

“Anyway why did it have to be the death of the poet?”

The Orphic Roots of Jung’s Psychology

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The Hysteric at the Threshold

At the end of the 19th century, the hysteric crossed the threshold into the consulting rooms of Freud and ushered in a revolution in European thought whose effects are still reverberating. In this essay I want to return to that moment in time when those hysterics gave flesh in a symptomatic body to the dreams of Descartes. In November 1619, in a stove-heated room in Ulm, Germany, those dreams of Descartes exiled soul to an abyss between matter and mind. Those hysterics, bastard daughters of Descartes, marked the return of the soul from that abyss.¹

We are the stuff on which these dreams are still being made. In the psychopathology of daily life, in our depressions and obsessions, our addictions and manias, our compulsions and delusions, we are possessed and haunted by soul and called through its symptomatic voice to awaken to our condition of exile. The revolution in our ways of knowing the world and being in it that began at that threshold remains unfinished. Confined to the therapy room as a method of treatment, and imprisoned within a medical model, the larger cultural-historical implications of this revolution have been quietly lost.² Its continuation demands a renewal of those radical origins, a return that re-collects what has become forgotten in the many ways in which depth psychology has been tamed.

I return to these origins in order to explore how the hysteric as prototype of psychopathological life leads a mimetic existence. As a literary term mimesis means imitation, and in biology and medicine this meaning is specified as the imitation of an illness, which is illustrated with reference to hysteria. In this regard, the hysteric leads a life whose symptoms take on the appearance of a physical disease. The paralyses, the various sensory afflictions, and the whole range of physical symptoms are the material expression of something other that is both revealed and concealed through the symptom. But the hysteric’s illness is a dis-ease, which does not matter as a biological condition or a physical fact. Rather, it matters in another way. In the abyss of matter and mind opened by Descartes dreams, we have called that other way a mental illness. The symptoms that inaugurated depth psychology are, however, no more a matter of mind

than they are a material fact. They were and are the dis-ease of soul whose voice cries out in exile from the depths of its abysmal existence.

Twenty-three hundred years earlier Plato also described a journey of exile and return. For Plato, it was a type of poet who was exiled from the Polis, and another type who returned. The origins of depth psychology are a retelling of this Platonic story. For Plato the tale of exile and return was rooted in his desire to transform the education of the Greek soul from mimesis to anamnesis, a shift that would free the soul from its condition of exile and ignorance. For depth psychology the tale of exile and return is also about a radical form of education. Therapy as education is also a shift from mimesis to anamnesis that would free the soul from its condition of exile and forgetfulness. We might, therefore, recover some of the radical origins of depth psychology if we invite the two types of poet to be witnesses to that moment when the hysteric crossed the threshold into that place of the talking cure, a place where neither the factual language of scientific medicine nor the conceptual language of the academic mind was to be spoken. The creation of the therapy room at the end of the nineteenth century was the creation of a new form of the Polis where the symbolic speech of dreams was spoken in a voice that is closer to the poet than it is to anything else.

In his book *The Orphic Moment: Shaman to Poet-Thinker in Plato, Nietzsche, and Mallarme*, Robert McGahey notes this same connection between fifth century B.C.E. Greece and fin de siècle Europe. The resonance between them is the appearance of Orpheus. When Orpheus is first encountered in the archaic era, he “comes...out of the shamanic mists.” Orpheus is “originally a shaman,” and like the shaman he made use of a “lyre fashioned out of the carapace of the tortoise.” But in fifth century B.C.E. Greece, when *mythos* is giving way to *logos*, the original music of the poet as shaman is being “transmuted into the children of myth: poetry and philosophy”. It is a moment when “the Apollonian forms of Western culture were being encoded”, and Orpheus steps into this moment as a new type of poet.³ Built on the older form of the shaman, which his mythic descent into the underworld to rescue his beloved Eurydice from death fully illustrates, Orpheus also stands as the medial term between the Apollonian and the Dionysian modes of thought. Orpheus is a figure who embraces the “shamanic contradiction,” which according to Jack Lindsay is a bifocal consciousness. “The shaman,” he says, “feels himself a wholly free and independent person; yet he is at the same time nothing but the mouthpiece of forces beyond himself.” As one who embodies this contradiction Orpheus is a figure in whom two states of consciousness are held in a tension so that “possession becomes poetry.”⁴ This is the primary point that McGahey makes about Orpheus. According to McGahey, Orpheus is for Plato the shaman who out of the mists of shamanic times returns to the Polis as poet-thinker. “Orpheus is a key operator,” McGahey says, “carrying forward the older, shamanic mode of thought and being into the youthful logocentric age.” In this appearance he signals the “shift from the poet’s traditional operation by *mimesis*” toward *anamnesis*.⁵

The return of Orpheus at the end of the nineteenth century coincides with the breakdown of those forms encoded twenty three hundred years earlier. In this new

context Orpheus appears again as the *daimon* or way between the Apollonian and Dionysian modes, as the figure who as poet-thinker holds the tension between *philosophos* and *poiesis*. McGahey argues that this breakdown is “represented by the language-crisis at the end of the nineteenth century”, and he traces out this language crisis in the work of the philosopher Nietzsche and the poet Mallarmé.⁶ But depth psychology also registers this language crisis, for, if nothing else, it begins with the recognition that language itself is a problem. There are gaps in our meanings even as there are meanings in these gaps. Into these gaps Orpheus steps once again as the figure who bridges the divide between an Apollonian mode that has become identified with mind cut off from nature and body, and the Dionysian identified with body and instinct cut off from mind.

In this context, Orpheus is as much the archetypal figuration of depth psychology as is Oedipus. While one might make an interesting case for dividing Freud’s and Jung’s psychologies along these archetypal fault lines, I want to limit myself in this essay to exploring how the symptom in depth psychology is an Orphic longing to reunite poet and philosopher. At the origins of depth psychology this reunion is a re-membering of the shaman as that new type of poet-thinker, as Orpheus. It is this longing that the hysteric in her mimetic appearance ignites. In her presence at the threshold she inaugurates, invites, makes possible and even demands the Orphic moment.⁷ It is this voice, the Orphic voice of symptom as vocation calling the soul to remember its shamanic journey, which is speaking through the symptom. It is the voice of anamnesis speaking alongside the mimetic voice of the symptom, alongside this other voice, the voice of the symptom as repetition of the soul’s life of imitation, a life in which the soul has forgotten its own journey.

