of archetypal psychology in a postmodern world? Or, more specifically, where in consciousness does the psychological happen to reside and to what extent does Hillman’s view of psyche succeed or fail in delivering a postmodern psychology? Doubtless these questions speak to an inherent critical stance in Hillman, but if his psychology should be in any way deconstructive, then are we not obliged to question what role philosophy plays in articulating a vision of soul that reflects a “postmodern” archetypal psychology?

On the Meaning of Postmodern

The term “postmodern” signifies a complex intellectual movement that crosscuts several fields of study, the meaning of which continues to suffer from a degree of considerable slippage. While it is beyond the scope of this essay to provide a comprehensive history of postmodernism, the tension surrounding the ambiguity of the term must be addressed, in schematic terms at least, in order to clarify just how it is to be understood in our treatment of Hillman’s work. The danger, of course, lies in the undue violence done to a thinker’s unique ideas amid the effort to paint broadly the vision of a certain intellectual movement.

In his introduction to *Postmodernism: A Reader*, Thomas Docherty (1993) argues that much of the contemporary debate over the meaning of “postmodern” flows from the work by a small group of individuals whose commitment to ideological critique led to the formation of the Frankfurt School of Social Research. Their writings, which addressed issues in art, culture, and politics, focused on a certain understanding of Immanuel Kant’s epistemology that failed to establish “critical reason” as the basis of human liberation from the animism of the natural world. Although the interests of these thinkers were diverse, they were unified against a reception of Kantian

thought that was not only thoroughly rational and grounded in a scientific empiricism, but which sought to grant power to the human subject in the name of knowledge. The emergence of the Frankfurt School constituted an alternative view of Kantian modernity, one that aligned itself more closely to the spirit of Kant's *Critique of Judgment*, particularly the aesthetic of the sublime, rather than the more popularly held, scientific understanding that flowed from Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. Kant's notion of the sublime suggests "a strong equivocal emotion" in which pleasure and pain are necessarily conjoined, bringing the faculties of the subject into conflict with each other: a moment in which the faculty that conceives of things stands in opposition to the faculty that "presents" them (p. 43).

In this context, although the sublime recognizes the conflicted division between faculties, it resists any arbitrary and thoughtful incision that would pit a knowing subject against a lifeless, natural object. What appears to be a deep, simple, exclusionary difference between things, in this case between subject and object, is shown as a complex fissure in which the elements of such things are at odds with each other in being co-constituted by their relation to the "same" interior seam, the site of the copula on which the meaning of that relationship rests. The joining together of subject and object in a formal definition not only specifies the essential territory of any given object, but makes visible the outer edge or boundary of difference, the difference we see *as* the difference we can know, what we call, in conventional terms, the knowable difference. Difference in this epistemological sense is predicated on a metaphysical construction that divides the world into binary opposites—subject versus object, theory versus practice, spiritual versus material—and it is here that the Frankfurt School levels its criticism in order to demystify the illusory power of an ideological imposition by a knowing subject. Whereas Kantian critique in and of itself fails to challenge the assumption of the Cartesian divide that separates subject and object, the work of the Frankfurt School, in a concerted effort to advance the aesthetic or literary dimension of Kantian thought, demonstrates the impossibility of seeing both spheres as anything but a sea of interpenetrating differences in a consciousness free to ebb and flow across a permeable boundary. This desire to work the "middle ground" between theory and action, as it were, is what some Frankfurt theorists called *praxis*.

All of this is not to say that the ambition of the Frankfurt School was to seek a nostalgic return to pre-Enlightenment consciousness. Rather, the task was to expand the consciousness of an independent, thinking subject

so as to “free” it from the false consciousness of state ideology. The subject would then be able to enter into less alienated, more human relationships with others and the world. In modernism, as characterized by the scientific influence of Kant and Descartes before him, the language or discourse of the subject is little more than a tool of power to define the domain of inquiry as a kind of object. The possibility of individuals emerging as modern subjects depends on the discipline that is brought to bear on how carefully they define their terms. For the definition itself, comprised of several terms, must have a clear and singular referent as the necessary prerequisite to distinguish one object from others as a proper means of identification.

So to have knowledge of an object means that the language through which that object is disclosed must withdraw its capacity to signify multiple meanings in order to allow thought or reason to tie a single meaning to a single term; its function is to be as transparent as possible, like a pane of glass, a window through which things are seen as objects present-at-hand. The Frankfurt School theorists, of course, challenged these scientific assumptions. They viewed the discursive space of knowledge as reflecting the other, imaginative side of mind. In different ways their work sought to reconcile the subject-object relationship through dialectical synthesis, thus broadening consciousness to reveal a more global understanding of how subjects and objects are related to each other. Though their work focused predominately on cultural and social issues, their level of critical engagement implied that knowledge can only find its “truth” in being bound to an ideology and that the “real” truth resides in the power of the imagination to present what would be excluded if knowledge were permitted to stand unquestioned in its taken-for-granted ideological form.

It would seem, then, that what makes the term “postmodern” so difficult to define is that the divergent paths of modernity—one scientific and empirical in its epistemology, the other hermeneutic and deriving in its critique—are often conflated by a reception of intellectual history that organizes thought by “period” or “school” as it exists in succession according to time. On the one hand this perspective claims, in a purely descriptive way, that the dream of modernism is kept alive in the natural and social sciences where scientific method remains as the primary mode of inquiry, with knowledge its ultimate goal. On the other hand, the question of modernity, as Foucault (1971) announces in the *Order of Things*, suggests that Kantian thought has a self-critical character that does not yield to the postmodern unless or until it succeeds in exhausting the last metaphysical

moment of its own criticism². This view is consistent with Docherty's notion of "postmodern," which he defines as "a desire" or "mood that looks to the future to redeem the present," if by "future looking" he means going beyond what is given or present to uncover a future that is always already there before us (p. 2). With "mood" as a possible touchstone for the postmodern, Docherty goes on to distinguish between "postmodernism," as an aesthetic style, and "postmodernity" as a political and cultural reality (p. 3). This distinction reflects his effort to expand the meaning of "mood" to include the notion of intellectual legacy, which he ties to the Frankfurt School and which informs so much of contemporary French thought. Such a move does well not only to substitute "mood" for history as the definitive factor that characterizes the postmodern, but to establish a further distinction in which "aesthetic postmodernism is always intimately imbricated with the issue of political postmodernity" (p. 3). The issue is whether Docherty gives too much weight to differences of kind in parsing the term "postmodern" rather than elucidating the extent to which critique itself, as the underlying driving force, manifests the differences we see in framing the horizon of significance we give to the term "postmodern³."

