Archetypal Psychology, Dreamwork, and Neoplatonism

I. Introduction

Not easy this – and so esoteric, occult.
James Hillman

According to James Hillman, archetypal psychology is rooted in the Neoplatonic tradition of Plotinus, Porphyry, Iamblichus and Proclus.[1] C.G. Jung, whom Hillman credits with being the "first immediate father" of archetypal psychology,[2] was influenced by the Neoplatonists both directly and indirectly, while Henry Corbin, the "second immediate father" was even more directly influenced by Neoplatonists as evidenced by his work on Suhrawardi, Avicenna, and Ibn Arabi who carried the voice and vision of earlier Platonists, including their emphasis on the reality of the imaginal world so central to archetypal psychology.[3] If Jung's psychology can be read as a kind of Christian (monotheistic) Neoplatonism, the Neoplatonism of archetypal psychology understands itself to be more polytheistic, reflecting more directly the thinking of Plotinus and other non-Christian Neoplatonists.

Since archetypal psychology sees itself as rooted in, or at least inspired by Neoplatonism, a closer examination of the currents of thought among the Neoplatonists should shed light on certain characteristics of archetypal psychology. Specifically, I will argue that the theurgical Neoplatonism of Iamblichus (c. 245–c. 325) shares many theoretical assumptions developed by Hillman and that the theurgical rites advocated by Iamblichus bear remarkable similarities to the "dreamwork" of Robert Bosnak, a Dutch psychologist and student of Hillman, who developed a ritual practice of encountering imaginal entities. Yet before fruitful comparisons can be made between Iamblichean Neoplatonism and its contemporary expressions, a significant misunderstanding by Hillman must be addressed.

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1 James Hillman, "Plotino, Ficino and Vico as Precursors of Archetypal Psychology," in *Loose Ends* (Dallas: Spring Publications, 1975), 148–49; 162, fn. #6. Cf. Hillman, *Archetypal Psychology* (Dallas: Spring Publications, 1983), 2–5.

2 *Archetypal Psychology*, 3.

3 *Ibid.*, 4–5.

In "The Pandaemonium of Images: C. G. Jung's Contribution to Know Thyself,"[4] Hillman distinguishes Jung's practice of active imagination from the encounters with divine images seen in Neoplatonic theurgy. As a term, "theurgy" was coined by 3rd century Platonists to describe divine activity as distinct from human activity; theurgy was ritual action that allowed human beings to enter the activity *(ergon*) of a god (*theos*), hence the term *theourgia*, divine action.[5] Distinguishing theurgy from active imagination, Hillman writes:

> Active imagination is not a psychological activity in the transpersonal sense of theurgy (ritual magic), *the attempt to work with images by and for the human will* … Active imagination as theurgic divination would work *on the Gods* rather than recognize their workings in us (my emphases).[6]

Hillman here repeats the Christian polemic against Platonic theurgy first articulated by Augustine and continued by classical scholars who misconstrued theurgy as manipulative magic, as a form of sorcery (*goeteia*). Yet anyone who reads Iamblichus's explanation of theurgy in *On the Mysteries* will recognize that it aims at precisely the opposite of what Hillman says.[7] The goal of theurgy was not to "work on the Gods" but to conform human action to divine action, and Iamblichus ridicules as absurd the notion that human beings could work *on* the gods in any way.[8] In Hillman's defense, he was not a historian of philosophy and his understanding of theurgy was influenced largely by E. R. Dodds, probably the greatest classical scholar of the 20th century and gifted with rare psychological insight. But Dodds was simply incorrect in his characterization of theurgy as superstitious magic,[9] and this has now been recognized by most scholars of Neoplatonism, particularly by those who have studied Iamblichus.[10] Hillman's

4 Hillman, *Healing Fiction* (Dallas: Spring Publications, Inc., 1994); first published as "The Pandaemonium of Images: C. G. Jung's Contribution to Know Thyself," *New Lugano Review*, III, 3/4 (1977).

5 For the history of this term in later Platonism, see Hans Lewy, *Chaldean Oracles and Theurgy*, ed. by M. Tardieu (Paris: Etudes Augustiniennes, 1978), 461–66.

6 Hillman, *Healing Fiction* (Dallas: Spring Publications, Inc., 1994), 79.

7 Emma C. Clark, John M. Dillon, and Jackson P. Hershbell, *Iamblichus, On the Mysteries,* translated with introduction and notes (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003). All my translations of *On the Mysteries* are based on this translation; in several instances I have changed their translation slightly. Passages from *On the Mysteries* (*De Mysteriis = DM)* will be followed with the Parthey pagination they provide.

8 *DM* 146.5–147.1.

9 E.R. Dodds, "Theurgy and its Relation to Neoplatonism," *Journal of Roman Studies* 37 (1941); cf. *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), 288.

