

Using the Greek
Goddesses to Create
a Well-Lived Life
for Women

Using the Greek Goddesses to Create a Well-Lived Life for Women

By

Martha Beck

Edited by

B.K. Lindsey

Cambridge
Scholars
Publishing



Using the Greek Goddesses to Create a Well-Lived Life for Women

By Martha Beck

This book first published 2018

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Copyright © 2018 by Martha Beck

All rights for this book reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the copyright owner.

ISBN (10): 1-5275-0615-0

ISBN (13): 978-1-5275-0615-2

Permissions:

Numerous quotations [pp. 40-268: 8836] from *GODDESSES IN EVERY WOMEN* by JEAN SHINODA BOLEN. Copyright © 1984 by Jean Shinoda Bolen M.D. Reprinted by permission of HarperCollins Publishers.

Numerous quotes [pp. 54-72] from *SHE: UNDERSTANDING FEMININE PSYCHOLOGY* by ROBERT JOHNSON. Copyright © 1989 by DR. JERRU RUHL. Reprinted by permission of Dr. Jerry Ruhl.

Electronic permissions:

Numerous quotes [pp. 54-72] *SHE: UNDERSTANDING FEMININE PSYCHOLOGY* by ROBERT JOHNSON. Copyright © 1989 by HarperCollins Publishers. Reprinted by permission of HarperCollins Publishers.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|--|-----|
| Acknowledgements | vii |
| Introduction | 1 |
| Chapter One..... The Value of Myth in a Post-Modern World | 6 |
| Chapter Two..... Eros and Psyche | 17 |
| Chapter Three..... Psyche's Four Tasks | 29 |
| Chapter Four..... Artemis: Goddess of the Hunt and Moon, Competitor and Sister | 39 |
| Chapter Five..... Artemis: Goddess of the Hunt and Moon, Competitor and Sister | 52 |
| Chapter Six..... Athena: Goddess of Wisdom and Crafts, Strategist and Father's Daughter | 60 |
| Chapter Seven..... Athena: Goddess of Wisdom and Crafts, Strategist and Father's Daughter | 79 |
| Chapter Eight..... Aphrodite: Goddess of Love and Beauty, Creative Woman and Lover | 94 |
| Chapter Nine..... Aphrodite: Goddess of Love and Beauty, Creative Woman and Lover | 108 |
| Chapter Ten..... Hera: Goddess of Marriage, Commitment Maker and Wife | 119 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| Chapter Eleven | 132 |
| Hera: Goddess of Marriage, Commitment Maker and Wife | |
| Chapter Twelve | 140 |
| Demeter: Goddess of Grain, Nurturer and Mother | |
| Chapter Thirteen | 155 |
| Demeter: Goddess of Grain, Nurturer and Mother | |
| Chapter Fourteen | 172 |
| Persephone: The Maiden and Queen of the Underworld, Receptive Woman and Mother's Daughter | |
| Chapter Fifteen | 191 |
| Persephone: The Maiden and Queen of the Underworld, Receptive Woman and Mother's Daughter | |
| Chapter Sixteen | 213 |
| Hestia: Goddess of the Hearth and Temple, Wise Woman and Maiden Aunt | |
| Chapter Seventeen | 236 |
| Hestia: Goddess of the Hearth and Temple, Wise Woman and Maiden Aunt | |
| Chapter Eighteen | 247 |
| Conclusion: Love Story | |
| Bibliography | 265 |

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book was born from the stormy waters of my soul.

According to Hesiod's story in the *Theogony*, Aphrodite, the goddesses of erotic passion, emerged from the sea after Uranos and Chronos, father and son, became engaged in a power struggle. Chronos eventually won by cutting off his father's genitals, taking away the passion that drove Uranos' life, and throwing them into the sea. From then on, Aphrodite, represented men's irrational and excessive sexual attraction to women. She was portrayed as a great threat to justice, virtue and human civilization. All the other gods and goddesses in Hesiod emerged in the forms they did as a result of this original cutting off of human passion from the natural world and from a peaceful transfer of male power from one generation to the next.

The inspiration for this book came from my realization that the pseudo-culture I lived in was driven by these sick male passions. Women were blamed for being the cause rather than the effect of men's hubris, their irrational excesses, all "inspired" by Aphrodite. When men failed to achieve wisdom, "Aphrodite" was always part of the problem.

I want to recover Aphrodite and all the other goddesses in the way they express themselves when they are healthy and flourishing. My inspiration came from many women along the way, women who were also piecing together lives that had been broken by patriarchy.

Thanks to Dean John Peek and the Faculty Personal Committee at Lyon College, who gave me partial support to go to Athens and become immersed in the cultural tradition that gave rise to these mythological stories. Thanks to Dr. Leonidas Bargeliotis, professor emeritus from the University of Athens and founder of the Olympic Center for Greek Philosophy and Culture, for arranging a free apartment in Athens where I could work on this book.

Thanks also to Dean Peek for funding to do further drafts of this book at St. Benedict's monastery in St. Joseph, Minnesota. While living as a scholar in their Studium program, I was given an apartment and a study. St. Benedict's was established by nuns in 1857 and is the largest Benedictine women's monastery in the United States.

While living and eating among the sisters, I heard many, many stories, stories of independent-minded, educated, dedicated women who collectively

ran colleges, schools and hospitals long before “secular” women exercised much power. They have been a constant inspiration ever since my first experience at Studium in 2000. Their living example and constant prayer has sustained me through the long process of traveling through the “valley of the shadow” in order to know myself.

Because of them, what might have been an exercise in self-absorption and self-pity became a book about an archetypal journey. The nuns are self-consciously living out the archetype of a community of Benedictine nuns. They are individually and collectively living for the sake of something greater than themselves. Each of them has a different spiritual calling. Their different sense of calling is manifested in different ways as they go through life (as was mine), but their dedication to the tradition and to a spiritual archetype is constant. They gave me the cultural environment within which I was inspired to do this work. Without their constant loving companionship, this book would be different, probably more small-minded and self-absorbed.