Surely, the legacy of Kantian modernity is carried on in today's scientific and hermeneutic forms of social and cultural writings. The scientific movement believes in the existence of a knowing subject that can produce knowledge for the sake of knowledge; whereas, the hermeneutic movement engages in the spirit of auto-critique in which there claims to be "no getting outside" the subject of knowledge⁴; and the concern of the subject, divided as it is on many fronts, is to respect the discursive ground on which a knowing subject stands, the very ground otherwise denied in the quest for knowledge. In these "postmodern" times there remains an "owing" at the center of knowing, a question of debt to Kantian critique that despite our best efforts may not yet be fully paid⁵. While rational modernism may be content to develop better, more sophisticated technologies in the service of human kind—a legacy more Cartesian, perhaps, than Kantian—the critique of modernity, in many cases, points out the failure of reasoned intention to make good on its claim to achieve knowledge. The same is also true among those modern critical thinkers whose philosophical work seeks to realize the full significance of critique. I am thinking in particular of the critical philosophies that intend to show a positive, metaphysical moment in their predecessors thought despite projects that claim an anti-metaphysical position: for example, Derrida's re-writing of Heidegger, Heidegger's thinking

beyond Nietzsche, and Nietzsche's critique of Hegel. With the possible exception of Hegel, each of these thinkers intends his work to be so self-critical that it would expose the presence of any metaphysical moment in their writings, thus showing the failure of their ideas to have brought an "end" to modernity⁶. So if thinking, pushed to its critical limits, best characterizes the spirit of modernity, then the postmodern may be said to inaugurate the "end" of modernism at the precise moment that thought is realized as a critical negation of itself. Indeed, the question of "ends" is precisely what concerns our interest with respect to Hillman's critique of mainstream psychology: that is, whether his view of psyche as a self-critical, imaginal force "ends" modern psychology by ushering it into the postmodern.

Psyche as Ontological Metaphor

Since a closer look at language as the vehicle of ideas is emblematic of postmodern thought, it is necessary to focus on the question of metaphor in Hillman as the fulcrum on which his notion of a "postmodern" psychology turns. Hillman claims that metaphor is "particularly psychological because, as it were, it sees through itself. The binary opposition (Levi-Strauss on myth and Harald Weinrich on metaphor), contained within it is contained *by* it . . . At one and the same time it says something and sees through what it says" (*RV*, p.156). Just what Hillman means by attending to the saying of something and the "seeing through" of the saying at one and the same time is the knot at the center of his text that, when untied, allows us a glimpse of psyche as the postmodern condition for its own being. What Hillman means here is that the psychological must be found in the middle ground between the hearing of what is said and the "seeing through" to its image. Yet such disclosure of the middle ground is only possible when critical work leads to spatial relations being "unhinged" from the concept of time, which, on another level, is why Hillman insists that psychology always finds itself somewhere in time. Time in this context refers to something like temporality, which, in Kantian parlance, is the condition of possibility for the understanding of psyche and not a transcendent notion that would seek to keep psyche in her place⁷.

"Seeing through," then, is the term Hillman uses when describing the metaphorical method of archetypal psychology. This method provides a space for temporality that would be otherwise suppressed by a concept of time that adheres to the law of contradiction, which states that "It is

impossible for the same attribute at once to belong and not to belong to the same thing and in the same relation” (Aristotle, trans.1980). As a result the act of “seeing through” presupposes a self-critical movement that not only recognizes the literal meaning expressed in an utterance, but also discloses the metaphor that is concealed or overlooked in its presence when the focus of the method remains purely on the image itself. Accordingly, things are “freed” from the logic of conceptual time to succeed one another in various times or to occur just as easily at one and the same time. From this point of view things happen to appear in flux and often share space in contradictory or paradoxical ways. The paradox of “seeing through” is that Hillman’s archetypal psychology, which on the face of it *appears* postmodern, lays bare the Greek mythos from ancient times as it shines through the “here” and “now” presence of our everyday lives. So we are left with the impression that the self-critical element in Hillman’s thought, not the concept of time as such, is the decisive factor for judging the extent to which psychological thought might be considered postmodern.

Paul Ricoeur, whom Hillman cites for his philosophical interpretation of metaphor, argues that there is no linguistic parallel for the situation of an element to be both a signifier and a signified unless that element is an *image*, in which case it could be treated as a linguistic element⁸. The image in this context is linguistic to the extent that its presence, as a signifier, signifies beyond the immediate signification of its proper content, what amounts to its literal meaning, to a second meaning, which can only be arrived at in and through the first (*RV*, p.153). This double meaning, and the path left by psyche in the recovery of it, is the site of the enigma that constitutes both the beginning and end of soul-making. Here the image contains both a conflict of meanings and, even more, the textual movement of meaning when it is translated from one place to another. In the end, the image is both a signifier of the possibility for other meanings and the signified for itself as the meaning and ground of that possibility. For Hillman it is in realizing the presence of two or more meanings in a single image that we discover the enigmatic nature of personified archetypes, whether it sets the task of psychologizing into motion or is the measure of its end result.

Hillman writes:

By virtue of their inconceivability, their enigmatic and ambiguous nature, these metaphorical premises elude every literalness, so that the primary urge of seeing through everything fixed, posited, and defined

begins archetypally in these fictional premises themselves. Here I am seeking to ground possibility in the impossible, searching for a new way to account for the unknown in the still more unknown, *ignotum per ignotius*. Rather than explain I would complicate, rather than define I would compound, rather than resolve I would confirm the enigma” (*RV*, p. 152).

When Hillman speaks of the “inconceivability” of metaphor, he means that its inherent duplicity resists being reduced to a concept that specifies a single meaning. It therefore resists the possibility of being known in any “literal” way⁹. Conversely, the possibility of “literal” knowledge rests on archetypal premises that are themselves impossible to know, at least in any direct sense. To have “literal” knowledge of an object means that we must forget that its foundation will always have been a metaphor, a certain fiction; and the moment the subject of knowledge becomes critical enough in its thinking to “see through” the relationship to its objects and acknowledges that fact, the foundation of singular meaning turns to something like quicksand, a morass of signifying possibility. Here the boundary being traversed is the difference between the rational and the imaginal, the metaphysical and the metaphorical, where the unquestioned presence of a conjunctive “crisscross” is disclosed as the complex “originary” structure at the center of Hillman’s view of metaphor. In granting priority to the imaginal, Hillman is led to a theory of metaphor in which the locus of meaning is found less in a figure of speech and more in the everyday experience of human existence (*RV*, p. 156).