10 Jean Trouillard, "La theurgie," *L'Un et l'âme selon Proclos* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1972), 171–89; Andrew Smith, *Porphyry's Place in the Neoplatonic Tradition* (The Hague, 1974), 81–99; Garth Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes: A historical approach to the late pagan mind* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 131–41; Gregory Shaw, "Rituals of Unification in the Neoplatonism of Iamblichus," *Traditio* 41 (1985), 1–28; Polymmnia Athanassiadi, "Dreams, Theurgy and Freelance Divination: The Testimony of Iamblichus," *Journal of*

understanding of active imagination may still need to be distinguished from Iamblichean theurgy but for different reasons, and, I will argue, in most respects their approaches to images bear remarkable similarities, especially in the context of dreamwork.

By misunderstanding theurgy, I believe that Hillman overlooked a deep and central current in Neoplatonism, one that he found necessary to reinvent by developing aspects of Plotinus's thought in the style of the Renaissance Neoplatonist, Marsilio Ficino, not realizing, however, that Ficino's richly embodied Neoplatonism exemplifies Iamblichus's theurgical principles.[11] To understand the different schools of Neoplatonism and their relevance for archetypal psychology we need to step back, briefly, to consider the important issues for the Neoplatonists of the 3rd and 4th centuries.

In the late 3rd century a pointed debate took place among Platonists and Pythagoreans over the soul's place in the cosmos. Some claimed the essence of the human soul was so high and pure that it remained undisturbed and unchanged despite its appearance in a body. These Platonists believed they possessed a divine and higher eye that remained untouched by the material world and from which they could rationally evaluate the traditional rituals of the Mediterranean world that exhibited an unenlightened groping for the gods. The Syrian Platonist Iamblichus was profoundly opposed to this elevated view of the soul and he blamed these "Greeks" (his fellow Platonists) for promoting an excessive intellectualism that was ruining the religion and piety of his day. In *On the Mysteries* he writes:

> At the present time I think the reason everything has fallen into a state of decay – both in our words and prayers – is because they are continually being changed by the endless innovations and lawlessness of the Greeks. For the Greeks by nature are followers of the latest trends; they are eager to be carried off in any direction and possess no stability. Whatever wisdom they receive from other traditions they do not preserve; even this they immediately reject and change everything through their unstable habit of seeking the latest terms (*DM* 259.4–10).

Although Plato himself had censured the Greeks with nearly identical charges, this condemnation by Iamblichus – one of the most respected Platonist and Pythagoreans of his time – may seem harsh, even if he was writing under the pseudonym of Abamon, an Egyptian priest.[12] By contrast, consider Iamblichus's

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Roman Studies, 83 (1993), 115–30; and G. Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul: the Neoplatonism of Iamblichus* (University Park, PA: Penn State Press, 1995).

11 See Hillman's discussion of Plotinus' reception by those who have emphasized the "Christianity-conforming aspects of his work." Hillman, in contrast, emphasizes those aspects of Plotinus focused on the "embodied" psyche, precisely those elements of Plotinus' philosophy developed by Iamblichus; J. Hillman, "Plotino, Ficino, and Vico," in *Loose Ends: Primary Papers in Archetypal Psychology* (Dallas: Spring Publications 1975; 1991), 150–154.

12 Plato's critique of the "Greeks" immaturity is spoken by an Egyptian sage to the wise So-

high regard for the "Egyptians," one of the sacred barbarian races with whom he compares the Greeks:

> … since the Egyptians were *first to be allotted participation in the Gods*, the Gods are pleased when invoked according to the custom of the Egyptians (*DM* 258.3–6) … The barbarians, since they are *fixed in their manners*, firmly continue to employ the same words. Thus, they are beloved by the Gods and offer invocations pleasing to them. To no man is it permitted to change these prayers in any way (*DM* 259.14–19).

Ah, but those Greeks, so enamored of their intellectual brilliance, were willing to change even sacred liturgical words and phrases because they understood their *conceptual meanings* and were therefore able to replace old words with new and better ones. In the case of barbarian prayers, these same Greeks translated the archaic terms into their own more sophisticated jargon. The Greeks condemned by Iamblichus were the philosophic trendsetters of his time, those who disdained traditional cults – Greek or barbarian – as somehow unworthy of their intellectual status, and this hubris was no more evident than in Iamblichus's own Platonic tradition as he received it from Porphyry, the student of Neoplatonism's founder, Plotinus.

The Greeks that Iamblichus criticizes so harshly through "Abamon" were his own Platonic predecessors, and in both *On the Mysteries* and his philosophic commentaries Iamblichus criticized the kind of Platonism promoted in Porphyry's transmission of Plotinus's teachings. Specifically, Iamblichus disagreed with Plotinus's views concerning the soul and the material cosmos, and he lamented their practical consequences. Although Plotinus had condemned the Gnostics for denying the divinity of the cosmos,[13] his own descriptions of the soul betray a Gnostic influence, even to the point of using Gnostic terminology to describe the soul's relation to the body.[14] In an attempt to convey the depth of his contemplative experiences, Plotinus told his students that he never really entered a body, that the embodiment of the soul was only an appearance for its "head" remains in heaven, never descending into the flesh.[15] What his students saw before them was not the *real* Plotinus but his "inferior companion," the mere simulacrum or statue of the true man.[16]

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lon: "for you Greeks have in your souls no old opinion stemming from ancient oral tradition" (Timaeus 22B–23B).