My claim in this essay then is that the origins of depth psychology are a re-telling of Plato’s struggle with the poet. The hysteric is a type of the mimetic poet whom Plato banned from the Polis *and* the return of another type of poet, the Orphic poet, the poet of anamnesis. Her symptoms had a double voice, and in this sense we might say that the psychopathology of daily life embodies the shamanic contradiction. In this context, Freud’s, and especially Jung’s, therapy, can be re-imagined as a struggle to find the poet’s place in the Soul, like Plato, twenty three hundred years earlier, struggled to find the poet’s place in the Polis.

This turning toward the origins of depth psychology, this returning to them, turns us toward that earlier time, the time of Plato. The work of returning becomes a spiral that deepens the return, a spiral in which those events of long ago turn up again but at another level, in another cultural-historical context. In this work of spiraling, I follow the time of the soul, which is vertical and not horizontal.⁸ In this vertical time, events gather together by virtue of their emotional affinity. They cluster together not because of any causal, linear links, which are external to their being. Rather they are drawn to each other through an interior correspondence, through a familial kinship that affectively holds them together. They have, as it were, a blood tie, and they share with each other a rhythm, a pulse, a beat, a resonant harmony. Hence, I am not identifying the hysteric with the poet. I am not explaining the hysteric via the poet. And I certainly am not

reducing the poet to the hysteric. Rather, I am noticing the archetypal kinship between these two moments of exile and return, the presence of Orpheus in each of them, which respects their differences while witnessing this affinity.

Plato and the Poets

When Plato exiled the poet from the Polis, he made one exception. One poet was finally not excluded. Or, perhaps it is better to say that one poet was allowed to return. This is the argument of Robert McGahey for whom Plato's philosophic vision is best embodied in a new kind of figure. This figure is the one who, in the quest for wisdom, is a lover inspired by the Muses. Nine sisters, these daughters of Mnemosyne and Zeus were sources of inspiration, and, as such, they were for the Greek mind one type of mania, one type of possession by the Gods. Like the other types of mania, inspiration by the Muses had a specific form. Prophetic madness was possession by Apollo, sensory madness possession by Dionysius, and erotic madness, which was the highest form of possession, was the gift of Aphrodite and Eros. Prophecy, drunken lucidity and love; and alongside them was poetic madness, possession by the Muses.

At the time that Plato is writing, the Greek image of the psyche has undergone a radical transformation. In the archaic period the person is still subject to invasion by forces and gods outside the psyche. Socrates, for example, has his daimon, which as a kind of guardian spirit leads Socrates to follow the law of his own being. This law however is not a cultural prescription. Rather it is an indwelling fate, paradoxically determined and chosen by the soul before it falls into time, as Plato's myth of Er at the close of the tenth book of *The Republic* describes. To follow the law of one's being makes one like the *theoi* of the Greek pantheon. While each god and goddess has a particular sphere of influence that may overlap with that of another, each one has a style or mode and a mood that is singular and which constrains the particular god or goddess within and to a law that is a way of being.⁹ To be in accord with the law of one's own being, then, is to be in accord with the divine. It is the paradoxical realization of how the law of one's own being installs one in an order of being that is greater than the individual self.

Concerning the daimon what is important to note here is that while it is indwelling, it still has an existence that is separate from the psyche. In this regard, the daimon is still an example of the archaic view of possession, as are the four manias. Thus, if Plato welcomes back a type of poet who is possessed by the Muses it must stand as "a capital instance of the persistence in his thought of the archaic view." Specifically Plato's retention of this archaic view of possession means that the *empsychon* or soul within is for Plato subject to 'the invasion of *theoi* as *maniai*."¹⁰ In the archaic view then the gods are still our manias, and the poet inspired by the Muses is therefore still possessed, like the shamans of Thrace in northern Greece. And yet this type of poet possessed by the Muses and like a shaman must in some way differ from the poets whom Plato bans from the Polis.

Plato's exiling of the poets from the Polis is a well-known tale. Poets are exiled by Plato in order to check the danger of "a corruption of the mind" that they inspire. This corruption lies in the fact that the poet, like the painter to whom he is compared in the opening of the tenth book of the Republic, produces a copy of some experience that is twice removed from the truth. A carpenter, for example, can produce a table, which is already only an appearance of the table "which really and in itself is," that is the table produced by the god who is its originator.¹¹ Of the three, then, the painter is an imitator of reality that is itself only the appearance of the truth.

Having made this point Plato then moves on to his critique of the poet Homer, pausing to ask that if a man were able to produce both the exemplar and the semblance, which would he choose? The obvious answer that Plato gives, that such a man would choose to produce the exemplar, already suggests that the poet is either lying or not aware of his condition of ignorance. But in *ION*, Plato makes it clear that the poet is a danger not because he lies but because he does not know that he is possessed by forces that are outside his mind, and that as such he is only the mouthpiece for them. At the end of the dialogue after Ion, who as a rhapsode had a reputation as the most skilled performer of Homer's poems, has tried to persuade Socrates that Homer is a teacher of all the arts, from medicine to the arts of war in which a general is skilled, Socrates gently says to Ion that he is just like Proteus. Ion twists and turns and assumes every shape "until finally," Socrates says, "you elude my grasp and reveal yourself as a general." But Ion is not intentionally deceiving Socrates. On the contrary, the conclusion toward which Ion is being led is that the poet has no art, no skill like the doctor or the diviner, or the fisherman, or the artisan. Rather, Ion is by divine lot possessed by Homer, and being possessed does not know of what he speaks. After asking Ion if he wishes to be regarded as a man who is unjust because he lies or one who is divine by virtue of being possessed, Ion chooses the latter.

Ion: The difference, Socrates, is great. It is far lovelier to be deemed divine.

Socrates: This lovelier title, Ion, shall be yours, to be in our mind divine, and not an artist, in praising Homer.¹²

It is a wonderful moment of irony. The poet who does not know of what he speaks participates in his own exile precisely at that moment when he does know that he does not know of what he speaks.