This entire book is a tribute to the women of the 1960s who did so much in one generation to break down the patriarchy and force so many people to rethink their assumptions and cultural conditioning. There is still much work to do, of course; this book is a tribute to what they did. Much to my horror, my college students have no idea what life was like before this generation of women “shed blood” for those who came afterwards. The movement was so successful that most of their greatest accomplishments are taken for granted and even incorporated into “conservative” women’s movements. “Feminism” has been marginalized, trivialized and reduced to the latest Facebook post. Any self-defined “feminist” post is taken for the essence of this profound cultural change. The women who paid the price for creating change have been forgotten, denigrated or demonized. It is a sad tale, but not the one I am telling her.

B.K. Lindsey has been a steady hand at getting the logistics in order: formats, footnotes, Bibliographical entries, publisher’s requests and all of the work that has to be done. She has been a great friend and confidant throughout it all. Judy Blackwell and Silke Fleischer were my readers; they gave helpful comments which improved the quality of the manuscript.

This book is going to press in 2017 after the elections. Hillary Clinton lost against Donald Trump and 40% of the American population, male and female, cannot distinguish between an extremely incompetent male and an extremely competent female. The spirit of the times has either regressed or else the conservative forces that always existed are now finding a voice, helped out by the billions donated by powerful white men. Political rhetoric motivates women to vote against those who benefit most from

continuing to oppress them. I am sure that my readers have also grieved with me over the self-destructive plague that has hit our nation since 9/11.

I also have to thank my immediate family, my parents, siblings, children and closest friends, for being my inspiration through it all, as those most near and dear to us always are.

INTRODUCTION

Like all great stories about human affairs, this is a love story. It is a story of the most deeply rooted patterns according to which human beings make both bad and good choices when acting on their deepest passion, their Eros. One assumption I bring with me is the view that Eros is the driving force behind all human aspirations, good and evil. Human history and culture are constructed from the erotic passions of individuals: passions for justice, virtue, truth and wisdom as well as destructive passions for wealth, power, and conquest.

The gods and goddesses of Greek mythology are personifications of how people behave when they are “possessed” by one or more of these passions, when their Eros is focused in a certain way. The patterns in human behavior described in these myths are patterns that have emerged over thousands of years and are deeply embedded in the collective unconscious.¹ Each goddess is paired with a god. The myths show the similarities and differences between men and women in their basic drives. The myths also show that Western culture is patriarchal—dominated by men—and that men often abuse the power they have over women. The myths expose and condemn these abuses by describing them and then describing all the suffering caused by the abuse of what is meant to be sacred. Each deity represents one of the ways human beings seek meaning and purpose in life.

Athena is the goddess of justice and war. She is closest to her father, Zeus, the god of justice. Artemis is the goddess of the hunt who protects women when they are most vulnerable, in childbirth and when wounded by men. She is closest to her brother, Apollo. Hestia is the goddess of the hearth, the reflective and contemplative goddess who keeps her distance from the conflicts and passions of the others. She is closest to Hephaestus, the quiet artisan, god of the forge and to Hermes, the messenger between the gods and humans. Hermes lights his torch from Hestia’s hearth and carries that light—the light of the mind—into the human world. Hera is the goddess of honor and wife of Zeus. She is close to her son, Ares, god of war, who also seeks honor through acts of courage in war. Demeter is the

¹ Martha Beck, *The Quest for Wisdom in Plato and Carl Jung: A Comparative Study of the Healers of the Soul* (Lewiston, NY: Mellen Press, 2008).

goddess of fertility, the goddess who determines whether the crops will grow or not. There is no god like her, since she has the power of reproduction that men do not have. Poseidon is most similar because he is the god of the ocean. Both Poseidon and Demeter represent natural forces that human beings must respect. These forces are more powerful than human beings. Persephone is the daughter of Demeter and was raped and abducted by Hades, god of the underworld. She became goddess of the underworld and lives half the year with her mother and the other half underground. Aphrodite is the goddess of beauty, paired with Dionysius, the god of wine. Aphrodite should not be associated with lust; her sensuality can be as sacred as any of the other passions. The history of the birth and life of Aphrodite shows what happens when women's sensuality is used as a tool by women to manipulate men and when men allow themselves to be possessed by a purely sensuous form of Aphrodite, detached from the passionate pursuit of transcendent goals.

The myth of Eros and Psyche is about making a transition from one form of Eros to another. A well-raised child should grow up in an environment where parents, extended family and close friends nurture those they know and love and treat others fairly and justly. Without this basic foundation, children can grow up cynical or completely confused. Eventually, young people learn that not everyone is honest, that they have to compromise to get something done, that people have profoundly different notions of good and evil, etc. To become mature adults, a transition must be made from an Eros stuck in the innocent world of good intentions to a mature Eros, integrated into the complexities of human life.

The myth of Psyche and Eros is about being in love with a sentimental and romanticized Eros. This Eros is not simply the Eros of romantic love, of sexual and sensual love. It is also about the sentimental and romanticized feelings one has when one believes one is in love with justice, virtue, beauty, truth or wisdom. These feelings eventually have to be tempered and modified, in order to accomplish the difficult task of making the world a better place, our ultimate desire to leave behind something of lasting value. In order to pass on a better world to our offspring, we have to teach ourselves how to make choices each day, in all aspects of our lives, which lead to societies that are just and whose citizens are acting justly in all aspects of their lives. This book will discuss my own transition from being in love with my theoretical love of the various transcendent goals in human life and going through the painful and difficult task of learning how to incorporate all those loves into a single, merely mortal, human life.