13 *Ennead* II.9; see A.H. Armstrong, *Plotinus Enneads I–VI. Translation and commentary* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966–1988).

14 *Ennead* I.1.12.25–29 for the soul's descent; *Enn.* II.9.10.25–27 for Plotinus's description of the fall of the Gnostic Sophia.

15 *Enn.* IV.3.12.1–5.

16 *Enn.* I.2.6.28.

Porphyry had the privilege of attending Plotinus's seminars where he and other students were entranced by the beauty of their master's voice and his vivid images of an unfallen soul. Porphyry, however, translated the visionary poetry of Plotinus's experience into prose, into what became known as the doctrine of the undescended soul. The consequence of making a teaching out of Plotinus's evocative images was significant. For if the soul never truly enters the material cosmos, there is no need to honor its generative powers, and to the degree that the soul worships the gods of the cosmos, it remains alienated from its true stature *above* the cosmos. According to Porphyry, the undescended soul is identical to the divine *Nous*,[17] a view consistent with Plotinus's remark when asked by a disciple to join him in worshiping the gods: "It is more fitting for them to come to me than for me to come to them."[18]

Such a doctrine and attitude were entirely new and unorthodox for Platonists.[19] Traditional Platonic *paideia* had encouraged the soul to become divine by assimilating itself to the gods of the visible cosmos,[20] but there was no need for this if the soul was only under the *illusion* of embodiment. If matter, as Plotinus said, was "evil in itself,"[21] then the soul should escape from it: one's body and even the activities that unite us to the gods of the material world would prevent the soul from recovering its divine status. In Porphyry's *On the Abstinence of Animal Food*, for example, he condemned animal sacrifice and claimed – to the delight of Christians – that the fumes of burning flesh did not contact real gods but fed blood-thirsty and malevolent *daimons*![22] He encouraged the soul to forego all such rites in order to make its escape from the cosmos, "never again to find itself held and polluted by the contagion of the world."[23]

All of this anti-cosmicism was unacceptable to Iamblichus, and the doctrine of the undescended soul was at the heart of his objection to Plotinian Platonism: it made the soul too high, the world too low, and left nearly all human beings cut off from the gods. In a pointed critique of Porphyry's view of sacrifice and the soul Iamblichus gloomily says:

> This doctrine spells the ruin of all holy ritual and theurgic communion between Gods and men since it places the presence of superior beings outside this earth.

17 Porphyry, *Porphyrye: De L'Abstinence* Vol. I.29.4, tr. and introduction by Jean Bouffartigue and Michel Patillon (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1977).
18 Porphyry, *The Life of Plotinus* 10; see Armstrong, op.cit.
19 Plotinus himself says his notion of the undescended soul goes against the received opinion of his tradition; *Enn.* IV.8.8.1–2.
20 Plato, *Timaeus* 90; a position also endorsed by Plotinus, *Enn.* II.9.18.31–35.
21 Plotinus, *Enn.* I.8.3.38–40.
22 Porphyry, *Porphyrye: De L'Abstinence* II.42.1.
23 Porphyry, *De regress animae* 40, 15–16, in J. Bidez, *Vie de Porphyre* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1964).

> For it amounts to saying that the divine is at a distance from the earth and cannot mingle with men and that this lower region is a desert, without Gods (*DM* 28.6–11).

In contrast to the Platonism of Porphyry and Plotinus, Iamblichus employed Pythagorean principles to argue for the divinity of the material world and for the necessity of the soul to descend into a body and a mortal life. Following the *Timaeus*, Iamblichus defined the soul as a mediating activity bridging the opposites of sameness/difference, indivisible/divisible, rest/motion, and rhythmically weaving the cosmos into existence.[24] Mediating opposites was the soul's only way to enter the hidden activity of the One which, according to Iamblichus, was an entirely ineffable principle "known" only through the mixing of its equally unknowable derivatives: the Limit and the Unlimited, from which all number and existence derive. Yet for the soul, its participation in the One causes it to experience an ontological rupture unique among divine beings, for in order to mediate between the immortality of the gods and the mortality of generated beings, the immortal soul had to become mortal. As Iamblichus puts it:

> … the soul is a mean, not only between the divided and the undivided, the remaining and the proceeding, but also between the ungenerated and the generated … Wherefore, *that which is immortal in the soul is filled completely with mortality and no longer remains only immortal*.[25]

Iamblichus's understanding of the soul stands in sharp contrast to that of Plotinus. Plotinus and Porphyry maintained that the essence (*ousia*) of the soul never descends but remains unchanged when the soul animates a body. The soul itself does not descend but merely *illuminates* its body;[26] mortal activities, therefore, cannot affect the soul's *ousia*. For Iamblichus, however, not only does the soul's *ousia* undergo change in embodiment, the multiplicity of its activities suggests to him that the soul's essence becomes fragmented into "essences (*ousiai*) of the soul." He says: "Our soul remains one *yet is multiplied at the same time* in its inclination to the body." For Iamblichus, the soul's *ousia* is "one *and* many."[27] Mortal and immortal, one and many, unified and divided … obviously, such paradoxes do not allow for discursive clarity or closure. The psychology of Porphyry