Rather than adopt Aristotle’s theory of proportional metaphor, which relies on analogy to restrain the semantic play of language¹⁰, Hillman proposes an ontological view of metaphor that borrows from the work of Giambattista Vico who takes metaphor to be a “mini-myth” or a “fable in brief” (*RV*, p. 156). Hillman realizes that Vico’s conflation of metaphor and myth as a form of personifying or mythologizing allows his notion of image to have currency in the extra-linguistic world. “Metaphors,” he writes, “are more than ways of speaking; they are ways of perceiving, feeling, and existing” (*RV*, p. 156). Indeed, it is through “recognizing our concrete existence as metaphors, as mythic enactments” that we are able to enter the myths that permit us to understand our relation to the Gods, because in myth is where the Gods are. So if, as Hillman claims, metaphor refers to the Gods in us, then “myths are the traditional narratives of the interaction

of Gods and humans, a dramatic account ‘of deeds of the *daimones*’” (*RV*, p. 157).

In this way Vico’s idea of metaphor can be seen as an ontological extension of Aristotle’s proportional metaphor. Whereas proportional metaphor is based on the analogy between words, ontological metaphor finds meaning in an analogizing process that uses “as-if” fictions to transform reality into mythic consciousness. This shift sets the image “before the eyes” in order to disrupt and resist the oppression of literal meaning, but it does so by retaining the presence of literal meaning as the vehicle in and through which the image shows itself. In effect, the image shows itself from itself through literal meaning, and metaphor is the way that it shows itself from itself. What makes metaphor emblematic of the psychological is that its self-critical nature overcomes the limitations of rational thought as expressed in the opposition of binary terms. Metaphor is able to overcome the difference between binary opposites because its “as-if” function seeks to show how these terms are linked together. If, as Hillman argues, the image is prior to reality, and reality constitutes our taken-for-granted interpretation of the world, then metaphor must be understood as the synthetic bridge that is always already there in the joining of things together but concealed by the presence of apparent differences in reason.

This, of course, is not to suggest that the method of metaphorical analogizing is in itself a synthetic gesture, but rather, that its self-critical edge leads to recognizing the synthesis at the center of a simple difference: a synthesis, though in-visible, that lies alongside the differences we see. In this way reason and imagination must be understood as differing from each other in their belonging together as expressions of the “same” psyche. Although reason is said to be the faculty that arrives later than imagination in our development as human beings, it cannot exist without the imagination as its source of invention¹¹. In other words their relation as such is that reason comes into being as a privation of the imagination, which means that reason can only exist by virtue of negating its other, the unconscious side of itself that is the imagination; or to put it differently, reason must repress the imaginal part of itself that is the “Other” in order to present itself in its pure form as a rational state of mind¹². So in light of this we can say that wherever differences exist, there is the presence of mind, and at the same time, in the same place, the very *and* that identifies the difference between things, (e.g. the difference between x *and* y) is the

site of imaginal connection, the unintended or unrecognized linking of things in the midst of their separation (e.g. “as-if” x is y).

Perhaps what is most critical about Hillman’s notion of metaphor is that it leads to an ontology of image that purports to “undo” the metaphysics of temporal priority. The metaphorical “as-if” returns us to the complexity of the image and to the inherent duplicity of its structure. “Is Richard the lion a lion in a cage named Richard? Or, is Richard the lion a courageous king? We are perturbed; there are echoes of schizophrenic thinking; fantasies are arising” (*RV*, p. 156). We find ourselves caught in what Robert Grinnell calls the *hiatus* of the image, the space between two senses of the same term or figure, where the literal *and* the metaphorical reverberate against each other, “as-if” they were the strings of Hermes lyre¹³. The “as-if” function of metaphor invites us to stand in a place and time before reason takes hold and Hermes is forced to give up his lyre to Apollo. Hillman insists on using the “as-if” prefix to remind us that the certainty of every idea, every belief, every concept, everything that is immediately present to us in constituting our world, is metaphorical in nature (*RV*, p. 157).

This ontology of metaphor, a broadened interpretation of analogy beyond the linguistic scope of its tradition, brings archetypal psychology to the threshold of the postmodern in that its method leads us to what Hillman posits as the first and last principle of psyche: “stick to the image¹⁴.” Image is the embodiment of metaphor; it is not only both form and content at the same time, but also, the means by which we catch sight of the connection that exists between them. By “sticking to the image” through metaphorical analogy, Hillman is able to amplify the meaning of one’s life, to deepen and complexify the nature of one’s relationship to self and others. And nowhere is this more evident than in Hillman’s approach to dreams.

The dream is a *text* of images, with each part of the image signifying a different aspect or relation to the larger image. “For instance, each younger woman in each dream is not the anima any more than every older man is a father figure. We do indeed see these imaginal persons in our dreams: the one wading at the riverbank, beckoning; the other masterfully demonstrating chemistry in an amphitheater. Though their image, behavior, and mood leads us to recognize them as ‘anima’ and ‘father,’ and though we even gain insight through this archetypal recognition, we do not literally see the anima or father” (*RV*, p. 144). The younger woman and older man are taken as symbols for the anima and father archetypes in themselves,

and not as archetypal figures in their own right. Hillman argues against translating the significance of the dream into the dreamer's life: which is to say that we should make no suppositions about the dream in order to resolve a problem, or fulfill a wish, or find the right interpretation to make sense of situations in our waking life. Rather, his approach consists of letting the dream speak by restating the images in words that would disrupt the grammar and syntax we typically use in our waking lives, the unconscious rules that present the narrative of the dream in a coherent sequence. To tell the dream through conventional speech prevents us from hearing what the images have to say.

The dream of the "young girl wading in the river, beckoning," for example, might be restated in numerous contradictory ways: the "young girl, River, beckons to go wading," or "the river beckons the young girl to go wading," or "the young, wading river is a beckoning girl," or "the girl beckons me to wade in the same river," etc. The object here is not to find an interpretation that will resonate with the dreamer; that would be to commit what Hillman calls a natural fallacy, the assumption that an interpretation which is ego syntonic is more correct and therefore better than one that is ego dystonic (*RV*, p. 86). Rather, it is to practice the kind of word-play that sticks close to the image, allowing us to hear the fullness of what the dream has to say.

Word-play for Hillman lets us see the "wading girl" in the contextual richness of the image itself, not as some idea or symbol of an archetype. This move in itself constitutes "seeing through" the literalist in each of us that tends to reject such restatements out of hand as "far fetched" or "reading too much into the dream." Yet if we reintroduce the "as-if" prefix to these statements, then the possibility of psychologizing can continue to take place as the dreamer begins to see in what way she may be like a "girl wading in the river, beckoning." The images of the dream are the flipside of the literalism to which the dreamer clutches in a desperate effort to maintain some kind of meaning and purpose in one's life. "Sticking to the image" helps to free the dreamer from painful or disturbing literalisms that irrupt into the average everyday consciousness of one's existence.