The book is one part of my own answer to the unending questions, “Given my natural ability, opportunity, professional training, personal experiences, and the culture within which I live, what can I pass on to posterity that might benefit humankind after I am gone?” I hope readers will recognize that they are also possessed by these passions, and they have experienced the same painful process of learning how to incorporate them into a well-lived life. I hope readers will return to the myths with fresh eyes and the desire to learn for themselves the lessons that the Greek poets were trying to teach.

The complexity of human life reflected in the myths also shows the inevitability of tragedy, another aspect of the way the Ancient Greeks understood the human condition. The need to balance all of these conflicting passions leads inevitably to tragedy. Aristotle describes the tragic character as someone who is not particularly good or evil, an “intermediate type”, who makes a mistake in judgment and suffers for it. I’ve made my share of mistakes as a wife, mother, activist, writer, philosopher, and teacher. I’ve been mistreated as Persephone was. My basic emotions, choices, and experiences are not any different from anyone else. I consider myself “Everywoman,” not exceptional in any way, even though not many women are paid to teach philosophy.

The only difference between me and others, if any, is my most dominate passion: Hestia, the contemplative. My obsession with thinking in order to understand myself and the human condition has led me to the study of Greek culture and to the desire to connect the experiences that have most deeply touched my soul with universal patterns in human history. Everything I might be tempted to think of as unique to myself I know is not; I am living out the patterns that repeat themselves with every generation. The disadvantage of knowing this is that one gets no ego gratification from anything one does. I am not a pioneer; I have not created anything new to humankind. The advantage of knowing this is that I can appreciate the wisdom passed down from our ancestors. I can be a mediator between great minds and those who seek to learn from great minds. My creative energy is sparked when I discover the way to connect the events around me with the people, poetry, philosophy, and cultural artifacts history has called great. I want to pass onto others my own view of why what has been considered great in the past is truly great: it tells us about ourselves and tries to teach us how to live well.

I have also come-of-age at a time when women’s lives have become much more complex. Many of the opportunities given to me were the result of centuries of suffering and work by the women who came before me. I stand on the shoulders of giants in the women’s rights movement.

Each generation of women gets a little farther in the quest for a meaningful and complete human life. I was not aware of the pervasiveness of sexism until my mid-thirties. After juggling a family of five and doing all the work toward a Ph.D., with two drafts of a dissertation finished, I was “let go” by my institution because I could not finish soon enough. Only then did I have the time to reexamine my life and recognize the many, many ways patriarchy had crippled me, overtly and covertly, mostly unconsciously. What had been buried became conscious in my soul.

For five years, before being readmitted into the Ph.D program, I had time to read whatever I wanted to read. I had a “free mind,” if one can believe a woman who is the primary caregiver of three children, running a family of five, and teaching part-time, has time to have a free mind. I took whatever time I had to read books by, for, and about women. I was obsessed with recognizing the psychic patterns of oppression around me. A woman’s bookstore opened nearby. I spend what little extra money we had on books and read about two every week. They saved my life.

Even though I went to college from 1971-1975 and should have known better, I was not a “feminist.” I thought the feminist movement was about women who wanted to be just as promiscuous, greedy, and power-hungry as men. It was about women conforming to social standards. It is odd that I thought this. It should have been clear that the women’s movement was connected with the anti-war movement, the civil rights movement, and the environmental protection movement. It was part of a move toward a paradigm shift, toward thinking holistically rather than splitting up culture and nature into separate pieces. It was part of an effort to prevent the United States from trying to become power-driven, money-driven oligarchy to trying to make America truly live up to its democratic ideals and aim for a balance of wealth and power within nations and at home between citizens. As I said, I should have known better.

After I had experienced patriarchy in all aspects of my life, I had the time to reexamine my prejudices and recognize the great gift the feminist movement has given to posterity. Although some excerpts are from long before the 1960s, most of the authors I quote from lived and wrote at that time. This book is my tribute to them. It took me a while to realize all the struggles they went through to create a different culture, to forge another path through all aspects of cultural life. This book is also a wake-up call to women today. My students are oblivious to what life was like for women only a few decades ago. They are in denial and deluded about what sorts of obstacles they will run into in their own lives. This book is trying to motivate them to appreciate the blood their sisters shed for them and to help them anticipate the many ways they are likely to be wounded by

patriarchy. This book is also trying to get women to stop blaming or criticizing each other so they can stay focused on the sacred contribution each one can make toward creating a better culture for future generations.

The book is organized as follows. The first chapter describes how mythology educates the human psyche and why this kind of education is still necessary. The second chapter describes and interprets the myth of Eros and Psyche. It compares my own position with that of some Jungian psychologists. The third chapter gives examples of women authors who are describing a woman experiencing each of the four tasks Psyche has to perform before she can be reunited with Eros. From the fourth chapter on, there are two chapters on each goddess. The first chapter on each goddess takes many excerpts from “Goddesses in Everywoman” by Dr. Jean Shindola Bolen, a feminist Jungian psychologist. Bolen explains the entire life span of a woman whose most powerful sacred passion is symbolically represented by that goddess. I compare my own life at those stages: childhood, adolescence, higher education, marriage, family life, work life, friendships and aging. My own most sacred passion is the least common, so I do not expect readers to identify with me. This gives them the freedom to see more clearly their own relation to that goddess, or passion. It also helps readers understand that women are very different from each other. Women should avoid judging each other from the point of view of their own idea of the best way to live. This section also makes clear the many ways each sacred passion is corrupted by male domination, at every stage of life. The second chapter on each goddess takes excerpts from poems, essays, books and other written works that speak in the “voice” of that goddess. To put it another way, they quote from the writings of women who were “possessed” by that goddess. These are the women that have kept me sane over the years. I hope this book will help other women stay sane and help all of us weave together a new way of understanding our lives, so we can create a new, more egalitarian, culture.