24 Iamblichus, *De Anima* 30, 19–23, text and translation by John Finamore and John Dillon (Leiden: Brill, 2002).

25 Simplicius, *De Anima* [DA] 89, 33–37; 90, 21–23, ed. M. Hayduck (Berlin: B. Reimeri, 1882).

26 See *Enn.* I.1.12.25–29.

27 For citations in Iamblichus see Carlos Steel, *The Changing Self: A Study on the Soul in Later Neoplatonism: Iamblichus, Damascius and Priscianus*, tr. by E. Haasl (Brussels: Paleis der Academien, 1978), 61–63.

and Plotinus allowed for a soteriology much easier to imagine: the soul escapes from the material world and ascends "alone to the Alone."[28] For Iamblichus, however, the soul's salvation depends not only on its unity and immortality but on its dividedness and mortality as well, for only by mediating the opposites could the soul truly function as soul. By ritually engaging the powers of the material world, the Iamblichean soul transformed the suffering and chaos of its embodiment into a cosmos. The soul became divine not by escaping from the world but by sharing in its creation through the performance of cosmogonic rituals: theurgies (*theia erga* = divine acts), which were the necessary complement to Iamblichus's less exalted psychology and less dualistic cosmology.

Theurgy was necessary, Iamblichus believed, because of the limitations caused by embodiment, the most significant being the self-alienation (*allotriōthen*) that defined the soul's essence as human.[29] Although immortal, the soul becomes mortal and is estranged not only from the gods but from its own divinity. It becomes constitutionally unable to return to the divine because its essence has become mortal; an "I" defined by its particular mortal life. To return to the gods Iamblichus says the soul first must recognize the "nothingness" (*oudeneia*)[30] of its identity and then ritually conform itself to the signatures of the gods present *in the visible world*. Like the god Dionysus dismembered by the Titans, the embodied soul gradually recollects its immortal identity by discovering its fragments in nature.[31] These acts of recollection, or theurgies, allow the presence of the gods in the world to awaken their corresponding presences in the soul, and through a life-long process of engaging these divinities the soul reconfigures its subtle body (*ochēma*). Theurgy, in effect, was a form of demiurgy, and the soul's deification was realized when the world and the soul became transparent to the gods within them.

Iamblichus has been vilified by Christians and ridiculed by classicists for his willingness to use stones, plants, and animals in theurgic rituals, but if the world is a visible divinity as Iamblichus believed, then each of its elements has the power to lead the soul back to its source. As Henry Corbin put it: "… each

28 *Enn*. VI.9.11.51: *phugē monou pros monon*.

29 Simplicius, *DA* 223.26; Iamblichus also says that the embodied soul is also "made other to itself" (*heteroiousthai pros heautēn* 223.31.

30 *DM* 47.13–48.4.

31 For the later Platonists Dionysus represents collectively all souls who descend into the sublunary world. Damascius explains how the soul's descent into a body is effected by the mirror of Dionysus and how souls (= Dionysus) recover their divinity: "The myth describes the same events as taking place in the prototype of the soul. When Dionysus projected his reflection into the mirror, he followed it and was thus scattered over the universe. *Apollo gathers him and brings him back to heaven*, for he is the purifying God and savior of Dionysus" *Damascius Commentary on Plato's Phaedo* 129.1–4, tr. by L.G. Westerink (Dilton Marsh: *The Prometheus Trust*, 2009; 1977). The gathering of the god by Apollo is effected by theurgic rites.

sensible thing or species is the 'theurgy' of its Angel … the sensible species does not divert from the Angel but leads to the 'place' of the encounter, on condition that the soul seeks the encounter."[32] In this sense, theurgy is a ritualization of Platonic recollection, employing the traces of divinity in the world to awaken the soul to its divine inheritance. What allows the sensible thing to be experienced as theurgy is the inner disposition of the soul that feels *called* by the god through the sensible image: the soul's eros awakened by the beauty of the god calling to the soul. Yet this theurgic union with the god does not sever the soul's connection with the material world – it confirms it, and it is this emphasis on the soul returning to the gods by going *outside* itself and into the world that most distinguishes the Neoplatonism of Iamblichus from that of Plotinus. It is this world-affirming – and theurgical – Neoplatonism of Iamblichus that informed the Florentine school of Ficino and is reflected in archetypal psychology's effort to return the soul to the world.[33]

Before shifting our focus to consider archetypal psychology and dreamwork against the background of Iamblichean theurgy, it may be helpful to summarize theurgy's guiding principles, some of which have not yet been discussed but will be referred to later in the paper.