Throughout his discussion of metaphorical analogizing Hillman at one point offers a rather curious assertion: that ". . . if we begin in mythical consciousness we do not need the prefix. It is implied throughout, always. So long as ideas are not fixed into singleness of meaning, we do not need to pry them loose with the tool of 'as if'" (*RV*, p. 157). At this point we

are left to wonder what it might mean for such an assertion to be possible, assuming that what he means by being psychological is located in the “origins” of mythic consciousness. How is it that we could ever “begin in mythical consciousness” or is Hillman simply fantasizing about the possibility of such a beginning? How can one possibly know to begin there unless one has already had the playful experience of “seeing through” the literal meaning of images in becoming more conscious of unconscious, mythical patterns, and if that were indeed the case, then how can Hillman claim mythical consciousness as the desired place of such a beginning?

Hillman’s assertion suggests that mythical consciousness does not call for a “seeing through,” because it is always already implied in the work of metaphorical analogizing. But in having taken this position it would seem that his text ignores the presence of something “literal” in the relationship of metaphor to itself, for metaphor or “mythical consciousness” must have the “same” relationship to the “literal” that the “literal” has to the “metaphorical.” The only way to make sense of Hillman’s position, it seems, would be to underscore that its “origin” must be found in some metaphysical point of view on the relationship between literal and metaphorical interpretations. In other words, it seems fair to say, Hillman maintains a distinction between “literal” and “metaphorical” meaning by trying to attend to the path of how psyche might work in order to make that distinction appear. His focus here and throughout is on metaphor as the language of soul, where metaphor “breaks through” or “ruptures” “literal” meaning in staking out a necessary place for psyche to express herself. But even in the work of endless analogizing is there not a “literal” presence or a presence of consciousness that his notion of metaphor simply affirms in giving primacy to the discourse of psyche? Or is the “origin” of this difference, the site where psyche is said to reside, more complex than that? In locating the origins of mythical consciousness in archetypes that are imputed to metaphor, Hillman seems to be postulating that the primary difference between the metaphorical and the literal is that the conjunction, *and*, which demonstrates a joining together in the midst of difference, is missing from a literal interpretation. Following Jung, Hillman writes:

Archetypes are semantically metaphors. They have a double existence which Jung presented in several ways: (1) they are full of internal oppositions, positive *and* negative poles; (2) they are unknowable *and* known through images; (3) they are instinct *and* spirit; (4) they are

congenital, yet not inherited; (5) they are purely formal structures *and* contents; (6) they are psychic *and* extrapsychic (psychoid). These doublings, and many others like them in the description of archetypes, need not be resolved philosophically or empirically, or even semantically. They belong to the internal self-contradiction and duplicity of mythic metaphors, so that *every statement regarding the archetypes is to be taken metaphorically*, prefixed with an ‘as-if’ (RV, p. 156).

The Ends of Psyche

In Hillman’s scheme it appears that catching sight of the archetypal is not possible except through the indirect means of metaphor. Metaphor, for Hillman, is seen as a structure whose binary terms, which stand in contrary relation to each other, are joined together in the formation of a new figure that bridges the difference between both terms. Such a move is distinguished from the notion of “literal” as a mode of interpretation in that the “literal,” which embodies self-reflexive thought in language, demands that the terms of any given proposition combine to be meaningful in a verifiable way, usually by having a one-to-one correspondence to things in the world. The metaphysical rule that governs such propositions creates the mutually exclusive difference that we see between things. At the same time this rule obscures the fold at the “end” of difference, a doubling that constitutes the connective tissue of difference to the material or sensate aspects of things in the world. The issue here, at this moment, is whether Hillman’s thought shrinks back from taking the next critical step, the “step *not* beyond” deciphering the linguistic or textual weave of the image itself¹⁵. The “step *not* beyond” would be the step that seeks to erase the last metaphysical moment that may be present as the basis of any claim toward self-critical, psychological thought. To shrink back from this step would disclose a failure to realize the full extent of auto-critique, as that which sheds a kind of backlight on the psychological in its being the scene of the psychological, in which image and object are acknowledged as belonging to the same archetypal fabric.

In a certain sense Hillman’s archetypal critique does *not* step beyond that which spans the center of all things, the fulcrum of difference, the presence of the “is” that forms the chiasmus in the space of difference between things. Here metaphysical rule is opposed to metaphorical rule; reason, to

imagination, and the difference lies not in the “essence” or “substance” between them, but in the degree of critical engagement with which each faculty allows psyche to find itself and thus realize what it means to be psychological. So it would seem that the only way that Hillman can refer to this relation as an “internal self-contradiction” is if the archetypes are able to “see through” themselves as metaphors. Any reluctance to take the next critical step, the step that exposes the archetypal pun as being always already alongside the “literal,” manifests as the difference he preserves between the “literal” and the “metaphorical,” and this difference is the critical difference in determining whether or not Hillman’s imaginative re-visioning of psyche leads us to a postmodern archetypal psychology.

Despite the apparent difference between the literal and metaphorical that Hillman means to make clear, he does not mean to suggest that there is no relation between ideas and soul. On the contrary, ideas and soul are intimately bound together, for ideas “are both the shape of events, their constellation in this or that archetypal pattern, and the modes that make possible our ability to see through events into their pattern” (*RV*, p. 121). As we have seen, it is through ideas that the soul reveals itself, and if ideas can be identified as the “what” that matters in our lives, then soul is the expression of “how” it matters. Soul refers to the kind of vision that transforms events into experiences. It is not enough “to participate in events, or to suffer them strongly, or to accumulate a variety of them,” because this in itself does not differentiate or deepen one’s psychic capacity (*RV*, p. 122). What “deepens” the event into an experience is the quality of vision one has, the kind of penetrating ideas that explore the complexity or “depths” of any given phenomenon.¹⁶ Certainly, Hillman’s notion of psychologizing seeks to “deepen” our understanding of the relationship between the modern (literal) and postmodern (metaphorical) views of psyche. But what is truly remarkable in Hillman’s thinking is the space of difference in which the critical work of the imagination and the images it uncovers must find each other while being at odds with one another. This is the site where the work of psychologizing ends with the “internal self-contradiction” of metaphor.