CHAPTER ONE

THE VALUE OF MYTH IN A POST-MODERN WORLD

Numerous artists and intellectuals have discussed the need for modern and post-modern Westerners to integrate the insights of religion and science, the activity of reasoning, so highly developed and valued since the Scientific Revolution, with the activity of creating a whole life, a life that includes emotions and patterns of behavior motivated by a drive for meaning and purpose.

Carl Jung and Archetypal Psychology

Carl Jung lived in the mid-20th century. The greatest ideal of the Enlightenment, the belief that science and the universal dissemination of knowledge would end human evil and the violence and war caused by such evils was proven wrong. In an effort to explain the reemergence of war and the evils associated with it, Carl Jung reinterpreted the meaning of religion and mythology and reaffirmed the value of religious language. Jung claims that myths reflect archetypes, patterns of ways of life that are driven by a desire for meaning and purpose, a desire to leave something of value behind after one dies. Jung argues that

Modern man does not understand how much his ‘rationalism’ (which has destroyed his capacity to respond to numinous symbols and ideas) has put him at the mercy of the psychic ‘underworld.’ He has freed himself from ‘superstition’ (or so he believes), but in the process he has lost his spiritual values to a positively dangerous degree. His moral and spiritual tradition has disintegrated, and he is now paying the price for this break-up in world-wide disorientation and dissociation.²

² Carl Jung, “Approaching the Unconscious,” in *Man and His Symbols*, ed. M.-L. von Franz (New York, Garden City: Doubleday & Co., 1964), 94.

Jung was the founder of a movement called “archetypal psychology,” the exploration of the conflicts people experience when their deepest-held values conflict or when their excessively rationalistic attitude leads them to a loss of meaning and purpose. Jung argued for the existence of a “collective unconscious,” a set of patterns of behavior that we inherit from our very early ancestors.³

From her experience as a medical doctor, psychiatrist and Jungian analyst, Jean Shindola Bolen began to recognize the sexist biases in Jung’s particular interpretations of myths, including Ancient Greek myths. She accepts Jung’s most important and basic premises and then reinterprets the true spirit behind the seven Greek goddesses.

Many women artists, writers, and intellectuals from all disciplines also recognize the way the patterns of behavior in Greek mythology reflect the passions that motivate women to think, feel, and act the way they do. Feminist archetypal psychologists also recognize the way that the myths themselves expose and call into question the way patriarchal society perverts women’s natural passions. The myths describe over and over again the ways men physically rape and psychologically abuse women while they are pursuing their most sacred goals in life. This chapter presents only a few examples from books, articles, and poems in which women are reaffirming the value of myth as an important part of education and of human life. Further, these women recognize the need to recognize the sexist perversion of the natural passions of women and how woman can overcome their oppression and live out the healthy and nature aspects of each of these passions.

The Unnecessary and Unnatural Splitting Apart of Religion and Science in the West

In her book, *A Romantic Education*, Patricia Hempl returns to her native land, now The Czech Republic where she learns the way one battle outside of Prague was a cornerstone in the historic split between religion and science that has deeply wounded Western civilization and the people who are molded to act on its distorted values. Hampl quotes extensively from a book by Francis A. Yates, *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment*.

On November 8, 1620, Frederick’s Protestant army was defeated by Catholic forces led by the duke of Bavaria at the Battle of the White Mountain, outside Prague. This was the beginning of the Thirty Years’

³ Carl Jung, *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*, trans. W.S. Dell and Cary F. Baynes (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1933), 165.

War. For Frederick and for Bohemia, ‘the defeat was total,’ Yates writes. ‘The Bohemian church was totally suppressed and the whole country reduced to misery.’

It was, among other things, the end of Prague as the alchemical capital. It was the defeat of the Czech nation, but can also be seen as one of the moments when the Western world lost a chance for the development of a holistic civilization. Exactly here, one might say, at the Battle of the White Mountain near Prague, is one of the places where science and religion were broken apart from each other, wounding Western consciousness profoundly.

Science, torn from its spiritual root, meant the end of alchemy, but also the end of a civilization with an united mind, a consciousness that could hold together ancient spiritual, psychic values and the newer progress of the analytical process. The mind-body split is not the essential wound in Western consciousness. It is the mind-spirit split, the intellectual severing that prepared the ground for the worst results of this rupture: the atrocities of ‘rational ideologies’ that our own century has experiences in abundance. Central Europe, is after all, the land of the concentration camp and the ‘final solution.’⁴

Hempl agrees, “The savage suppression of hermetic studies that occurred after the Battle of the White Mountain in 1620 ended the slow progress toward a unitary modern consciousness based, at least in part, on the intelligence of metaphor. Such a mind might, in our own day, have kept science (more specifically, technology) attached to the spiritual hunger that is its ancient source.”⁵

The suppression of religious and spiritual thought was responsible for fear.

This intellectual fear is familiar to us in its modernity. It is the fear of mystery, of the wisps of life that refuse to be pinned down, that will not ‘make sense,’ that are irregular and do not *fit*. This fear has justified every atrocity in our immediate history: against Jews, against blacks, Asians, against the victims of the abstruse ideologies of Communism and anti-Communism. It is the response of consciousness stripped of its old allegiance to spiritual values.⁶

In her book, *Earth and Spirit*, Helen Luke also discusses the unnatural and uncivilized way that reason and science are split apart from religion and a sense of the sacred. In this quote, Luke cites the Eleusinian Mysteries, the rituals connected to Demeter, goddess of fertility, and her

⁴ Patricia Hempl, *A Romantic Education* (New York: Norton, 1999), 218.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 219.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 219-20.