1. Theurgy was not (*pace* St. Augustine, E.R. Dodds, Hillman et. al.) an attempt to manipulate the gods. It is the work *of* the gods on us and through us, not vice versa. Iamblichus is unambiguous about this point in *On the Mysteries* and saves his harshest criticism for sorcerers (*goētes*) who use their knowledge of the gods for personal ends.[34] The purpose of every theurgy, Iamblichus says, is the purification, liberation, and salvation of the soul.[35]

2. Theurgy allows the soul to share in the cosmogonic activity of the gods, seen in the power of nature to reveal the invisible powers of the gods through visible shapes and images.[36] In terms of experience, all theurgy is dual in the sense that although those who perform the rite remain human beings, yet in theurgic ritual they take on the shape of the gods.[37]

3. Souls perform different kinds of theurgy according to their needs and capacities. Without a proper "receptacle" (*hupodochē*) the soul would lack the

32 Henry Corbin, *Avicenna and the Visionary Recital*, tr. by Willard Trask (Dallas: Spring Publications, 1980), 115–116.

33 The Iamblichean influence is seen particularly in Ficino's *On Making Your Life Agree with the Heavens* where Iamblichus is often cited as an authority; see *Marsilio Ficino: The Book of Life*, tr. by Charles Boer (Dallas: Spring Publications, Inc. 1980). On Hillman's dependence on Ficino's world-affirming Neoplatonism, see James Hillman, "*Anima Mundi*: The Return of the Soul to the World," *Spring* (1982), 71–93.

34 *DM* 193.15–194.7; 182.13–16.

35 *DM* 293.5–8.

36 *DM* 249.14–250.7.

37 *DM* 184.1–8.

capacity to receive the god.[38] Therefore, a careful diagnosis of the soul and its capacity should precede the ritual act.

4. The gods appear to the soul as symbols and *sunthēmata* ("tokens") in various forms and through various media: animals, plants, stones, images, letters, sounds, music, names, and geometric shapes. Each of these symbols *is* the god in an activity (theurgy), veiling and revealing its divinity.

5. Although the soul must prepare itself, the theurgic symbol works on us without our interpretation or understanding. In an often quoted passage Iamblichus says, "we don't perform these acts intellectually, for then their energy would be intellectual and depend on us, which is not at all true. In fact, these symbols, by themselves, perform their own work, and the ineffable power of the Gods with which these symbols are charged, itself, recognizes, by itself, its own images. It is not awakened to this by our thinking."[39]

6. Through the performance of theurgic rites, the soul restores and strengthens its subtle body (*ochēma*) – disoriented by embodiment – through which it is reunited with the gods. This subtle or imaginal body is the place of the soul's transformation.

7. All theurgy must begin with the material gods in order to establish a foundation for encounters with the gods who rule over immaterial reality. The material gods have jurisdiction over all experiences of growth and decay and the agonies of material life. The attempt to worship immaterial gods without first establishing a foundation with the material gods cuts the soul off from *all* gods for it would have no way to contain them.[40] To think otherwise is hubris and self-deception.

II. Archetypal Psychology: Recovering the Gods

He who has not distributed to all these Powers what is fitting
and in accord with the appropriate honor that each is worthy to receive
will depart imperfect and deprived of participation in the Gods.
Iamblichus

Once we know at whose altar the question belongs,
then we know better the manner of proceeding.
James Hillman

Iamblichus's dark prophecy that Porphyry's theology would remove the divine from the earth and "leave this lower region a desert, without gods," was eventu-

38 *DM* 233.7–16.
39 *DM* 97.2–9.
40 *DM* 228.19–229.7; 227.6–13.

ally fulfilled. After the gods and the undescended soul were exiled into heaven, this lower world lost its connection with divine powers and with them its living spirit. Later, the ineffable divinity of the Neoplatonists – revealed only in the *multiplicity of gods* – was confused by Christians with their One Triumphant God, a mistake that Corbin describes as a "metaphysical catastrophe."[41] It was inevitable, Corbin argues, that this God of monotheism would eventually be exposed as an idol created by human insecurities: the God elevated above the world and cast in the image of our Unified and Transcendental Self. Iamblichus had warned Porphyry that his inflated notion of the soul would lead to this:

> For being unable to lay hold of the knowledge of the Gods through reasoning, *but believing they are able to do so*, men are entirely carried away by their human passions and make assertions about divine things drawn from personal feelings (*DM* 65.16 – 66.2).

As a Neoplatonist and Pythagorean, Iamblichus was well trained in the dialectics of the One. Like other Neoplatonists who had reflected on the function of Socratic unknowing (*aporia*), he knew that the One was ineffable and that Plato had already demonstrated in the *Parmenides* that the One itself never is, that the One *does not exist*.[42] For the Neoplatonists, however, this realization marked the beginning of genuine theological reflection, the subtlety of which is captured by the Proclus scholar Jean Trouillard:

> If one tries to affirm pure unity this very affirmation, in effect, destroys it because one may only posit and think in relations, in dualities. Pure simplicity [the Limit] blinds us as does pure diversity [the Unlimited]. If we try to realize the absolute we abolish it as absolute, for meaning occurs only in a context of relations to which the absolute presents itself as the negation. But this impossibility of affirming is not an ordinary negation, since the One that we posit as relative to the Many itself implies another unity which sustains them both, but which we may not describe. It is necessary, then, after avoiding the affirmation, to deny the negation itself and enter into the ineffable.[43]

Damascius, the 6th century master of apophatic discourse, said that the One is simply a symbol for the ineffable,[44] what Egyptians call "unknowable darkness"

41 See Henry Corbin's discussion in his Prefatory Letter to David Miller, *The New Polytheism*: *Rebirth of the Gods and Goddesses* (Dallas: Spring Publications Inc., 1981), 2–3.