Within the imaginal, the hard line of difference between the literal and metaphorical for Hillman becomes blurred through the lens of the “as-if” function of metaphor (e.g. ‘as-if’ x is y). The psyche that literalizes is not critical enough in its thinking to “see through” this difference, whereas a psyche that views metaphor as a method of psychologizing

must acknowledge a literal presence in order to have something to “see through.”¹⁷ In the work of soul-making, there is, according to Hillman, a continuous oscillation between the ambiguity of metaphor and the clarity of insight, and this could not occur were it not for the presence of a metaphysical difference that is presupposed between them. In the beginning, at a time prior to the kind of difference that delivers the form and substance to things, the enigma of an image provokes us to ask questions of its meaning: namely, what is this? Or, what could this possibly be? The answer to these questions comes to us in terms of singular meaning, in being a literal interpretation of the image, or polysemous meaning in being a metaphorical interpretation. But to ask the question at all is to be already underway regarding a certain metaphysical relation to the phenomena in question. That is, what I call metaphysical in this context is the posing of a question that seeks to make sense of some phenomena by going beyond it in some “vertical” way in order to penetrate its depths and capture its “essence.” Either the question points to reasons lying behind the existence of such phenomena or it discloses a sense of the phenomena as having some elusive mystery about it.¹⁸

The dialectic between question and answer mirrors the dialectic between blindness and insight, darkness and light.¹⁹ “When the clarity has itself become obvious and transparent,” Hillman writes, “there seems to grow within it a new darkness, a new question or doubt, requiring a new act of insight penetrating again toward the less transparent. The movement becomes an infinite regress which does not stop at coherent or elegant answers” (*RV*, 140). Rather it regresses toward the infinite, the Gods that are not immediately visible, and comes to a stop at fantasies about the experience of one’s death. Here time expires and life ends, as we know it; for death is the last term and the prime metaphor of life. The circular movement of regress comes to rest here, “because here it meets the *permanent ambiguity of metaphor*, where ‘rest’ and ‘permanence’ are also as-if fictions” (*RV*, 153).

Although soul-making seeks to locate the literal outside the bounds of temporal priority, the duplicity of metaphor reverberating at *one and the same time*, the permanent ambiguity of metaphor is affirmed as the site where soul-making *ends*. The *end* of soul-making is where “fields meet and paths intersect or thoughts cross over into quick light” (*RV*, 63). The question becomes who or what is the image (of) here? If chiasmus is the image and path of soul, if intersection or crossroads mark the end

of soul with an “X,” then is there not a figure or God who brings the soul’s insights into this place? Once the infinite regress of soul-making comes to an “end,” how does Hillman make sense of it? How does Hillman psychologize the *end* of psychology, the *end* that would constitute the place and home of psyche? If soul truly ends in the permanent ambiguity of metaphor, in which “rest (end) and permanence are also ‘as-if’ fictions,” then is there no other sense in which he means “infinite” than a reference to that of the Gods? Certainly, the imaginal work of Hillman embraces the necessity of error in the discovery of soul. But in what sense might there be a “metaphysical error” in Hillman’s thinking about psyche in which he posits the “necessity of error” as the meaning and archetypal ground for psychological awareness? Answers for these questions can be found in Hillman’s return to the origins of Greek thought in his commentary on Plato:

Reason cannot bring the errant principle or necessity altogether under its control. Errancy seems opposed to intelligent order and purpose, and according to Cornfield we meet it in coincidences and spontaneity; it points to the irrational element in the soul. . . . For Plato the intelligent reason was not enough to account for man and the universe. Something else was necessary, especially in accounting for what governs the psyche. Some wandering necessary force *also comes into play*, and in fact, it is through errancy that we see Necessity at work. Thus the archetypal background to error is Necessity; through error-caused events Necessity breaks into the world. If this errant cause, necessity, is the principle in errors, then let us consider error necessary, a way the soul enters the world, a way the soul gains truths that could not be encountered by reason alone. Psychological awareness rises from errors, coincidences, indefiniteness, from the chaos deeper than intelligent control (*RV*, pp. 159-60) (*Italics mine*).

With this account of errant necessity as the basis for psychological awareness, we discover that Hillman’s *permanent ambiguity of metaphor* reflects an uneasy tension between the metaphysical (logos) and the metaphorical (phantasia) dimensions of thought in the creation of soul. In fact, one could say that each way of thinking entails the other but as activity that corresponds with two distinct faculties of mind. The passage suggests that reason and error are a function of two opposing causes: on

the one hand an image irrupts through the veneer of rational control due to the inherent necessity of its unacknowledged presence; on the other hand, the possibility of an image bursting through and overshadowing literal meaning is contingent upon the presence of the literalist in all of us to make it so. The former is explicit, the latter, implicit.

For Hillman, however, there is no sense in which the nature of reversal, so characteristic of mythic metaphors, can take place in relation to the “literal,” which exists on the opposite side of the very metaphysical divide that would keep these domains separate. On one side his critique of psyche works to “see through” literal meaning to the Gods within, the end result being that which he terms “soul-making”; on the other side, the role of critique takes the form of endless play in which echoes of the image are heard by way of imaginative re-visioning. Through it all Hillman continues to grant this distinction without questioning its presence as the site of an unconscious connection between the two faculties of mind. Instead he questions metaphor in search of “the principle in errors” in order to find the God(s) responsible for the “way the soul enters the world.” Within fervent play of the imagination, Hillman characterizes the principle of endless wanderings in the image of “The Knight Errant,” the one that “listens to the deviant discourse of the imagination” (*RV*, p. 161). In describing this figure, Hillman personifies the restless nature of this particular figure:

The Knight Errant of psychology is partly picaresque rogue, of the underworld, a shadow hero of unknown paternity, who sees through the hierarchies from below. He is mediator betwixt and between homeless, of no fixed abode. Or his home, like that of Eros, is in the realm of the daemons, of the *metaxy* (the middle region), in between, back and forth. Or his home is in the ceaselessly blowing spirit, as Ficino placed the home of thought in soul and the home of soul in spirit. “That is why man alone in this present condition of life never relaxes, he alone in this place is not content. Therefore, man alone is a wanderer in these regions, and in the journey itself he can find no rest. . . .” (*RV*, p. 160).

In quoting Ficino, Hillman presents the context in which the results of psychologizing the discipline of psychology end with the image of a man wandering in search of a home but only comes to find himself at home in his wandering. The soul of psychology finds itself out of necessity, aimlessly

adrift in the spaces between theology, science, literature, philosophy, and medicine: at home everywhere but nowhere in particular (*RV*, p. 162). Its self-critical nature displaces the principle of identity in every meaningful difference we see, recognizing the permeability of borders that otherwise appear closed, de-centering the substance of things to their margins, where the materiality of things is allowed to matter.²⁰ From a “literal” point of view, the psychological meanders with no clear-cut goal, no direct object in sight, yet the inherent nature of its activity “is always questing *after* something while it wanders” (*RV*, p. 162). For Hillman the quest is always after an image, the origin of psychology, the *archi* or *arche* that stands as both the “principle” and “property” of psychology in its capacity to rule over all that is psychological. Admittedly, this is the quest of soul-making, and its inquiry takes the form of an infinite regress to the image that arbitrarily comes to an *end* with the answer to Hillman’s question concerning the principle cause of errancy: namely,

Is Hermes the God within it? Hermes, who guides thieves, and dreams and souls, who relays the messages of all the Gods, the polytheistic hermeneutic? Does he not appear where fields meet and paths intersect or thoughts cross over into quick light? Hermes is the connector-between, Apollo’s brother yet Dionysus’ first carrier. Because of Hermes, psychologizing is always moving between opposing views such as the Apollonic and the Dionysian attitudes, standing at either end of its spectrum—partly Apollonic Knight, partly Dionysian Rogue, both and neither (*RV*, p. 163).