daughter, Persephone. Luke points out that these secret rites were honored in Ancient Greece for many, many centuries, long after Greece ceased to be a superpower. In discussing the Eleusinian Mysteries, Luke says, “The Homeric hymn ends with the words ‘awful mysteries which no one may in any way transgress or pry into or utter, for deep awe of the gods checks the voice.’”⁷ Luke goes on that

modern man is busy breaking all the essentials of a ritual mystery. . . . The element of awe is being deliberately banished. . . . The growth of consciousness inevitably and rightly means that we pry into, we question everything with our hungry minds, and to try to stop this would be futile obscurantism. . . . Without vision, without mystery, all of our fine intellectual understanding and its great values turn to dust.⁸

Women Calling Upon Women and Men to Find and Live Out Their Sacred Callings

Luke recognizes the way the mythological tradition has been perverted by sexism, yet she calls on women to find out their highest sense of spiritual calling and follow it, even in the face of the obstacles women face in a male-dominated society. “Every individual woman who is capable of reflection and discrimination, and who lays claim to freedom, carries a responsibility to ask herself, ‘What kind of free spirit is it that breathes through me and is the dominant influence in my life?’ To discover this is a task of self-knowledge which demands all the courage, honesty, and perseverance of which we are capable.”⁹

Luke cites another mythological story, Rumpelstiltskin, as symbolizing the need for everyone, particularly women, to find their callings and follow wherever they lead.

“The little man [Rumpelstiltskin] is that which releases in us a passionate devotion—to a person, to an idea, to an art—awakening in us that vivid perception of beauty in one thing which can transfigure the whole of our world to gold.”¹⁰

Anne Dillard, in her book, *For the Time Being*, writes about her encounters with the sacred in the midst of the secular and admonishes

⁷ Helen M. Luke, *Woman: Earth and Spirit, the Feminine in Symbol and Myth* (New York: Crossroad, 1990, 1981), 69.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid., 27.

¹⁰ Ibid., 74.

everyone to do what they can to infuse the physical world with spiritual encounters and meaning,

God entrusts and allots to everyone an area to redeem: this . . . feeble life, ‘the world in which you live, just as it is and not otherwise.’ . . . He who prays and sings in holiness, eats and speaks in holiness, in holiness performs the appointed ablutions, and in holiness reflects upon his business, through him the sparks which have fallen will be uplifted, and the worlds which have fallen will be delivered and renewed.¹¹

In her book, *States of Grace*, Charlene Spretnak points out that modern science and technology have not made people happy or psychologically healthy. She advocates a return to “the great wisdom traditions” to find guidance about how to live a meaningful life.

An agitated mind creates its own torment. An excessively agitated mind often inflicts physical or psychological damage on family, community, other nations, or other species. . . . it is surprising that the modern, rationalist notion of the human is so lacking in subtle perception of the nature of mind states and an understanding of their inception and dissolution. For that we must look elsewhere: the great wisdom traditions.¹²

Archetypal Psychology and Literary Criticism

One crucial path to affirming and discovering one’s own calling is through literature and literary criticism. If literature is written with the assumption that life is meaningless and absurd, certainly it will be difficult to find one’s sense of calling. Even if a writer believes in the sacred, however, literary critics can be convinced that religion is anti-rational and superstitious and can destroy the original messages in literature through their criticism. The message can be ignored, denigrated, or reinterpreted through the categories of strictly physical drives, such as sex and power.

In his essay, “Preface to *Ishmael: Jungian Psychology in Criticism: Some Theoretical Problems*,” James Baird affirms the truth in Jung’s basic position, “individual consciousness is born mysteriously of the hereditary psychic disposition, from the totality of the experience of the race. The true genesis of consciousness is not in experience but in the inheritance of

¹¹ Anne Dillard, *For the Time Being* (New York: Vintage Books, 1999), 201-02.

¹² Charlene Spretnak, *States of Grace: The Recovery of Meaning in the Postmodern Age* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993), 35.

disposition.”¹³ Baird then asks literary critics to use this view of reality in their own craft. “If the literary critic wishes to be faithful to Jung, he must recognize the disposition of the unconscious as it urges consciousness toward the making of images and symbols to represent its material.”¹⁴

In his essay, “The Analytical Psychology of C.G. Jung and the Problem of Literary Evaluation,” Mario Jacoby discusses and affirms Jung’s understanding of the artist as a prophet, one who signals to his generation the perversions of the human spirit in his society. Instead of the negative label, “neurotic,” Jung suggests that it is those who labels artists imbalanced, who have projected their own unhealthy denial onto the artist, the messenger who has the courage to tell the people what they do not want to hear.

Jung is quite generally of the opinion that the artist’s suffering—for himself, his world, and the general spirit of his age—is the very thing that opens his consciousness to those compensatory images and ideas that arise from the unconscious. . . . he sees neurosis not merely as a negative, senseless pattern, but in some cases even as a signal or a call to deeper self-awareness, self-knowledge, and self-realization.¹⁵

Staying in Touch with the Spiritual Realm

Archetypal psychologists discuss two ways human beings stay in touch with their unconscious and integrate it into their lives. One is to pay attention to their dreams. Dreams tell us about what we deny and repress about ourselves and our world. They tell us when our souls are dissociated and diffused. They also tell us when our souls are trying, unconsciously, to heal their wounds.

Besides dreams, while we are awake we also experience many encounters with people, places, events, and sequences of events that have a deeper meaning and purpose, that can tell us something about our spiritual lives and that of those around us. Jung used the word “synchronicity” to describe events in life that seem to have a deeper meaning.

Jean Bolen’s book, *The Tao of Psychology*, focuses on the reality of synchronicity and the importance of paying attention to it throughout life.

¹³ James Baird, “‘Preface’ to Ishmael: Jungian Psychology in Criticism: Some Theoretical Problems,” in *Jungian Literary Criticism*, ed. Richard P. Sugg (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1992), 43.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Mario Jacoby, “The Analytical Psychology of C.G. Jung and the Problem of Literary Evaluation,” in *Jungian Literary Criticism*, ed. Richard P. Sugg (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1992), 68.