42 *Parmenides*, 141d–142.

43 Jean Trouillard, "Néo-platonisme," *Encyclopedia Universalis* 11 (Paris, 1968), 682 (my translation).

44 Damascius, *Traité des Premiers Principes*, Vol. 2: "De la triade et de l'unifié," Westerink and Combes (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1989), 30.3–8.

(*skotos agnōston*).[45] It made no sense, then, to speak of the One God as if it existed or were capable of being known, for it was neither. Yet, despite (and perhaps because of) their *aporia* in the face of ineffability, the Neoplatonists experienced the ineffable One revealing itself as *unifying activities:* the activities of the Gods in their daimonic expression of creating the world. The goal of the later Neoplatonists, therefore, was not to reach the One, since it doesn't exist, but to enter its ineffable and unifying activities, the *theurgies* of the One, in whatever context the soul finds itself.

The tendency to transform apophatic discourse or any transformative discourse into an orthodoxy of memorized rules or concepts seems to be inherent in our need for security. Even a discourse designed to subvert this habit of self-deception can become the most subtle and efficient way to indulge it. This is why even in apophatic Neoplatonism there is a need for rigorous self-criticism which attempts to rediscover those moments of genuine transformation revealed by a seminal thinker, whether it is a Plato, a Plotinus, or, more recently, the Swiss psychologist Carl Jung.

As the Neoplatonists interpreted Plato according to their apophatic principles, seeing the One and the Forms not as ideal entities or objects but as patterns of activity and manifestation, so James Hillman, in a effort to circumvent a veneration (and reification) of Jungian archetypes (akin to the Platonic Forms of the psyche), speaks not of archetypes, but of *archetypal* images, changing the "what" of an archetype into a "how," into an *activity* experienced by the soul.[46] Hillman's desubstantiating and deliteralizing move, like the apophatic move of the Neoplatonists, means that the archetypes are not confined to a metaphysical space or an abstract empyrean outside this earth. Archetypal images, like the gods of Iamblichus, must be found in this *lower* region. "All images," Hillman says, "can gain this archetypal sense,"[47] and in the same way that theurgic symbols penetrate the soul and work on us independently of our thinking, so archetypal images work on us without our interpretation. Hillman writes:

> We learn from the alchemical psychologists to let the images work upon the experimenter; we learn to become the *object* of the work – even an object, or objectified image, of the imagination.[48]

I believe that the Neoplatonism to which archetypal psychology is most akin is not, as Hillman thinks, the high-souled Neoplatonism of Plotinus but that of the Syrian theurgist Iamblichus. Hillman looks to Plotinus to find parallels with

45 *Ibid.*, 30.8–9.
46 James Hillman, "An Enquiry into Image," *Spring* (1977), 82–83; Hillman, *Archetypal Psychology* (Dallas, Spring Publications, Inc., 1983), 12–14.
47 Hillman, "An Enquiry." *Spring*, 83.
48 Hillman, *Re-Visioning Psychology* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1975), 40.

archetypal psychology, not, he says, the Plotinus that has been appropriated by Christian philosophers and theologians with their "inherent tendency to bring out, or read in, the inspiring and inflating and Christianity-conforming aspects of his work …,"[49] but with the Plotinus who describes the soul struggling with pleasures, fears and other emotions of embodied existence. Granted that Plotinus was a masterful thinker with acute insight into the soul, there is nevertheless, a reason that Christian theologians have been attracted to Plotinus's Neoplatonism and, largely, have been repelled by Iamblichus and theurgy. The theory of the undescended soul and the evilness of the material world *can* be found in Plotinus, not in Iamblichus. And in Plotinus's personal rejection of traditional pagan worship and Porphyry's condemnation of blood sacrifice Christians found powerful allies in their battle against the worship of the pagan gods. Iamblichus, on the other hand, by providing a philosophic rationale for traditional pagan cults, became a demonic figure for Christians and later, a target of ridicule for scholars who feel greater affinity for the "rational" Neoplatonism of Plotinus.[50]

A.H. Armstrong noted, however, that "it is possible to develop a theory of theurgy from one side of the thought of Plotinus,"[51] and that is precisely what Iamblichus did. It happens that the side to which Armstrong refers is also the side attractive to Hillman. For Hillman is interested in Plotinus's grasp of the soul's paradoxes, its multiplicities, imagination, and complexities, not in his exhortations to escape from the world. With archetypal psychology Hillman follows a trajectory of Plotinus's thought that was developed by Iamblichus into theurgy: the recognition that the soul in the body is fragmented and needs to recover itself not by withdrawal, introspection, and escape but by creating proper receptacles to contain the gods, to give these deepest impulses of the soul a divine shape. In *Re-Visioning Psychology*, Hillman cites a passage from this theurgical side of Plotinus describing a technique for ritually containing the gods. Plotinus says:

> I think, therefore, that the ancient sages, who sought *to secure the presence of divine beings by the erection of shrines and statues*, showed insight into the nature of the All; they perceived that though this soul is everywhere tractable, its presence will be secured all the more readily *when an appropriate receptacle is elaborated, a place especially capable of receiving some portion or phase of it, something reproducing it, or representing it and serving like a mirror to catch an image of it*.[52]

49 Hillman, *Loose Ends*, op. cit., 150.

50 See Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul: The Neoplatonism of Iamblichus* (Kettering, OH: Angelico Press, 2014; 1995), 1–18.