The poet who is exiled from the Polis is the one who when he speaks is "out of his mind." Such a poet, Plato has already said earlier in this dialogue, "is a light and winged thing, and holy, and never able to compose until he has become inspired, and is beside himself, and reason is no longer in him..." Possessed in this fashion, the poet possesses no art of his own: "...for not by art do they utter these, but by power divine..." What we are to learn from this dialogue is "... the reason why the deity has bereft them of their senses, and uses them as ministers, along with soothsayers and godly seers; it is in order that we listeners may know that it is not they who utter these precious revelations while their mind is not within them, but that it is the god himself who speaks,

and through them becomes articulate to us..." We are meant to know this difference in order to be free of the aesthetic and emotional spell that the poets weave. We are meant to know that "...the poets are nothing but interpreters of the gods, each one possessed by the divinity to whom he is in bondage."¹³

Inspired by the Muses the poet is possessed and in bondage to the god who speaks through him, and he is incapable, therefore, of either hearing or speaking any other words. These poets, rhapsodes like Ion, only imitate what is given to them, repeat and pass on without discernment or reflection what passes into and through them. This imitation, moreover, is not just a mere representation of some original form, for as Erik Havelock argues in his classic text *Preface to Plato* imitation is not adequate to understand Plato's notion of mimesis, since the poets do not have knowledge of the original which they copy in their performance. Rather, Havelock says, the mimetic poet takes on the character of the figure he is praising in his song. He becomes that character through a kind of emotional identification, which he then passes on to the audience. Mimesis for Plato then would be, in our terminology, an imitation that is based in an unconscious identification, and in this regard it mimics the state of possession. In this state of emotional identification the poet seduces the audience into a place where the beautiful semblance of things about which he speaks, supported by the rhythm and harmony of the poet's speech/song, is mistaken for the truth. They are guilty of exciting the passions and hypnotizing the mind into forgetting what is true.¹⁴

In Plato's time education by mimesis was still the predominant form of the Greek *Paideia*, a form he wanted to transform. The poet's aesthetic power robs the mind of its reflective power to discern the difference between the messenger-the poet's song-and the message-the God speaking through it. The poet drugs into sleep what Socrates in the *Phaedrus* calls the divining power within the mind. Indeed the *Phaedrus* offers a telling myth that illustrates the danger of the hypnotic power of song inspired by the Muses. It is the myth of the cicadas spoken by Socrates to Phaedrus as they walk outside the city and into the country to talk of beauty and love, and it goes like this:

'The story is that once upon a time these creatures were men-men of an age before there were any Muses-and that when the latter came into the world, and music made its appearance, some of the people of those days were so thrilled with pleasure that they went on singing, and quite forgot to eat and drink until they actually died without noticing it. From them in due course sprang the race of cicadas, to which the Muses have granted the boon of needing no sustenance right from their birth, but of singing from the very first, without food or drink, until the day of their death."¹⁵

This myth is a beautiful criticism of mimesis and its dangers. The cicadas are the descendants of that race of men who lived before the Muses, who lived before song came into the world, and their presence is a potent reminder to Socrates of the bewitching power of song. In the dialogue, therefore, Socrates makes it clear that he and Phaedrus are to steer clear of the cicadas' hypnotic song and that if they do they

might be granted the gift that the Muses are able to confer upon mortals. McGahey argues that this boon concerns the food that the soul needs for its nourishment. This food upon which the soul feeds is the beauty of the loved one. This myth, McGahey writes, “adroitly combines the interrelated themes of beauty and nurture of the soul in the theme of unceasing song...” This unceasing song, which finally leads the soul back home, is, however, the original song of the soul that is present in each philosopher-lover, and which can be heard only when one has not been bewitched by the “cicada choir as the chorus of the ‘Inherited Conglomerate.’”¹⁶ This myth combines then the power of the poetic both to awaken the soul to its beauty and to drug it into sleep

Without this capacity to know beauty as what awakens the soul to love and initiates it into its journey of homecoming; without that divining power of mind to differentiate the song within one’s own breast from the song of the “Inherited Conglomerate”, the poets become a danger to the moral and ethical development of the soul.

Once the Muses have entered creation, song that has entered with them is transmitted in a great chain of inspiration in which the poets stand between the Muses and the audience. As the first link in this chain, the Muses receive from the gods and goddesses the divine afflatus. The breath of the divine is then transmitted to the *poietai* who were the inspired bards like Homer or Hesiod, who then in turn inspired the *rhapsodes*, who like Ion were reciters, who in their turn transmitted their inspiration to the audience. This mode of transmission learning, according to Havelock, is a form of indoctrination in which the lessons of the poets are memorized through repetition that is rhythmic and that is built into the body. The entire performance between poet and audience had a musical quality, which Havelock reminds us was for the Greeks intimately linked to the act of memorization. Mimetic learning then was oral, acoustic, rhythmical, conservative in the repetition of its content, essentially bodily, and ultimately had the quality of a spell. Describing this situation Havelock says, “The entire nervous system is geared to the task of memorisation,” and “The regularity of the performance had a certain effect of hypnosis.”¹⁷

This is how the poets in Plato’s time taught what they taught. Possessed they taught mimetically through imitation and emotional identification and contagion. Their song, like that of the cicadas, was a siren’s song. While *ION* makes it clear that the *rhapsode* has no place in the Polis, the *Republic* makes it clear that the *poietai*, who are a step closer to the Muses, are also to be sent into exile. In the *Republic* neither Homer nor Hesiod have a place. Thus in the tenth book Socrates in speaking to Glaucon says that while we must concede to those who praise Homer as the educator of Hellas that he was the best of the poets, “we must know the truth, that we can admit no poetry into our city save only hymns to the gods and the praises of good men.”¹⁸

And yet while the case against the poet seems clear Plato still appears to retain some place for them in the Polis. The Muses, who inspire the poets, are represented at the entrance to the Academy, present at this earlier threshold, which prompts McGahey to say that in his ideal state Plato must retain “a certain piety for them as bestowers of the poetic form of mania.”¹⁹ Their inspiration then still seems to matter in the education of

the soul, as Plato makes clear in the *Phaedrus*, where the Muses as source of one of the four manias are presented. We have to conclude then that Plato is ambivalent about the role and the place of the poet and that at the heart of his banishment of the poet from the Polis there is a paradox. The poet is banned from the Polis, but poetic madness is not. *Poietes* and *rhapsode* are exiled but the Muses are not. The chain of inspiration is broken but the Muses remain. The ambivalence is heightened and the paradox is compounded when in the same dialogue, the *Phaedrus*, the poet, whomever he or she is, is nevertheless assigned a place quite far down on the list in that hierarchy of births in which the soul awakens or un-forgets its true home. This poet ranks just above an artisan.