“Synchronicity, like dreams, invites us to participate in the symbolic level, where we sense there is underlying meaning, where we share a collective unconscious with humanity, where time and space become relative, and where, in the course of our everyday lives, we experience a non-ordinary reality.”¹⁶

Bolen points out that the sciences advocate the stance of an “outside observer” carefully watching the natural world, meaning the purely physical world, of cause and effect and gaining knowledge about patterns in this kind of causality. Archetypal psychology, by contrast, advocates the stance of a spiritual being in a living, interconnected universe, both natural and cultural. “What is outside of me, is in me: whenever a person is either magnetically drawn to someone who carries a positive archetype or overly condemns someone who is intensely felt to be a completely negative person, an archetype probably has been activated in the environment.”¹⁷

In her book, *I Could Tell You Stories*, Patricia Hampl describes memoirs and memoirists as writers who want to tell their stories in ways that include both inner and outer, both the narrative of a series of events and the spiritual reality of the synchronicity underlying those events. “Memoirists, unlike fiction writers, do not really want to ‘tell a story.’ They want to tell it *all*—the all of personal experience, of consciousness itself. That includes a story, but also . . . a bit of the cosmos, spinning and streaming into the great, ungraspable pattern of existence. Memoirists wish to tell their mind, not their story.”¹⁸

Women Restructuring the Spiritual Realm, Bringing the Patriarchal Subconscious into Consciousness in Order to Heal the Wounds and Bring Back Balance

Women do not merely want to describe synchronicity and the way the collective unconscious affects their lives. They want to flush out the sickness of a distorted, male-dominating culture that taps into the collective unconscious in ways that lead to conflict and violence. They want to find that path into and through the collective unconscious that will lead to health and a harmonizing of opposites, a bringing together of many archetypes into a whole that is not unified and standardized, but one in

¹⁶ Jean Bolen, *The Tao of Psychology: Synchronicity and the Self* (San Francisco: Harper & Row 1979), 48.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 56.

¹⁸ Patricia Hampl, *I Could Tell You Stories: Sojourns in the Land of Memory* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1999), 18.

which differences are respected and integrated into a complex and beautiful whole.

In her book, *Arts of the Possible*, Adrienne Rich discusses the joy and pain that comes from trying to create a new cultural climate. On the one hand, women should not have to face a long history of suffering and subjugation. On the other hand, women today have a greater opportunity than they have had for millennia to make themselves whole and create a more egalitarian society that they can experience for themselves.

It's exhilarating to be alive in a time of awakening consciousness; . . . Revision, the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction—is for women more than a chapter in cultural history: it is an act of survival. Until we can understand the assumptions in which we are drenched we cannot know ourselves. And this drive to self-knowledge, for women, is more than a search for identity: it is part of our refusal of the self-destructiveness of male-dominated society.¹⁹

In the introduction to her book, *The Feminine in Fairy Tales*, Marie-Louise Von Franz explains her own recognition of the deep-seated misogyny in Western culture, including Western religion, and her efforts to find mythological images women could identify with that would enable them to lead themselves and others to a healthy civilization.

Women in the Western world nowadays seem to seek images which could define their identity. This search is motivated by a kind of disorientation and a deep uncertainty in modern women. In the West, this uncertainty is due to the fact, as Jung has pointed out, that women have no metaphysical representant in the Christian God-image. Protestantism must accept the blame of being a pure men's religion. Catholicism has at least the Virgin Mary as an archetypal representant of femininity, but this feminine archetypal image is incomplete because it encompasses only the sublime and light aspects of the divine feminine principle and therefore does not express the *whole* feminine principle. In studying fairy tales, I first came across feminine images which seem to me to complement this lack in the Christian religion.²⁰

Von Franz realizes that even the relatively strong female figures in mythology represent men's projections of the nature of women onto women. Women were not able to tell their own stories, to express their

¹⁹ Adrienne Rich, *Arts of the Possible: Essays and Conversations* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2002), 11.

²⁰ Marie-Louise Von Franz, *The Feminine in Fairy Tales* (Boston: Shambhala, 2001), 1.

own inner and outer lives. “The feminine figures in fairy tales might have been formed by a man, and therefore do not represent a woman’s idea of femininity but rather what Jung called the anima—that is, man’s femininity.”²¹ Von Franz’s book is her own effort to re-imagine women’s inner and outer lives, written by women, for women, and about women.

In her book, *Lost Goddesses of Early Greece*, Charlene Spretnak explains the fact that the mythological tradition existed long before Homer and Hesiod. The pre-Hellenic tradition, she claims, was matriarchal. The goddesses from that time are described as working together and running the culture. The “Ancient Greeks” we know of, by contrast, destroyed the old matriarchy, set up a patriarchy, and recreated the images and archetypes of the goddesses to fit their own purposes. The goddesses now serve men in men’s desire for power and domination over women and over each other.

Unlike the flowing, protective love of a Mother-Goddess, the character of the Olympian Gods is judgmental. Olympian Gods are much more warlike than their predecessors and are often involved in strife. The pre-Hellenic Goddesses are powerful and compassionate, yet those whom the Greeks incorporated into the new order were transformed severely. The great Hera was made into a disagreeable, jealous wife; Athena was made into a cold, masculine daughter; Aphrodite was made into a frivolous sexual creature; Artemis was made into the quite forgettable sister of Apollo.²²

As this book makes clear, my own experience of the seven sacred passions is one of wounding and distortion.

In her book, *Composing a Life*, Mary Catherine Bateson assumes that the greatest human art is the art of creating a whole life, of responding to all the sacred callings of life. Her book describes the lives of five women today. Each of them had to try and piece together the great passions in life—spouse, family, career, cultural engagements of various sorts—within the context of a patriarchal society. Bateson assumes in her book that the greatest human art is the art of creating a whole life, of responding to all the sacred callings of life.