51 A.H. Armstrong, "Tradition, Reason, and Experience in the Thought of Plotinus," *Plotinian and Christian Studies* 17 (London: Variorum Reprints, 1979), 187.

52 Hillman, *Re-Visioning*, 14.

These recommendations form an integral part of the theurgical art as described by Iamblichus, specifically, providing a receptacle (*hupodochē*) in which divine activity may be fruitfully contained and engaged.[53] Later, Hillman returns to the theme of receptacles and the dangers of facing the depths of the soul without them. He writes:

> To let the depths rise without our systems of protection is what psychiatry calls psychosis: the images and voices and energies invading the emptied cities of reason which have been depersonified and demythologized and *so have no containers to receive the divine influxes*.[54]

Hillman recognizes the truth of Iamblichus's prophecy: this "lower world" has become a demythologized desert, without gods, and its corollary for the human soul is that without "containers" to properly receive the gods *outside* us – in shrines, rituals, statues or prayers – they appear as psychic imbalances. As Jung put it, "the gods have become diseases; Zeus no longer rules Olympus but rather the solar plexus, and produces curious specimens for the doctor's consulting room."[55]

Here, it seems, is where archetypal psychology differs most markedly from Iamblichean theurgy. For Iamblichus, the gods could still be met, contained, and acted with through various forms of worship and divination. Theurgists like Iamblichus and Ficino could diagnose psychic imbalances and prescribe rituals to align the soul with its god, for they still had gods, rituals, and shrines to which they could refer. In our terms, they had a way to contain the pathologies of the soul. We do not. Yet, Hillman argues, our lack of containers and the debilitating experience of having gods as diseases may have a useful function, for it strips the ego of its illusion of power and control. He claims

> … that it is mainly through the wound in human life that the Gods enter (rather than pronouncedly sacred or mystical events), because pathology is the most palpable manner of bearing witness to *the powers beyond ego control* and the insufficiency of the ego perspective.[56]

Despite the cultural differences between archetypal psychology and the theurgy of the Platonists, Hillman's emphasis on working with pathological images is consistent with the principles of Iamblichean theurgy especially as they relate to the soul's embodied experience. For when the soul enters a body, its essence (*ousia*) is broken apart; it becomes intertwined with mortal lives (the material

53 Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul*, 53–54.
54 Hillman, *Re-Visioning*, 224.
55 Cited by Hillman in *Archetypal Psychology* op. cit., 37.
56 Hillman, *Archetypal Psychology*, 39.

daimons) and is made subject to fate and suffering.[57] The soul *is* identified by the Neoplatonists with the dismembered Dionysus, and in exact proportion to its dividedness and identification with mortal lives, it requires rituals specific to each kind of rupture and embodied agony that it experiences. These rituals, provided they are appropriate to its needs, contain the agonies of the soul and allow it to recover its divine body. Iamblichus insists, however, that the soul begin its theurgy with the material gods who, he says, preside over the suffering of all

> … material phenomena: division, collision, impact, reaction, change, generation, and the corruption of all material bodies … and in worship we offer what is appropriately related to them. In the sacrifices, therefore, dead bodies and things deprived of life, the blood of animals, the consumption of victims, their diverse changes and destruction, and in short, the breakdown of the matter offered to the Gods is fitting – not for the Gods themselves – but for the matter over which they preside.[58]

Iamblichus explains that the power of fire to consume and assimilate matter to itself initiates the assimilation of the soul to the divine fire.[59] Like the mortifications of alchemical *materia* or the tortured images in the art of memory which, Hillman says, free the soul of its "literal perspective," stuck in the coagulations of matter,[60] so the material rites of theurgy release the soul from its embodied fixations through giving ritual expression to the material *daimons*. Iamblichus insists that it is necessary to begin theurgy with the material gods in order to build a foundation for the soul's subsequent contacts with divine powers, and he specifically criticizes Porphyry for trying to return to the immaterial gods without first honoring their material counterparts. Yet Porphyry, believing that his soul was undescended, perhaps did not feel the need to ritually honor material gods and *daimons* that he had never *really* encountered. This hubris, according to Iamblichus, makes the soul blindly subservient to the material gods and *daimons* that it ignores and prevents any possibility of uniting with the immaterial gods.