Hermes brings us to the chiasmal twist, the crisscross, the crossroads, the intersection, the undetected moment of predication at which we lose sight of the “image” in the presence of metaphysical differences. When Hillman asks if Hermes is “the God within it,” he reveals a metaphysical prejudice that psyche, as image-maker, is not free to overcome. The “it” the God is in is something like a *text*, the discursive situation of psyche, and Hermes is disclosed as the God that transmits the image or meaning of that text in psychological terms. The critical dimension of Hillman’s question speaks to the eternal “Who?” that connects all the Gods together as constituting the archetypal fabric of consciousness. Hermes appears in this context not only as a transcendental signifier for all of the Gods but also as the signified that marks the end of soul-making in the *permanent ambiguity of metaphor*.

This *end* is that of an idealized notion of infinite regress, of endless oscillation between the dark of ambiguity and the light of insight: image being the site of text and meaning, and meaning being the focus of Hermes' concern. Hermes in the *end* is endless in his reach, standing outside the concept of time in being able to attend to what is said and to "see through" what is said *at the same time*; yet his existence as metaphor, as an ontology of metaphorical presence, ultimately finds its origin and end in the metaphysical presence of his image. In short, the permanent ambiguity of metaphor "ends" with the image of Hermes whose in-visible presence continually spins meanings from an image and images out of meaning. It is at this rather critical juncture, however, that psyche, in Hillman's terms, elides the psychological at the precise moment that Hillman claims to have its image in view. For at this point his notion of soul-making will have necessarily resisted taking the next critical step, the step *not* beyond a metaphysical construction of the image itself.

Psyche in the Text of Metaphor

We find evidence of this psychological resistance in the presence of Hermes as gatekeeper at the border between the metaphorical and the metaphysical. When Hillman claims that, "having a wholly metaphorical existence, cannot be mistaken for metaphysical existence," (*RV*, p. 152) he seems to be taking issue with Heidegger's fundamental maxim in *The Principle of Reason*, which states that "the metaphorical exists only within the bounds of the metaphysical."²¹ In what appears to be an effort to dismiss or refute Heidegger and to ground the psychological in an alternative notion of ontological metaphor, Hillman adopts a Nietzschean stance that respects the difference between the metaphysical and the metaphorical by positing their relation as co-constitutive contraries. And it would seem that for Hillman the psychological resides in Hermes being able to make sense of how each element finds the other in itself, thus revealing the crisscross at the center of the chiasmus that shows how both elements are joined across a Cartesian divide.²²

It is here that Hillman's position seems to repress the complexity of the psychological as a textual phenomenon that outstrips his notion of psyche. Interestingly, the presence of the chiasmus in Hillman's thinking, in a sense, already defies Hermes efforts to make meaning of it. This moment is the enigma that appears just prior to "the clarity of insight"

that comes only after further questioning: the kind of questioning that leads to meaningful images. The presence of the crisscross, then, is that metaphysical moment, the “white mythology,” that makes possible the existence of psyche as veiled in the reflection of images. If in keeping with Jung’s view that “image is psyche,” then invoking Hermes as the God whose critical eye interprets meaning would fulfill the Nietzschean axiom that Hillman ultimately upholds: “Discern or perish” (*RV*, p. 226). Just exactly what Hillman means by this imperative is open to question, given that it hinges on the degree to which Hillman allows Hermes to discern the meaning of what is psychological in the text.

For Hermes, the fundamental unit of analysis is at the level of meaning, but meaning cannot exist in and of itself without a “text” to make it possible. The “text” and its complicated relation to meaning is the phenomenon that evokes Hillman to characterize the hermeneutic movement of psyche as being one of “infinite regress,” especially insofar as Hermes is the God that transforms the place where the “fields meet and paths intersect or thoughts cross over into [the] quick light [of meaning].” As critical as hermeneutics purports to be, it fails to untie the threads of the chiasmal knot, and to acknowledge the presence of the mark of Hermes (X) as the condition that brings meaning or meanings into “quick light.” Yet in the midst of metaphorizing it is there, in simple presence, and in plain sight for all to see. The presence of the “X” in and of itself has no meaning; it is, simply, non-sense. But to the extent it has any archetypal significance at all it functions something like a signifying “letter” without the phonemic context of a word around it to constrain how it should mean. A letter in itself, for example, does nothing but signify infinite possibilities of meaning. It is only when placed alongside other letters, in accordance with a given grammar, that it can mean anything. The mark of its signifying possibilities is concealed or repressed by the very transparent meanings it serves to create. This is not to say that it is concealed like an object behind a curtain—that would be to perpetuate the problem of infinite regress as recurring moments of metaphorical insight—rather, it is to say that its existence is paradoxical in the sense of being hidden while in plain view, not unlike the manner in which Minister D conceals the letter he had purloined from the Queen by not trying to conceal it.²³ In that situation the Minister opts to “hide” the letter by placing the contents in a different envelope, one with a different seal, handwriting, and address, and letting it sit unconcealed in a card rack with five or six visiting cards (Mabbot, p. 21).

Like a purloined letter, the existence of Hermes, signified by the figure (chiasmus) or letter “X,” is concealed in being present. He is hidden in his ability to discern the images of the Gods in sending them forth but unable to signify himself in discerning his own presence. The presence of Hermes without self-recognition is purely metaphorical, in the sense at least that it is emblematic of a transcendental image, and it is metaphysical in the sense that his mere presence passes without the kind of self-negation that would keep psyche in the neighborhood of the psychological. Ironically, the chiasmus, or mark of Hermes, reflects the Apollonic “end” of soul-making for Hillman, with the *end* being a metaphysical presence of the crisscross or a metaphor that is bound by metaphysical limits, in just the way Heidegger claims. Here the metaphysical ground of Hermes, the in-visible presence of “X,” escapes the image as a kind of textual remainder, a certain excess, an “error” in the ability of soul-making to acknowledge the metaphysical presence of the chiasmus itself. So in this context the mark of Hermes, the mark left behind without re-mark, operates in his perspective as a transcendental signifier, and the story of Hillman’s archetypal psychology can only be seen (not heard) as being limited to the immediacy of imaginal content or to the polytheistic meaning of his presence, not to the self-critical element of being a signifier for-itself in the tracing of its archetypal presence.

