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Archetypal Cosmology

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REAWAKENING PROMETHEUS

Through this paper I will examine more thoroughly the Uranus/Prometheus archetype as well as its close ties with the Jungian Puer Aeternus and Trickster archetypes. I will explore my relationship to and understanding of Archetypal Cosmology, in particular how the Uranus archetype has played out in my own divine dance of life and the process of awakening this archetype for the benefit of all. I strongly believe the Prometheus archetype epitomizes Archetypal Cosmology with its multidimensionality and bridging of ancient knowledge with the modernity of psychoanalysis – thus the reawakening Prometheus. This semester's Archetypal Cosmology course was my first introduction to archetypes and any sort of modern cosmological perspective. Through this introduction, I was able to bring together and develop a deeper understanding of my relationship with my inner and outer experience of life and how archetypes enhance this relationship.

Before coming to CIIS and taking this course, I felt something was desperately missing in my New Age cosmological view. I understood and identified with the quantum physics perspective of David Bohm and the biochemical research of Rupert Sheldrake. These outer sciences and explanations of my experience couldn't begin to explain my inner experience of life. This dichotomy became even clearer to me through the unfolding of this semester and how this shift and division occurred over time through the Mesopotamian, Hermetic, Platonic, and now Jungian perspectives of cosmology. This fundamental shift from our subjective understanding of the arts and humanities with our objective practice of the sciences, created our

current modern worldview based in separation of ourselves from the world. According to Richard Tarnas this worldview can be best described as

Speaking very generally, what sets the modern mind apart is its fundamental tendency to assert and experience a radical separation between subject and object, a distinct division between the human self and the encompassing world.¹

Archetypal Cosmology attempts to take us back to a primal worldview, incorporating ourselves back into the world as united in the whole, seeing magic in even the mundane. The modern worldview is unable to clarify why I am consistently drawn to certain things or possess the same instincts over and over again. Archetypal Cosmology allows for the emergence of both as an inclusive and new worldview and cosmology. It awakened in me a desire to acknowledge my allurements and in doing so recognize their sacredness and role in my life. After only a semester at CIIS and one class about archetypes, I am enlivened by the wisdom they have to offer us on a macrocosmic and the microcosmic of our being. I sincerely hope my enthusiasm for this ancient knowledge and new forms of insight shine through in my illumination of the Uranus archetype.

Despite the many types of archetypes that exist, I still find it difficult to describe what an archetype is in my own words – so I turn to Carl Jung for his. In Jungian psychology, the terms he used to identify an archetype include a pattern of thought, image, and universally present idea of our collective unconscious.² Put another way, an archetype is an unseen force that permeates everything. Its energy is expressed not only externally, but also internally. While Carl Jung popularized the concept of psychoanalytic archetypes, the concept has been represented as early

¹ Tarnas, *Cosmos and Psyche*, 16.

² Jung, *The Basic Writings of C.G. Jung*, xxv.

as 360 B.C.E. in Plato's *Timaeus* as "the things that pass in and out are to be called copies of eternal things."

Until 1781 when astronomer and musician William Herschel discovered Uranus, the heavenly bodies referred to as planets included only the Sun, Moon, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn. Bringing Uranus into the mix drastically changed perspectives and brought light to an important energy not otherwise expressed in the other planets. Tarnas points out that the three planets discovered by telescope — Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto — did not originally have any archetypal and mythological resonances like Venus, Saturn, or Mars.³ Uranus has now been associated with a rebel, and not the mythical Ouranos it was named after.

The archetype associated with the planet Uranus has a youthful, awakening nature and a call for adventure and new horizons – a stereotypical wanderer with a very individualistic, enchanted path. It serves as a symbol of youth, passion, curiosity, and newness that can also be illustrated through dynamism and creative energy. As Tarnas⁴ notes, Uranus represents the principles of change and revolution, the best examples of this being the Uranus-Pluto world transits that occurred during the 1960s' civil rights movement, the French Revolution, and the English Revolution. He also reminds us that the same alignment occurred during the birth of Aeschylus, the writer of the Greek tragedy *Prometheus*.

The Greek figure Prometheus seems to “carry the torch” for Uranus. In the myth of Prometheus, he tricks Zeus using a fake sacrifice and Zeus punishes humanity by hiding fire. Prometheus then steals the fire and brings it back to Earth. Prometheus has become the

³ Tarnas, *Prometheus the Awakener*, 16.