Which poet then haunts the Polis? What kind of figure is this poet who, though possessed by the Muses, is exempted from exile? This figure must be someone new who while possessed is also free. It is Orpheus who steps into this contradiction, Orpheus who is the son of Oeagrus, a river god and the king of Thrace. It is Orpheus then who, built upon the older figure of the shamans from Thrace, repairs the broken chain. It is Orpheus who renews the link with the Muses and reconnects humanity to the gods. It is Orpheus finally who enters the Polis and again 2300 years later who enters the therapy room.

Enter Orpheus

In Plato's myth of Er, which is presented at the close of the tenth book of the *Republic*, Orpheus chooses to be reborn as a swan, which is the animal form in which Plato appears to Socrates in a dream just before their initial meeting. McGahey suggests "there is a sense in which this swan figure replaced the poets banished from the Republic."²⁰ It is an intriguing suggestion because it indicates that the poet who returns to the Polis belongs to the realm of dreams, that the poet who is not exiled comes from the land of dreams. Orpheus who returns is both myth and dream. Orpheus who is excluded from exile belongs to the kingdom of the soul, and hence still retains a place in its education. Not by reason alone is the soul educated, but by reason ensorcelled by myth and dream. In presenting the myth of Er at the close of the same dialogue in which the poet is most famously banned from the Polis, is not Plato teaching us about a new kind of reason, about a new kind of mind, which in freeing itself from possession remains attuned to myth and dream, these deep waters of the soul?²¹

Orpheus is the imaginal embodiment of this new type of mind.²² He is the son of the Muse Calliope, who as chief of the Muses presided over the domains of epic and heroic poetry. By his birthright then Orpheus has an intimate connection to the gods, a direct link as it were to them through his birth, which already places him in a different relation to the Muses than the *poietes* and *rhapsode* have. He is not just inspired by the gods through the Muses in that chain of inspiration; he partakes of their being. His song therefore is not just a repetition of what has been received in a state of possession; it is a song of remembrance. "His poetic modality is not mimetic," McGahey notes, and "The song he sings is the inner song of creation." In this regard the Orphic song is daimonic,

and as such it is “an analogue of the ‘song’ that Socrates taught each individual seeker to listen for.”²³

Orpheus/Socrates; Socrates/Orpheus: The poet who returns from exile is the philosopher. The philosopher who dwells in the marketplace of the Polis, asking his disturbing questions, is the poet. And both, as seekers of wisdom, are lovers of the soul. Orpheus then is a new type of poet, a philosopher/poet/lover, the poet who, as McGahey notes, marries the older form of the *poietes* to the *philosophos* and who in this guise is connected to the Muses and their form of poetic mania. He is a poet/thinker, a poet whose thinking is poetically thought, the *philosophos* who dwells poetically in the Polis, the one who truly does embody a new kind of thinking, which holds together the children of myth, poetry and philosophy.²⁴ Orpheus is the one who re-members soul to its mythic form by staying in the gap between poetry and philosophy.²⁵

So Orpheus belongs to the Polis because his song re-members the soul, because his song awakens the soul to its forgotten inner song, which connects it then to “the music of the spheres”, to the celestial and cosmic music of creation. This harmony between inner song and the song of creation is present in the mythic tales told of Orpheus. His songs have the power to bend the willows branches, to tame animals, and to arouse, as Rilke says in one of his *Sonnets to Orpheus*, to its full powers the order of nature. In this power to awaken nature Orpheus song sings “the original song to which all creation responds, as if hearing its own inner melody.”²⁶ That he must undergo dismemberment by the Maenads after his descent into the underworld only indicates that the shamanic journey between worlds is an integral part of this resonance between his inner song and that of creation. How much then his song differs from those light and winged beings who, speaking only when out of their minds, do not know what they are saying, those whose songs merely exhale the breath of the gods, those whose songs are a mere repetition and not a remembrance of the divine afflatus.

Orpheus’ song is cathartic. It frees the soul from its enslavement to melodies that are not its own, and it is this liberation of the soul that Plato desires. Catharsis for Plato was not achieved through the formulaic practice of some external rites. Rather as a purification of the soul catharsis was a matter of “learning to ‘practice philosophy’ as he had learned from his master, Socrates.”²⁷ To practice philosophy in this way meant following the injunction of the Delphic oracle’s charge to “know thyself”, a charge that was central to the core of the new theology of Orphism. Although Plato was dismissive of the diluted form of Orphism, he accepted this one, which was one of its principal teachings.

Catharsis then is *philosophia*, the love of wisdom, a way of coming to know oneself that coincides with the work of remembering. Recalling that as the son of the Muse Calliope, Orpheus is the grandson of Mnemosyne who with Zeus bore the nine Muses, we can say that by his birthright Orpheus is in service to memory. Orpheus returns not only because of what he is not—a mimetic poet; he returns because of who he is: the poet/philosopher whose songs awaken the soul to the heritage it has forgotten. When we remember that in the myth of Er, the soul both chooses and is given its destiny, we

might add that Orpheus returns because as a poet in service to remembering his songs awakened the soul to a destiny that can be chosen as a vocation, a calling that McGahey identifies with the *oima*, the song lines of the soul, which only the poet/philosopher who has freed the soul from the choir of the cicadas song is able to hear.