We can say at this point and in reference to this site that there is a sense of “primal repression” in Hillman’s thought that goes unnoticed, in the metaphor of Hermes as the transcendental signifier of archetypal psychology. The signification of Hermes exists wherever there manifests the appearance of an image; consequently, his presence in Hillman’s archetypal scheme can be said to take on an indestructible function in that no other God can become visible without the presence of his hermeneutic powers to make it possible. Yet at the same time he remains necessarily invisible as the structural element in that very disclosure, and easily forgotten or overlooked in the metaphysical grasp of the image itself, regardless of what divine visage is presented. That Hermes stops short of taking the last critical step may be a function of Hillman’s reluctance to name what is psychological using definitive terms. “Whenever we say ‘the soul is’ this or that, we have entered a metaphysical venture and literalized an abstraction. These metaphysical assertions about the soul may produce psychology, but not psychologizing, and as avoidances of psychologizing they are an abstract acting-out” (*RV*, p. 137).

Hillman, of course, is right in this claim to the extent his idea of psyche in being metaphorical engages in a psychologizing that questions the metaphysical limits of psychology. But to give primacy to metaphor over the self-critical property of psychologizing, as Hillman's assertion implies, is to betray psychologizing as something other than a psychological phenomenon. Indeed, if we are to take Heidegger seriously, whose thinking on the relation of the "metaphorical" to the "metaphysical" is, perhaps, more self-critical than Hillman's metaphorical efforts at psychologizing, then we might easily substitute one term for the other in Hillman's criticism of psychology such that we are able to sense what may be repressed in Hillman's thought. Now Hillman's prophetic words could be read otherwise: "These metaphorical assertions about the soul may produce psychology, but [in the end] not psychologizing, and as avoidances of psychology they are an abstract acting-out." With this, it seems that we find Hillman caught in the slippage of a Heideggerian (or worse, Derridean) text that his view of psyche, and his efforts to lay claim to psychologizing, sought to avoid. The idea of "seeing through" to the image in things becomes no different, on a self-critical level, than the metaphysical act on which modern psychology relies in order to identify psyche as its object for investigation. The contents and methods are different, certainly, but the form of appropriation in the disclosure of these contents can be revealed as metaphysically the *same*. In the "end" the metaphorical *and* the metaphysical are understood to be the opposite sides of each other in their belonging to the same Moebius strip-like structure, and this becomes noticeable only to the extent that psyche is capable of going beyond itself as image in order to read the *text* of its psychology.

Coda

All of this discussion suggests that the risk for Hillman and ultimately archetypal psychology is that in "sticking to the (meaning of the) image" we may not be any closer to understanding the complexity of psyche than modern, scientific psychology against which Hillman levels his criticism. True, there is a "radical relativism" in Hillman's thinking that permits a rich kaleidoscope of mythical, imaginal, and polytheistic possibilities for psyche. But like modern psychologists Hillman understands the object of psychology (psyche) from a place above and beyond the archetypal text of the image itself. He creates this distance by assuming an unquestioned

presence of the difference between literal and metaphorical meaning as the foundation upon which he bases his argument for retrieving the proper meaning of psyche: the one as soul, whose work is psychologizing; the other, as mind, whose work might be called philosophizing. For Hillman the essence of “seeing through” is the becoming of the image, but the “essence” of what it ultimately becomes is the image itself. What is and what becomes are necessarily joined in the presence of the image. But what is psychological about the image can only be realized when the act of “seeing through” takes seriously the *text* that makes possible the disclosure of its image as being a creative transfiguration. If Hillman could have read the word “sticking” in “sticking to the image” as pushing Hermes to discern the *archi*-trace of the image, to take the step *not beyond* the trace of the archetypal image rather than interpret its meaning, then he might have arrived at an understanding of soul as being psychological in just the way his *text* suggests.²⁴

The power of Hillman’s insight allows us to see that the psychological dwells *in* the knot of the chiasmus that Hermes brings to bear, but the appearance of the knot is a metaphor that comes into being as a metaphysical presence. Although Hillman substitutes terms such as “soul-making,” “psychologizing,” “seeing through,” and “discerning” for each other in order to signify what psyche does, and terms such as “image,” “god,” “personification,” and “soul,” to signify what psyche is, his refusal to name psyche for fear of committing a metaphysical gesture betrays in itself the commission of a metaphysical error, or what amounts to a metaphysical “acting-out.” Perhaps even more disconcerting for Hillman may be the haunting possibility that his efforts to deny the metaphysical presence of metaphor unconsciously locates his thought in a certain Heideggerian position, a position from which his (notion of) psyche never quite overcomes.

By following the path of Hillman’s resistance, we find that he gives primacy to what psyche *is* over what psyche *does* even though he says they intersect each other *at the same time*: “at one and the same time it [metaphor] says something and sees through what it says.” While in other places throughout his text he appears to grant priority to the substance of psyche: “Human existence is psychological before it is anything else—economic, social, religious, physical. In terms of logical priority, all realities (physical, social, religious) are inferred from psychic images or fantasy presentations to a psyche,” (*RV*, p. 173) and “prior to any knowledge are the psychic

premises that make knowledge possible at all" (*RV*, p. 131). This apparent contradiction may be an expression of the archetypal *text* he chooses not to read, or of his inability to get beyond the imaginal synthesis of binary opposites as the meaning and ground of psychologizing. For no matter which term he uses to describe soul, no matter where he begins the work of soul-making, the image in the "end" is the presence of Hermes' knot, not that of a self-critical Hermes. And the only possible way to "untie" the knot is to take the next critical step, the step *not* beyond the (k)*not* that is already there: the double *not* that ultimately reveals the last metaphysical moment Hillman had in mind.

So it is that when we push Hillman to his psychological limits, soul-making, in order to be true to itself, must work to be in touch with the subtle body of its self-critical edge, if, ultimately, it is to force a withdrawal of Hermes' metaphysical presence. But the cost of this critical step is a withdrawal of the metaphorical as well.²⁵ The end of the metaphysical is the end of metaphor, an "end" in which both figures recede into the face of a surging self-critical discourse. The discourse of the image is an imageless *text* that leads to a surfeit of imagery, and this in the end is how psyche must be, if we are to make the move necessary to fulfill Hillman's promise of an archetypal psychology that understands what it means to be psychological. To be psychological in this sense is not merely the conjoining of path and place of soul, although it certainly seems to live there in the presence of the image. Nor is it the eternal recurrence of an image in multiple presences. Rather, it is something more than the presence of an image and not quite an image at the same time, or in the same place. It is, finally, the critical move that truly attends to the situation of psyche, thus rendering the work of archetypal psychology distinctively postmodern.

Notes

1 "Perhaps because of this move beyond the literalism of premodern tradition and the rejection of modernist attempts to explain away everything, Hillman is sometimes called postmodern and compared with deconstructivists." Thomas Moore (1989), "Prologue" to *A Blue Fire: Selected Writings by James Hillman*, p. 8. See also, Bernie Neville (2007), "The Charm of Hermes: Hillman, Lyotard, and the Postmodern Condition" and "Why Hillman Matters." On Hillman's postmodern thought in relation to Whitehead and Jung, see David Ray Griffen (1989), "Introduction" to *Archetypal Process: Self and Divine in Whitehead, Jung, and Hillman*.