Today, the materials and skills from which a life is composed are no longer clear. It is no longer possible to follow the paths of previous generations. This is true for both men and women, but it is especially true for women, whose whole lives no longer need to be dominated by the rhythms of

²¹ Ibid., 2.

²² Charlene Spretnak, *Lost Goddesses of Early Greece: A Collection of Pre-Hellenic Myths* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1978), 18.

procreation and the dependencies that these created, but who still must live with the discontinuities of female biology and still must balance conflicting demands. . . . Much biography of exceptional people is built around the image of a quest, a journey through a timeless landscape toward an end that is specific, even though it is not fully known . . . It is time now to explore the creative potential of interrupted and conflicted lives, where energies are not narrowly focused or permanently pointed toward a single ambition. These are not lives without commitment, but rather lives in which commitments are continually refocused and redefined.²³

Sarah Ruddick and Pamela Daniels also decided to write a book about the way women are piecing together meaningful lives. In the introduction to their book of essays, *Working It Out: 23 Women Writers, Artists, Scientists, and Scholars Talk About Their Lives and Work* allows women to tell their own stories, stories similar to the stories in Bateson's book. Many of these women suffered from their desire to juggle marriages, families, and careers, those ways of fulfilling one's humanity that men are raised to expect as a birthright. Ruddick and Daniels say,

The essays in this book are parts of a much larger work, which we are still struggling to possess: the long process of making visible the experience of women. The tentativeness, the anxiety, sometimes approaching paralysis, the confusions, described in many of these essays by intelligent, educated, 'privileged' women, are themselves evidence of the damage that can be done to creative energy by the lack of a sense of continuity, historical validation, community. Most women, it seems, have gone through their travails in a kind of spiritual isolation, alone both in the present and in ignorance of their place in any female tradition.²⁴

In *Reinventing Womanhood*, Carolyn Heilbrun discusses the way professional historians are researching the lives of outstanding women from the past to find meaningful patterns for living that can be imitated today.

In academic circles, nothing has so clearly marked the current woman's movement as the search for female role models through the recovery of female history . . . Women engaged in these studies have found them fascinating and without doubt a source of strength, inspiration, and

²³ Mary Catherine Bateson, *Composing a Life* (New York: Plume, 1990, 1989), 3-9.

²⁴ Sarah Ruddick and Pamela Daniels, eds., *Working It Out: 23 Women Writers, Artists, Scientists, and Scholars Talk About Their Lives and Work* (New York: Pantheon, 1977), xiv-xv.

enlightenment . . . the individual woman must learn to recognize and to value her own experience and to articulate her true condition.²⁵

Jill Kir-Conway is a professional historian who engaged in this search of women role models. She describes these women in her book, *Written by Herself*.

In her collection of essays, *In Search of Our Mother's Gardens*, Alice Walker adds the problems of race and poverty to the reality of women's lives as having to constantly respond and adapt to the oppressive conditions around them. "Black women are called in the folklore that so aptly identifies one's status in society, 'the mule of the world,' because we have been hand[ed] the burdens that everyone else—*everyone* else—refused to carry."²⁶

In our time, the voices of even poor, black women are being heard and recorded in the historical and literary record. A new, more comprehensive and more accurate account of the human condition is being exposed, passed down to posterity, and lived out by women who now have role models in the people they know and the women they read about from the past. This book is my own attempt to add to this on-going project.

²⁵ Carolyn Heilbrun, *Reinventing Womanhood* (New York: Norton, 1979), 93-94.

²⁶ Alice Walker, *In Search of Our Mother's Gardens: Womanist Prose* (A Harvest Book. Orlando: Harcourt, 2004), 237.

CHAPTER TWO

EROS AND PSYCHE

Many ways to tell the story of Eros and Psyche exist—and even more ways exist to interpret its meaning. Myths are like that; they leave open room for interpretation and in the process of interpreting a myth, people develop their sense of meaning and purpose in life and reveal their own passions to others. My own interpretation of the myth focuses on our tendency to fall in love with Eros rather than cope with life. It is about the painful process of distinguishing between being, on the one hand, in love with the idea that we are pursuing something great and profound, and what we do each day, on the other hand, to lead toward, distract from, or even undermine this sense of purpose.

This is the story: Psyche is the youngest and most beautiful of three princesses. She is so beautiful and gracious that people begin to refer to her as the “New Aphrodite.” Aphrodite becomes afraid the princess will usurp her function as the goddess of love, so she sends Eros, her son, to make Psyche fall in love with death. However, he falls in love with her instead. He transports her to a faraway paradise under the condition that she will not try to find out who he is. Psyche is in love with Eros but doesn’t realize it. This is an unconscious state of romantic love: a young woman fantasizes about her husband, believing he is a perfect god, and she will live in paradise with him forever.

Psyche’s sisters are jealous, so they put doubt in her mind about who Eros is. Eventually she breaks her promise to Eros and finds out his identity. He, in turn, discovers that she knows and runs away to Aphrodite. This is the point in many women’s lives when they realize they have fallen in love with love—with Eros, a god—and know nothing about who the man really is. The husband, in turn, is wounded, because his wife no longer worships him as a god. He “runs away to his mother,” meaning he psychologically regresses to his mother, who shields him from needing to do the hard work of relating to his wife as another human being and seeing himself as a mere mortal and not the god his mother thinks he is. Aphrodite, the goddess-mother, loves her god-son eternally, without having to ground love within the limits of human mortality. Psyche, a

mere mortal, has to learn how to experience love and how to relate to Eros in an entirely different way. Eros has to choose between loving a mere mortal and being eternally attached to his goddess-mother. Aphrodite gives Psyche four tasks to perform before she can hope to regain Eros. Toward the end of the fourth, Psyche falters, and Eros chooses to run away from his mother and reunite with Psyche. He recognizes the value of a love grounded in effort and suffering rather than an eternal, unchanging bliss.