Rilke in one of his sonnets to the poet succinctly captures this sense of the Orphic moment as the moment when heritage as destiny becomes vocation. Having disobeyed the command not to look back, Orpheus has already lost Eurydice for the second time. In the next section I will consider this singular moment of the backward glance, but for now I want to anticipate those remarks by noting that in that gesture of disobedience Orpheus transforms fate into vocation. From the mind's point of view what looks like 'failure' is from the soul's perspective the unfolding of a destiny that now has been chosen. Orpheus, having looked back, is brought to his fate. Finally unable to fend off the Maenads, he is dismembered. But his melody lingers "in lions and rocks/and in the trees and the birds," where Rilke says Orpheus is still singing. And because he lingers, because his song still resonates with the song of tree and bird, rock and animal, his fate chosen and fulfilled becomes for us the occasion when we might be freed of the singsong rhythms of the collective and awakened to the inner song of the soul, whose melody echoes the song of creation. He becomes for us a fate that might be chosen:

"O you lost god! You unending trace!
Only because at last enmity rent and scattered you are we now the
hearers and a mouth of Nature."²⁸

To say that Orpheus, unlike the mimetic poets whose form of education is by possession, is in service to memory does not, however, quite capture the Platonic notion of anamnesis, which is the Orphic form of education. While anamnesis does mean learning by recollection, there is a sense in the word's structure, which brings us closer to its dynamic quality. Amnesia means without memory; it means forgetting. In borrowed Greek compound words 'ana' means 'upward' and/or 'back from.' When prefixed to amnesia, anamnesis connotes a movement upward into memory, a movement of coming back from being without memory; it suggests a movement upward and back from forgetting. Anamnesis then is a return from forgetting. It is a work that works through forgetting. It is a work against forgetting. It is a work of un-forgetting.

In this regard, the Orphic moment of anamnesis is a journey that one undertakes and undergoes, a journey in which active and passive elements co-mingle, a journey that is both chosen and imposed. Anamnesis then connotes more than the terms memory or remembering do. As un-forgetting it suggests a process that one goes through, which is not entirely without some suffering and cost. In the moment of un-forgetting something happens to the person who is being re-membered. Anamnesis is a sundering of the person, a *sparagmos* or tearing apart, a dis-membering like Dionysius and Orpheus himself undergo. Anamnesis is a painful awakening, a re-membering of the flesh.²⁹ It is not recollection contemplated in the comfort and safety of the critical, reflective mind. In this regard I would agree with McGahey against Eric Havelock who argues that "*anamnesis* routs mimesis."³⁰ Havelock's argument would separate thinking and its

derivatives from the flesh and would install the philosopher as a figure who is separate from the Orphic poet.

What awakens soul to what has been forgotten; what initiates the journey of anamnesis; what tears soul apart in service of its re-remembering? It is Eros and in both the *Symposium* and *Phaedrus* Plato presents a description of the awakening of Eros that animates his Orphic universe. According to McGahey, "In each of these dialogues the core process is a dialectic that begins with the stirrings of love for the divine excited by the longing for union with the earthly beloved, whose beauty is a reflection of the otherwise unimaginable beauty of the world of forms."³¹ Beauty releases the soul from its sleep, and in the tides of passion the soul begins to spiral upward and to re-grow the wings it had shed in its fall into time. This new wing growth is felt as a throbbing, which becomes a fevered anguish when the beloved is gone. For Plato then anamnesis, this journey of awakening through Eros, is both a joyful release and a painful process.

Orpheus is the exemplar of this process of anamnesis. As such he is no light and winged thing. On the contrary, he is for Plato the new type of poet, the poet/thinker who has descended into the underworld for the sake of beauty and love, and who, having suffered the journey of love and loss, has heard and chosen the song line of his fate.

Orpheus' Descent

Eurydice, seduced by the sweet songs of Orpheus, falls in love with him. Their marriage however is short lived, for as she flees from Aristaeus, a beekeeper who is associated with Apollo, and whose desire is inflamed by her beauty, she steps on a viper whose venomous bite inflicts a mortal wound. Grieving over her loss and unable to be moved as he has moved others by his songs, Orpheus descends into Hades where his grief moves the gods and goddesses of the underworld to tears. Hades and Persephone, King and Queen of the underworld, are persuaded to release Eurydice back into life, but only on the condition that Orpheus not look back as they ascend to the upper world. But Orpheus does look back, and in this fateful moment he loses Eurydice for a second time, as she is taken back into death and the underworld by Hermes.³²

Orpheus, now alone, returns to Thrace, the place of his origins, where he lives as a recluse apart from the company of women. In one version of the tale the women of Thrace complain that Orpheus has seduced away their warrior-husbands. In their anger these wives who have now become Maenads attack Orpheus, and while he continues to sing even in such a way that, as Rilke says in a beautiful image, the stones that they hurl at him turn soft and become gifted with hearing on touching him, he is finally unable to overcome their wild Phrygian cries and the din of their drums and cymbals. Orpheus dies and then is torn to pieces by the Maenads who throw his body parts into the sea. His head and lyre float down the Hebrus until they come to rest at Lesbos. There his lyre rests in the temple of Apollo, while his head continues to sing and prophesize at the shrine of Dionysos, situating Orpheus in this return as he was from his beginning in his medial place between them. But Apollo, jealous at the intrusion of Orpheus onto his

realm of prophecy, silences him, while his lyre is cast into the heavens where it continues to shine as the constellation Lyra.

In his book *L'espace litteraire* Maurice Blanchot places 'le regard d'Orphee' at the center of the Orphic tale.³³ In that moment of turning Orpheus peers into the black nothingness of an abyss and sees it as never before, that landscape of soul where love and death dwell on the threshold between the worlds of light and darkness, that world of shades and images, of dreams and visions, which do not surrender themselves to the colonizing efforts of consciousness. And on the pivot of his turning, a gesture that in itself marks a threshold, Orpheus chooses his fate; at this pivotal moment Orpheus binds himself and, as we shall see in a moment, Eurydice to their destinies.

It is not then out of fear or doubt or impatience that Orpheus turns. Or perhaps one should say that it is something other than fear, doubt or impatience that turns Orpheus toward Eurydice. Certainly his turning is a human gesture, which is easy enough to understand. Who would not look back to make sure that death has not claimed the beloved? But his turning as central to his story is meant to teach us something else, something about the ways of the soul, about its song lines, which when heard lead us in another direction. His turning is meant to teach us what the Orphic moment of the soul is, that moment of transformation when, in Nietzsche's phrase-'amor fate'- one begins to love one's fate. And his turning is in any case at one with who Orpheus is, the poet/philosopher/lover who is excluded from Plato's ban precisely because he has listened to the 'oima' or song way of his soul and has not been bewitched by the chorus of the cicadas, those songs that mimetically repeat themselves and seduce one into the sleep of convention. On the threshold of his turning Orpheus is making a choice. At this pivotal moment he is choosing his destiny as a vocation.