2 Cf. Michel Foucault (1971), "... Confronting Ideology, the Kantian critique,

on the other hand, marks the threshold of our modernity; it questions representation, not in accordance with the endless movement that proceeds from the simple element to all its possible combinations, but on the basis of its rightful limits” (p. 242).

3 See also Christopher Norris (2000), *Deconstruction and the “Unfinished Project of Modernity”* in which he argues against Richard Rorty’s interpretation of Jacques Derrida’s work as just “another kind of writing” in a merely postmodern sense.

4 Ernst Behler (1991) describes critical thought after Kant as being an “auto-critique of philosophy.” See *Confrontations: Derrida/Heidegger/Nietzsche* for his discussion of this motif as it is played out in the divergent readings of Derrida and Heidegger on Nietzsche.

5 Cf. Jacques Derrida’s reference to Samuel Weber in *The Post Card: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond* (1987) in which Weber describes a debt in need of acknowledgment at the core of psychoanalytical thinking, an “owing at the heart of knowing” (p.ix).

6 “There have been great seekers since Hegel who have opened new paths—Nietzsche, Marx, Freud, [Heidegger]. But the question is whether they have continued philosophical thought or whether they have written its criticism. . . . What is the place of this thought and of its language? It is precisely because Hegel is the last of the great metaphysicians—not only for us; he, himself was clearly conscious that philosophical thought as such was coming to an end with him—that his thought interests us” (Jean Hypolite, 1972, pp. 157-8). On this question see Martin Heidegger (trans. 1982), “Nietzsche’s Fundamental Metaphysical Position.” On Heidegger’s reading of Nietzsche see Derrida (trans. 1979), *Spurs: Nietzsche’s Styles*; “The Written Being/the Being Written” in *Of Grammatology* (trans. 1982) and “Ousia and Gramme: Note on a Note from *Being and Time*” in *Margins of Philosophy* (trans. 1982).

7 In his summary of *Kant’s Critical Philosophy* Deleuze (1984) identifies four “poetic formulas” that might characterize the modernist episteme as questioning the foundation of time and space relations. The first points to a reversal of the relationship between time and movement, which describes time as being “out of joint” (p. vii).

8 See Paul Ricoeur (trans. 1970), *Freud and Philosophy*, in which he counters Jacques Lacan’s linguistic reading of Freud by offering a philosophical interpretation of Freud.

9 I have placed the term “literal” between quotation marks to distinguish Hillman’s notion of the term from Lacan’s. For Hillman the *literal* refers to the singleness of meaning whereas the same term for Lacan suggests the existence of the *letter* as a signifier.

10 See Aristotle (trans. 1982) *Poetics* in which he lays out his theory of proportional metaphor.

11 See Lacan (trans. 1977), *Ecrits: A Selection* in which he deconstructs the developmental bias of psychoanalysis by reading the signifying chain of letters that are repressed in the imaginary register of the unconscious.

12 The “Other” in this context refers to Lacan’s notion of place that exists somewhere in the symbolic or linguistic order. It therefore is the necessary condition for any subject to exist, to the extent that the speech of the subject coincides, albeit unconsciously, with the discourse of the “Other.”

13 See Robert Grinnell (1973), “Reflections on the Archetype of Consciousness: Personality and Psychological Faith,” and Hillman (1978), “Further Notes on Images,” where

he discusses this moment in Grinnell's article: "He understands the hiatus to be where the mystery of the conjunction occurs. It is the arcane substance of the image itself, as well as the arcane activity at work in and on that substance" (p. 180).

14 Although Hillman does not utter the phrase, "stick to the image," anywhere in *Re-Visioning Psychology*, the intention of that phrase is evident in the following: "Fantasy-images are both the raw materials and finished products of psyche, and they are the privileged mode of access to knowledge of soul. Nothing is more primary. . . . Every single feeling or observation occurs as a psychic event by first forming a fantasy-image" (p. xvii). See also Hillman, *Archetypal Psychology* in which he identifies Jung's principle of "stick to the image" as being axiomatic to the method of archetypal psychology. Cf. Carl Jung (1966), *Collected Works: The Practice of Psychotherapy* sec. 320.

15 Cf. Maurice Blanchot (1992), *The Step Not Beyond*, for a discussion of the possibility of a language without closure.

16 It should be apparent that Hillman equates the "depth" of an image with showing its inherent complexity through metaphorical analogizing. But what he calls "depth" is actually a "horizontal" rather than "vertical" exploration of the relationship between the imagination and the world. In a paradoxical sense the "depth" work of imagination for Hillman plays closer to the surface structure of things than Jung's analytical psychology but does not go so "deep" as to supersede the boundary between the literal and the metaphorical.

17 "Psychologizing is in danger when it forgets that literalism is inherent in the very notion of idea. Then we begin to see ideas rather than seeing by means of them" (*RV*, p. 141).

18 See Heidegger (trans. 1984), "The Essence of a Fundamental Metaphysical Position, the Possibility of Such Positions in the History of Western Philosophy," where he describes the distinction between metaphysics and metaphysical in the following way: "*Metaphysics* is thus the rubric indicative of philosophy proper; it always has to do with a philosophy's fundamental thought. . ." But "when we speak of *metaphysical* we are pointing to reasons lying behind something else, or perhaps going out beyond that thing in some inscrutable way" (p. 185).

19 Cf. Paul De Man (1983), *Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism*. Note especially the Nietzschean influence on the practice of literary criticism.

20 "Psychologizing is always at variance with the positions of others; it is a countereducation, a negative learning, moving all standpoints off balance toward their borders, their extremes. At the borders Hermes rules, and in these regions of no-man's land there can be nothing alien, nothing excluded." (*RV*, p. 163).

21 See Heidegger (trans. 1996), *The Principle of Reason*, for his discussion of this principle in lecture six. Also see study 8, p. 259 of Paul Ricoeur (trans. 1981), *The Rule of Metaphor*.

22 "Hermes holds this bridge, and connects, too, to night, to death, and the hidden hermetic message in all things." (*RV*, 163).

23 Thomas Mabbott (1988), "Text of 'The Purloined Letter'." See in particular Lacan,

“Seminar on ‘The Purloined Letter,’ and Derrida, “The Purveyor of Truth,” for a polemic discussion over the significance of the letter in psychoanalysis.

24 For a discussion of *archi-trace* in psychoanalysis or depth psychology see Derrida (trans. 1978), “Freud and the Scene of Writing.”

25 Cf. Derrida (1978), “The Retrait of Metaphor,” for a discussion of how the withdrawal of metaphor resists Paul Ricouer’s characterization of Derrida’s text as being an ‘unbound deconstruction.’ See also Derrida (trans. 1982), “White Mythology: Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy,” the text to which Ricouer directs his response in the *Rule of Metaphor*.

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