⁴ Tarnas, *Cosmos and Psyche*, 203.

quintessential symbol of the Uranus archetype with its young-for-life, rebellious energy of someone capable of stealing fire from the Gods. This bringer of light (representing the freedom of our consciousness) gives a gift to the world through teaching humankind the arts and sciences. The Promethean archetype shows up in sudden epiphanies as flashes of brilliance. The discovery of Uranus itself signifies this energy as it happened during the culmination of the Enlightenment and challenged the traditional beliefs of the hierarchy of the seven celestial bodies.⁵

Like all archetypes, Uranus is multivalent and encompasses many characteristics that can show up in a person's life and natal chart in many different ways – such as through a strong desire for knowledge or a “wild child” mentality. The Prometheus story demonstrates the multifaceted way that, just like humans, archetypes hold aspects considered both negative and positive. (Zeus did after all punish Prometheus by chaining him to a rock.) Just as Uranus has not only elements of the awakener, he also has those of the trickster.

Even astronomers have considered Uranus to be the “cosmic trickster,” as its transits are often unpredictable and strange.⁶ Uranus is the only planet whose rotational direction is almost perpendicular to its orbital plane. All other planets and many moons rotate along the orbital plane, as does the Earth and the Moon. Lewis Hyde⁷ defines a trickster as “boundary-crosser,” and goes on to say that

The trickster is the mythic embodiment of ambiguity and ambivalence, doubleness and duplicity, contradiction and paradox....The boundary is where he will be found — sometimes drawing the line, sometimes crossing it, sometimes erasing, or moving it, but

⁵ Tarnas, *Prometheus the Awakener*, 18.

⁶ Tarnas, *Prometheus the Awakener*, 17.

⁷ Hyde, *Trickster Makes this World*, 7.

always there, the god of the threshold in all its forms.

The trickster archetype shows up in many places, ranging from fairy tales to comics and everywhere in between. In Greek mythology, Hermes has also been considered a trickster and associated with this archetype. For the purposes of this paper, I want to focus on Prometheus as the inspirational side of the trickster symbol. Indeed the Prometheus and Uranus archetypes encourage us to not only bring light, but also to cross boundaries to get it.

While it is certainly debatable, the trickster can have a key role as an outlet for things we feel unable to partake in. In spite of his/her flaws, the trickster can represent bringing good things to a society and culture (knowingly or unknowingly) as is the case with Prometheus. There can also be an element of humor connected to these mischievous acts and confusion about whether it was deemed right or wrong. Personality traits of the trickster character vary from clever to foolish and callous to loveable.

The Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung describes four main archetypes he believed were common to all humanity that express themselves during different stages and situations of life – the Mother, Rebirth, Spirit, and Trickster. I agree with Jung’s statement that tricksters possess a “divine-animal nature”⁸ that enables them to be on some levels superior to humans and on other levels inferior to all animals. By nature, the trickster lacks certain instincts and at the same time compensates for them with other attributes. Intertwined with this trickster nature, Jung describes an “eternal youth,” or in Latin, Puer Aeternus.⁹

⁸ Jung, *Four Archetypes: Mother/Rebirth/Spirit/Trickster*, 144.

⁹ Jung, *Symbols of Transformation*.

Many people are able to identify with the Puer Aeternus, or Puella Aeterna in its feminine form, prototype through mythical characters such as Peter Pan or in the book *The Little Prince* by Antoine de Saint-Axupéry. These “flying boy” examples epitomize the ungrounded, passionate free spirit of the Puer. Greek references to the Puer commonly link it to Apollo, but at its core holds also the rebelliousness and charisma of Prometheus, and Hermes. Referring to that intoxicating quality, Marie-Louise Von Franz, a student of Jung’s, says of them, “Many have the charm of youth and the stirring quality of a drink of champagne.”¹⁰ There’s something idealistic, romantic and embodying the things we miss and love about adolescence in this archetype. Pueri typically become artists or some sort of visionaries whose joie de vivre can’t possibly be satiated with an ordinary job or life. Hillman again drives the point home when he reminds us that above all the puer or puella, “is anyway not meant to walk, but to fly.”¹¹

Such a connection to life’s luminosity often leads such people to positive or sanguine feelings about life. A common problem can also arise from their subsequent attachments to such experiences, or expectation for life to continually grant them visions from the mountain peaks. While an airy disposition and a love for the pleasures of life sound pleasant, a fear of the normal certainly doesn’t move anyone forward towards more bliss. Being easily excitable makes pueri somewhat adverse to serious responsibility or work; wanting always to soar to the heights instead of willing to inhabit the valley. In this sense, both the Puer Aeternus and Puella Aeterna may have rather obvious shadow effects to their disposition. For the sake of my own experience, I will focus on the Puella Aeterna and not the Puer Aeternus.