Mark Greene convincingly captures this sense of Orpheus' turn. The "look back" is "a conscious act on the part of Orpheus," and in this backward glance "resides a shattering of Orpheus' former ego and identity." Considering what allows this act to occur, Greene writes that "It is only because Orpheus knows more leaving the underworld than when he entered it that a context for his deliberate choice emerges."³⁴ Love, loss and the descent of grief have made Orpheus more conscious of his gifts and the responsibilities that flow from them. His descent has made Orpheus into the shaman, which his origins had already prepared but which had to be chosen, and which once chosen made him Plato's exceptional poet. His descent and the transformation in consciousness that it brings have allowed Orpheus to become who he was meant to be. It has made him a conscious shaman, one able to hold the tension of the shamanic contradiction, which as we saw earlier is a state of being in which one is paradoxically free and in service to forces beyond oneself. E.R. Dodds speaks of "rationalized shamans", which is another way of holding the tension of opposites in the shamanic contradiction. It is his term for the "Guardians" of Plato's *Republic*. The rationalized shaman "like their primitive predecessors, are prepared for their high office by a special kind of discipline defined to modify the whole psychic structure." Orpheus' descent is such a preparation. It is an education of the soul, which stretches the limits of human possibility and which Orpheus

undergoes in his *sparagmos*. The Orphic moment of the soul is the moment when “the possibilities of an exceptional type of personality” become possible.³⁵

Orpheus’ turn releases him into the laws of his fate. It is a choice that is also a transgression. He turns back and disobeys the gods and goddesses, but in so doing he makes their laws and prohibitions more conscious and in this way perhaps makes them more fully aware of themselves. They are brought into the human order by his act, just as he in realizing his destiny is brought to his divinity.³⁶

Orpheus must look back if he is to fulfill his destiny, if he is to be in accord with the law of his being. He must and yet paradoxically in so doing he chooses what he must do and thereby not only does his destiny become a vocation, but he also liberates Eurydice into her destiny. This choice is not heroic self-sacrifice, or if it is then it is the sacrifice of his possession of her. In the *Duino Elegies* Rilke throws this moment to us as a question: “...Is it not time that, in loving,/ we freed ourselves from the loved one, and, quivering, endured: as the arrow endures the string, to become, in the gathering out-leap, something more than itself?/For staying is nowhere.”³⁷ Orpheus does not stay; he does not stay put as it were, fixed to the god’s command, fixed in his forward gaze and the literal achievement of the intention of his project to bring Eurydice back, fixed to his diurnal, upper world relation to her. He turns. Rilke describes with one word what this moment is for Eurydice in his poem “Orpheus. Eurydice. Hermes.” At the moment of his turning Rilke says, “the god put out his hand to stop her, saying,/with sorrow in his voice: he has turned around-;/she could not understand, and softly answered/*Who?*”

Who? One word, italicized in the poem! In her death, “She had come into a new virginity/and was untouchable...” and in that space “She was no longer that woman with blue eyes/who once had echoed through the poet’s songs,/no longer that wide couch’s scent and island,/and that man’s property no longer.” “She was already root.”³⁸

Orpheus’ descent has changed his vision. He now sees life with and through the eyes of the dead; like the shaman-poet that he is, the poet-thinker welcomed back into the Polis, he sees not only with the eyes of this world but also this world through the eyes of the other world. In doing so both he and Eurydice “out-leap” who they were and become more than themselves. Each becomes an imaginal being, a being of the soul, freed from the weight and expectations of their histories and freed into their larger destinies. Orpheus is Plato’s lover; he is the prototype of the one who is awakened by beauty and love, the one claimed by love and released by it.³⁹ We cannot imagine then the tale of Orpheus without this turn. Or if we do, then we are forced perhaps to imagine Eurydice chained to his vision of her, depressed perhaps and on Prozac. And Orpheus, vaguely aware perhaps of the stars, bored, distracted, his lyre going to rust and ruin, and the stars destined to be a bit less in their shine. And both standing on the threshold of the therapy room!

Orpheus: Archetypal figure of Individuation

In his article, "Who is Behind Archetypal Psychology?" Noel Cobb offers the thesis that "a revisioning of psychology cannot take place without the simultaneous revivication of the myth of Orpheus." My article fully agrees with this thesis. Speaking of Freud and Jung, whose descents to the underworld crafted their psychologies, he then says "neither of them managed to release the voice of Orpheus from the spell of Apollo, though Jung did much to prepare the way for a true poetic eloquence."⁴⁰ While I also tend to agree with this assessment, I would offer that in order to appreciate the place of Orpheus in Jung's psychology it is necessary to return to the symptom at the threshold of depth psychology and hear its mimetic voice alongside its Orphic one. This return allows us to appreciate the individuation process as the soul singing its Orphic song.

To understand how Jung's psychology of individuation is the expression of the soul's Orphic voice, it is necessary to recall how at the threshold of depth psychology the hysteric's symptom was the imitation of a physical illness. Through the symptom the soul was presenting itself as if it were a malady of the flesh, and the genius at the origins of depth psychology was to see through the imitation. The genius was to see through the symptom the soul's capacities for mimicry, its capacity and even necessity for indirection, its capacity to display itself through something else, its capacity as a mimic for metaphor. The genius was not to take the imitation literally.⁴¹ In this regard, the point about the symptom as imitation is not invalidated by the fact that Jung dealt less with hysterics and more with schizophrenics. The issue is not that there is a biological aspect to the symptom, which over time has become obvious for schizophrenia and other conditions including perhaps obsessive-compulsive states. The issue is that the symptom is reducible to these aspects only at the cost of losing its mimetic quality as an expression of the soul.

At the threshold of depth psychology Freud and Jung saw that the symptom was neither a matter of matter nor a matter of mind. It was on the contrary the way in which soul was holding a tension between forgetting something too painful to remember while remembering something too vital to forget. Freud and Jung, however, understood this tension and their respective approaches to therapy attempted its re-resolution in radically different ways. Without going into the many complexities of this difference, I want to highlight the one that is relevant to this essay.