When Psyche is living in the paradise Eros creates for her, there are no children to care for, no bills to pay, no careers to maintain, no illness, no accidents—nothing that resembles the lives of mortals. There is no history to pass on to the next generation, no laws to create, no motive to accomplish anything that would lead to a better world within the human sphere, no reason to do anything other than wallow in the feeling of being in love with Eros, even though Psyche does not even know who it is that has carried her into this world. Aphrodite is legitimately jealous of Psyche because Psyche is, indeed, living like Aphrodite.

This experience is archetypal. At many, perhaps most, marriage ceremonies, guests legitimately worry about whether one or both spouses is really in love with the other or, instead, are just in love with the feeling of being in love. They may legitimately worry about what might happen if somehow the husband keeps his wife isolated in a paradise of his own making. In such cases, the woman would never understand human suffering, would have no empathy for others, would not want to have children or would not do all of the difficult work of raising them. The wedding guests might also worry about what could happen if one spouse recognizes the difference between their fantasies and the true character of the person they are married to and cannot reconcile the two. In such cases, when there is no sense of a common, sacred purpose to which both partners are dedicated, either divorce or a permanent animosity between the spouses would result in great suffering.

The great psychological task is to figure out the difference between one's fantasy and the reality. This requires self-knowledge: knowing why one chose to marry this person, how each spouse projected their needs into the other person, convincing themselves that the person just happened to be exactly the one to meet their own needs. When a person finds out their spouse cannot meet their selfish needs, they must get to know the real person they married and respect them for who they are. Otherwise, the marriage will either dissolve or persist but without any common purpose. Making the transition from being in love with loving one's spouse to actually loving one's spouse as the human being he or she is can be difficult, but the only way to live a mature human life.

Going through this process in relation to one's spouse gives one a model to follow in the pursuit of all the sacred passions in life. It teaches us how to articulate a grand vision of what we are living for and also to recognize how close to that goal we are really getting in our daily lives. Getting over one's delusions about one's marriage is a big step toward getting over delusions about one's other projects in life. It enables one to set attainable goals and to expect attainable results from people one depends upon to achieve those goals. Even without ever marrying, distinguishing between fantasy and reality about oneself is a critical step in self-knowledge and the ability to relate to people and do work that promotes human well-being.

Psyche's Four Tasks and What they mean Psychologically^{27 28}

Aphrodite requires Psyche to perform four tasks before she can integrate a divine Eros into her mortal life.

²⁷ Jean Shinoda Bolen, *Goddesses in Everywoman: Powerful Archetypes in Women's Lives* (New York: Quill, 2004, 1984).

²⁸ Elizabeth A. Johnson, *She: Understanding Feminine Psychology* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1989).

I begin with interpretations from two professional psychologists. Both are professional archetypal psychologists who have been inspired by Carl Jung and who have joined a large group of practicing psychologists who accept the power of the collective unconscious in the shaping of daily life. From the quotes, readers can tell that they agree in the basic foundation: the importance of myth as a reflection of the patterns according to which human beings find meaning and purpose in life. They disagree, however, on one main point. Johnson argues that the myth of Psyche and Eros is true for all women to the same degree. For Johnson, the four tasks of Psyche are the path through which every woman must go before she can "discover [her] own archetypal nature, that which is beyond any personal dimension" (72). Bolen, on the other hand, thinks the myth is most relevant for women whose archetypal nature is primarily that of Aphrodite. She seems to imply that Psyche's tasks are not relevant, or at least not as critical, for women who are naturally independent: Athena, Artemis, and Hestia women. My own view is that every woman has the potential to go through all four stages in relation to all of the sacred passions built into the collective unconscious. My own life story is the story of going through this four-stage process in relation to all seven of the feminine archetypes on Greek mythology. I think Johnson and Bolen would acknowledge the validity of my approach, since myths are intended to be starting points for gaining insight into human life in all of its dimensions.

Task #1. Sorting the Seeds: Knowing oneself as a Product of One's Past

Psyche's first task is to sort seeds.

Aphrodite shows Psyche a huge pile of seeds of many different kinds mixed together and tells her she must sort these seeds before nightfall or the penalty will be death. . . . An army of ants comes to her rescue. They sort the seeds with great industry and accomplish the task by nightfall.²⁹

Psychologically, this activity refers to both an external and an internal process. Robert Johnson discusses mostly the external aspect. "In so many of the practical matters of life, in the running of a household, for example, or its parallel in a professional life, the challenge is to make form and order prevail."³⁰

Jean Bolen focuses on the inner aspect of this activity.

When a woman must make a crucial decision, she often must first sort out a jumble of conflicted feelings and competing loyalties . . . 'Sorting the seeds' is, then, an inward task, requiring that a woman look honestly within, sift through her feelings, values, and motives, and separate what is truly important from what is insignificant.³¹

This ability is clearly necessary for any woman, or even man, who wants to make the transition from being in love with love and living a human life dedicated to people and projects that have great meaning in life.

Raising children, having a career, balancing marriage, children, and career, doing volunteer work or creative work, all require the art of sorting. Human life also always includes times where important decisions have to be made that turn a life in one direction or another. We do not live idly in paradise. Making the best decision, one that will lead one's life in a positive direction, requires the kind of inner sorting that only mortals, those who have to compromise and choose, have to make. Deities, by contrast, play out the same patterns over and over for eternity; each goddess has her own obsession and manifests the strengths and weaknesses relative to that one obsession.

Neither Johnson nor Bolen mentions another dimension of this psychological sorting: the seeds that were planted from birth until one

²⁹ Johnson, *She*, 54.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 54-55.

³¹ Bolen, *Goddesses*, 259-60.