¹⁰ Marie-Louise Von Franz, *Puer Aeternus*. 4.

¹¹ Hillman, *Senex and Puer*, 24.

Without realizing it the Puella Aeterna has become an important archetype in today's youth-oriented world. Modern day representations of the Puella include Barbie Doll and Alice in Wonderland. She is recognized as being somewhat of a space cadet flirt with grandiose dreams. While Jung focused more on the Puer representation, much could be said about the impact on the female pressure of the "eternal girl." The eternal girl, like the eternal boy, can fly too high and then fall back to earth trying to live up to the unrealistic image of adolescence. For the Puella, probing the reality behind fairy tales and folklores may offer a key to healing and more balance. The first step of overcoming a shadow is to enlighten it, possibly with some Promethean energy.

A quick look at my birth chart reveals an obvious Sun-Uranus opposition — the Sun symbolizing our self-striving or "telos." It shows our life's calling and the themes of what we strive to become. I identify with the adventurous side of Uranus wanting to be an explorer of bright, new horizons, and also wanting to bring my light and love for the world to others, "new" and "bright" being key words to describe a Uranus-Sun relationship. This combination also "shines" with creative potential and frequently manifests as a dynamic to pour out creativity through the arts and sciences. It has also been noted to have an element of and youth, intellectual grace of inspiration, and sometimes also a nervous, quick-response archetype that can cause clumsiness, tendencies toward accidents.

The archetypes of Uranus I identify with are the Puella and Prometheus aspects, and not so much the trickster. I have been known to be quite a dreamer and not in a mischievous way. My Puella Aeterna characteristics don't appear to be quite as lofty as some, but the resemblance is certainly there through a youthful creativity and love of the arts. My Sun-Uranus opposition and affiliation with Prometheus and the Puella archetypes have been demonstrated throughout my life on an unconscious level, and I'm so grateful to have them now a part of my conscious

experience. This archetype shows up a lot with my love for traveling. I'm an explorer at heart and love seeing new places and meeting new people. I have been to five continents before turning 28, and hope to reach all seven before 30. The desire for newness shows up most evidently in the year after I quit my structured, government job (I don't think anyone expected me to last as long as I did doing this) to expand my horizons living at an ashram and taking in more trips. During this time I did one new thing every day for almost a year. My Sun-Uranus opposition is also in a harmonic trine with Mars (Sun trine Mars, Uranus sextile Mars), which represents the action or warrior principle, and also activates the impulsive nature of Uranus through this relationship. This may show up as giving me the courage to leap forth and be willing to take on the rebelliousness and risks of Uranus. The combination can also prove to support a compulsive nature or warrior/competitive edge, as was the case with Napoleon Bonaparte who had the same alignment.¹²

Since moving to San Francisco several months ago I'm consistently drawn to whatever "revolution" or revolt seems to be going on during any given weekend. Many times a day I receive flashes of insight about my life or someone else's path and sometimes I feel creativity wanting to ooze out of me in whatever way I will allow it to be expressed during that moment. My rebellious nature continues with my draw towards change and making a difference in some sort of ostentatious way that I seem to be unable to define. Through my time at CIIS I intend to continue to reawaken my inner Promethean as a way to relieve my restlessness associated with wanting to make a difference for humanity through my own light.

¹² Tarnas, *Prometheus the Awakener*, 17.

My greatest breakthroughs have come through reminding myself not to become too closely identified with an archetype and also acknowledging that all of us have this archetype within us as well as all the others. They are not good, nor bad – they just are. I am once again “enchanted” with the unconscious, now made conscious, forces that shape my being and create a fuller identity for me to reawaken whichever part of myself and Uranus I choose to harness.

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