Freud placed the symptom in history and looked for its re-resolution in an archaeology of the past. He was masterful at listening to the mimetic voice of the symptom, to the ways in which the symptom kept the individual identified with the forces of repression, that is possessed by cultural collective values, which kept the person enslaved to a life attempting to imitate those values and suffering for it. For Freud the symptom was the price of civilization, one of its discontents. Jung, on the other hand, placed the symptom in myth and looked for its re-resolution in the timeless time of the archetypal realm. He was masterful at listening to the Orphic voice of the symptom, to the ways in which the symptom presented itself as a vocation of the soul, as a calling to the individual to free him/herself from collective values for the sake of becoming what one was meant to be; he was masterful at listening to this other voice of the symptom as an invitation to be in accord with one's destiny, with the law of one's own being. For Jung the gods had

become our diseases and in this regard we were as much possessed by them through our symptoms as those who in Plato's time, under the hypnotic sway of the mimetic poets, were possessed. Jung, however, also heard this other voice of the symptom, and attending to its Orphic modality he offered a psychology of individuation, which sought to free the soul from its mimetic states of possession.⁴²

As we saw earlier, the Orphic voice is rooted in a choice. Orpheus chose to turn and in that moment his destiny became a vocation. This transformation of destiny into vocation is fundamental to the individuation process, which is a key concept in Jung's understanding of personality development. In his essay, "The Development of Personality," he excoriates the system of education that imposes upon the child the "high ideal of educating the personality." Indeed, he says that "It is only in an age like ours, when the individual is unconscious of the problems of adult life, or-what is worse-when he consciously shirks them, that people could wish to foist this ideal onto childhood." Those who would wish to do so are "half-baked educators...walking personifications of method...the professional man...irretrievably condemned to be competent." They are those who forget that "Children are not half as stupid as we imagine," those who "spoil their own children with a tolerance bordering on bad taste."

What Jung advocates is the recognition that the "achievement of personality means nothing less than the optimum development of the whole individual human being." Personality, he says, "is an act of high courage flung in the face of life, the absolute affirmation of all that constitutes the individual, the most successful adaptation to the universal conditions of existence coupled with the greatest possible freedom for self-determination." What he advocates is an education of that new type of mind, which Plato advocated, an education that would free the soul from its enslavement to conventional norms lived out in repetitive and mimetic fashion. Written in 1932, his words seem even more relevant today, although the proximity of the date to one that would shortly witness the rise of Nazism in Germany makes us pause to note and demands that we not forget the shadow side of this vision

Considering then the forces that go into the education of this personality, this new type of mind, Jung dismisses the idea that "one develops his personality because somebody tells him that it would be useful or advisable to do so." On the contrary, he asserts that the only thing that moves nature, including human nature, out of its familiar, repetitive patterns is necessity. The human personality "is tremendously conservative, not to say torpid." But the consequence of this development into a consciousness that is not ruled by outside caprice, subject to every whim and wind that blows it in this direction or that, not unlike Plato's description of the mimetic poets as light and winged things whose hypnotic effect upon their audience he sought to change, "is the conscious and unavoidable segregation of the single individual from the undifferentiated and unconscious herd." The development of the personality requires differentiation of unconscious unity.

The force of necessity, however, is not sufficient to move one toward this development. Choice is also required. Jung writes: "personality can never develop unless the

individual chooses his own way, consciously and with moral deliberation. Not only the causal motive-necessity-but conscious moral decision must lend its strength to the process of building the personality.”(174) Without necessity, individuation becomes “a mere acrobatics of the will;” and without choice it becomes an unconscious imitation of some idea of the individuated life, a mimetic performance where one is possessed by and identified with that idea. Together, however, they offer the possibility that the individuated life means living in “fidelity to the law of one’s own being.”⁴³ Jung, however, leaves no doubt about the high price that this path requires, against which the conventions of family, society, success, or reputation are no protection. There is the loneliness of isolation, and in celebrated cases like that of Socrates imprisonment and death, or with Orpheus dismemberment.

But Orpheus, like Socrates chooses. He chooses his fate within the context of necessity. He turns, and his turning is in defiance of a law imposed upon him by the gods. He must go in search of Eurydice and it is necessary for him to break the law. Maurice Blanchot notes “Orpheus’ destiny is not to submit to that law.”⁴⁴ In this act of defiance he and Eurydice are released into their fate. But if individuation is the Orphic moment of the soul, then who has the means to achieve it?

Clearly for both Plato and Jung the achievement is an exception, and while exception does not necessarily mean elitism there is in both Plato and Jung some hint of this identification. As E.R. Dodds points out Plato “shows scant interest in the psychology of the ordinary man.” For Plato only a few possess “the natural endowment which would make it possible to transform them into Guardians.” As for the rest, “he seems to have recognized at all stages of his thought that, so long as they are not exposed to the temptations of power, an intelligent hedonism provides the best practical guide to a satisfactory life.”⁴⁵ As for Jung he clearly says that most are not able to choose their own way and therefore fall into lives that are lived not in accordance with the law of their own being, but in accordance with “conventionalities of a moral, social, political, philosophical, or religious nature.” This only proves for Jung that “the vast majority of mankind do not choose their own way, but convention, and consequently develop not themselves but a method and a collective mode of life at the cost of their own wholeness.”⁴⁶

The words do seem harsh, but let us not judge them too quickly. Instead let us recognize first that there is this kinship between Plato and Jung regarding the education of a new kind of consciousness, one that keeps soul in mind. Second let us recognize that in Jung’s theme of the individuated personality the voice of Orpheus is being heard, the shaman poet whose descent into the underworld has given him a vision of life from the side of death, and whose return to the Polis as a poet/thinker/lover places him in the service of anamnesis, of awakening others to their condition of forgetfulness and exile in the state of sleep that is otherwise called the mimetic life. And third, let us keep open the possibility that psychology itself has lost its soul and in so doing has concerned itself only with the ordinary man and woman thereby forgetting the vocation of soul for the extraordinary. In this last regard the Orphic roots of Jung’s psychology of individuation might be the proper response to what the soul is and needs, and what it calls each of us

toward. Maybe the Orphic voice of the individuating process is one that sings softly in one's ear, "The ordinary life is not enough; for anyone!"

For Plato and Jung the education of the soul was about the education of an ethical human being, one who could make a moral choice to follow the law of his or her being against conventional values. But "How could anyone but a God," Jung asks, "counterbalance the dead weight of humanity in the mass, with its everlasting convention and habit?" "What is it in the end," he asks, "that induces a man to go his own way and to rise out of unconscious identity with the mass as out of a swathing mist?" Turning back on himself Jung now says "Not necessity, for necessity comes to many, and they all take refuge in convention." And "not moral decision, for nine times out of ten we decide for convention likewise." So, in the end, while both necessity and moral choice are crucial to the individuation process, as they were for Orpheus, "What is it, then, that inexorably tips the scales in favor of the *extra-ordinary*?"

Vocation! It is this factor that finally draws one away from the crowd and its familiar and comfortable patterns. "True personality," Jung says, "is always a vocation," which "acts like a law of God from which there is no escape." Called in this fashion we are, like Orpheus, both claimed and free; called in this fashion we live out that shamanic contradiction where contrarities are formed into harmonies, where the path of the law of one's own being does not leave one outside the collective human community but returns one to it as a unique witness for those values of soul sunk in the collective. Called in this way the one who has a vocation "*must* obey his own law, as if it were a daemon whispering to him of new and wonderful paths."⁴⁷ Socrates was such a witness, and so was Orpheus. Each had to obey his own law, but in doing so each became free to choose his destiny as a vocation.

At the start of this essay we stood at the threshold of depth psychology with the hysteric, and from that place we returned to an earlier threshold at the entrance to the Polis. My argument has been that these two thresholds are the same archetypal moment. In both instances there has been a struggle with the poet. Does the poet belong to the Polis? Does the poet have a place in the soul? Plato and Jung both give affirmative replies. Depth psychology, and particularly Jung's psychology of individuation, is the return of Orpheus to the city of the soul. Our symptoms are the chains of necessity that offer a choice. In their mimetic mode they speak to the suffering of the soul trapped within the confines of convention, which situates life in the service of repetitive forgetting. In their Orphic mode our symptoms call us out to choose our fate as our destiny, to transform destiny into a vocation, which situates life in service to the continuous work of un-forgetting. In our symptoms, then, we are both asleep and awake; we are both the mimetic poet whom Plato exiled from the Polis and the Orphic poet who returns.

"Anyway why did it have to be the death of the poet?"

If Plato and Jung give affirmative replies to the question of the place of the poet, these same replies are nevertheless ambivalent. In October, 1954 Jung writes a letter to

Aniela Jaffe in response to an essay she had sent him on Hermann Broch's novel, *Der Tod des Vergil*. In that letter he says that he has always wondered about "my reluctance which on all sorts of pretexts has hitherto held me back from letting *this Tod des Vergil* approach me too closely." In the very next sentence Jung gives his reply. "I was *jealous* of Broch because he has succeeded in doing what I had forbid myself on pain of death." Here is a man nearing the end of his life who confesses that he has always heard "a voice whispering to me that I could make it [his psychological work] 'aesthetic,'" and who had refused because he feared that "I would have produced nothing but a heap of shards which could never have been turned into a pot." Then in words that echo some painful realization of what he may have lost, Jung adds, "In spite of this ever present realization the artist homunculus in me has nourished all sorts of resentments and has obviously taken it very badly that I didn't press the poet's wreath on his head." In a telling P.S., written as an after thought that reveals the feeling tone of his words, Jung then wonders, "Anyway why did it have to be *the death of the poet?*"⁴⁸

Why indeed? Why did the poet have to die? Not Vergil, but the poet in Jung, the Orphic voice of his own soul? Was it, like Orpheus, a choice that out of some necessity freed Jung into his vocation, which continues to 'sing' for us as a legacy, like Orpheus' songs still resonate for us through nature? Perhaps! But however we regard Jung's ambivalence with respect to the poet there is also this testimony, spoken in a kind of reverie about one year before he died:

"Somewhere there was once a Flower, a Stone, a Crystal, a Queen, a King, a Palace, a Lover and his Beloved, and this was long ago, on an island somewhere in the ocean five thousand years ago...Such is Love, the Mystic flower of the Soul. This is the Centre, the Self. Nobody understands what I mean...only a poet could begin to understand."

Individuation is about the integration of the timeless background of the world and our lives, which is our common legacy. Orpheus, who was a shaman before he became the eponymous poet, lingers on the threshold between the time bound world and this timeless background. Depth psychology needs his presence. It needs to welcome him back into the city of the soul if it is to free itself from its reductions of the life of the soul to the empirical and the conceptual, the literal and the historical. It needs Orpheus if it is to be in service to the extra-ordinary in us. "In studying only the real man...psychology...only encounters an uncrowned being."⁵⁰ It needs to welcome him back too for the sake of the world. There is a necessity for the poet's voice in a "prose flattened world."⁵¹

In a recent editorial in *Poetry* Christian Wiman wonders if a National Poetry Month is a "late lifesaving gesture, like those paddles applied to a patient whose heart is failing." "Does the illness belong to culture or to poetry itself?" "I'm inclined," Wiman replies, to lay the blame on the former: it's this fat country whose heart is failing."⁵² As mediator and bridge Orpheus restores the soul's connections with the natural and the divine, and frees the soul from its formulaic conventions, which allows it to hear its own *oima*, its own song way in harmony with the song of creation. Orpheus needs to be welcomed back for the

sake of the earth and the soul of the world. The individuated life is a way of welcoming Orpheus back. But in the end can it make any difference to humanity if a few undertake and undergo this journey of descent and resurrection? Jung has the penultimate word here. Writing about psychotherapy, he says that what takes place in the field between patient and therapist 'is vitally important not only for the individual but also for society, and indeed for the moral and spiritual progress of mankind....Small and invisible as the contribution may be, it is yet an *opus magnum*.... The ultimate questions of psychotherapy are not a private matter-they represent a supreme responsibility."⁵³ To undergo the journey of individuation, however it begins, is to find oneself placed in service to the world. It is to find oneself in that paradoxical position where, in following the law of one's own being-the Orphic moment of the soul's awakening to its condition of exile-, one finds oneself installed within and in service to something larger and greater than oneself.