The divinities which the soul recollects in theurgy by engaging their traces in nature seem to grow uglier through our neglect: the gods truly have become diseases. But despite their grotesque and repulsive appearance, these pathological symptoms have become our only means to return to the cosmos of the Neoplatonists. Iamblichus would tell us that our illnesses are not themselves the gods but indicate our failure to receive and contain the gods properly,[61] and Hillman

57 Iamblichus explains that daimons oversee nature and bind souls to their mortal bodies: *DM* 67.1–68.2.
58 *DM* 217.10–218.8.
59 *DM* 214.14–215.5.
60 Hillman, *Re-Visioning*, 90f.
61 Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul*, op. cit., 60–61.

seems to agree, for he encourages us to elaborate – like theurgists – "appropriate receptacles" in order to better contain our divine influxes.[62]

Iamblichus and Hillman both emphasize the importance of our *not* knowing and *not* controlling the gods when they appear and for the same reason. When challenged by Porphyry to explain why theurgists chant "meaningless" god names, Iamblichus tells him "to remove all conceptions and logical deductions from divine names"[63] and concludes by asserting that "*even if it is unknowable to us, this very thing is its most venerable aspect*."[64] The embodied soul, identified with a particular "self" is not capable of intellectually grasping the audible bodies of the gods, and to think it could, Iamblichus argues, keeps us from being able to receive them. It is through recognition of our "nothingness" that we are drawn to receive the gods.[65] Once freed of our pretensions to know, the soul can be moved in theurgy "to another order, having entirely abandoned its former existence."[66] For Iamblichus, the doctrine of the undescended soul, untouched and unperturbed by the lower powers of the cosmos, is the functional equivalent of archetypal psychology's "heroic ego" which similarly prevents us from entering the darkness and meeting the gods. Like Iamblichus, Hillman values the pathological symptom *because* it is unknowable: "that thing so foreign to the ego, that thing which ends the rule of the hero … [and] moves the myth of the individual onward by moving him first of all out of the heroic ego …"[67] and into death, which is the theme developed by Hillman in the *Dream and the Underworld.* Both Hillman and Iamblichus also insist that we must begin with pathological images: the "breakdown of matter offered to the Gods," and I believe that both share a similar motivation.

Behind the psychologies of Iamblichus and Hillman is a protest, a reaction against the titanic self-deception that invites us to see ourselves as self-sufficient and god-like: a disease specifically of our discursive power that has not yet learned – in Neoplatonic terms – to limit its propensity to the Unlimited. Iamblichus attacked the doctrine of the undescended soul because it invited the kind of hubris and self-deception he perceived in Porphyry's questions and in Plotinus's psychology. Hillman, for his part, seeks to undermine what he calls the heroic ego, our "heroic attitude toward all events, an attitude now so habitual that we have come to call it the 'ego.'"[68] Since this heroic mode dominates our consciousness today far more than the doctrine of the undescended soul did in

62 Hillman, *Re-Visioning*, 225.
63 *DM* 255.5–6.
64 *DM* 255.9–10.
65 *DM* 47.13–48.3.
66 *DM* 270.10–14.
67 Hillman, *Re-Visioning*, op.cit., 89.
68 *Ibid.*, xiv.

Iamblichus's time, Hillman is proportionately more passionate and careful to discern the subtle forms of self-deception that the "hero" invites. While Iamblichus could speak of "taking on the shape of the Gods" in theurgic ritual,[69] Hillman would likely suspect it to be "but another heroic voyage of the ego now translated into interior space."[70] So long as the hero lives, has not been initiated into death, into the realm of Hades, then all transformations of the soul are nothing more than heroic self-deceptions. The task, then, is to enter the darkness, to experience our soul as "filled completely with mortality,"[71] to recognize, as Iamblichus puts it, our nothingness. Hillman rejects the "grand shamanic journey"[72] and prefers the soul to be broken down, afflicted, and depressed: "the pathological image held solemnly is what moves the soul."[73] He is so acutely on guard against heroic inflation that even such a standard notion as self-transformation is viewed with suspicion: "I prefer to speak of transformation," Hillman says, "only when I can point at its actually happening,"[74] and the experience of transcendence, which was important to all Neoplatonists, is even more suspect for Hillman, who writes:

> There may well be more psychopathology actually going on while transcending than while being immersed in pathologizing. *For any attempt at self-realization without full recognition of the psychopathology that resides, as Hegel said, inherently in the soul* is itself pathological, an exercise in self-deception.[75]

Hillman's vigilance against self-deception might lead one to suspect that he discounts the validity of any form of transcendence, but his insistence on recognizing our pathologies *before* transcending is similar to Iamblichus's insistence that we honor the material gods before proceeding to the immaterial gods. Hillman does acknowledge the validity of transcendence as described by Henry Corbin, who spoke of the soul's ascent to the divine, called *epistrophē* (return) by the Neoplatonists and *ta'wil* by Shi'ite Muslims. Quoting Corbin, Hillman says that "one must carry sensible forms back to imaginative forms and then rise to still higher meanings …"[76] For the Persian Neoplatonists of Corbin the theurgic moment that transforms the sensible into symbols occurs in the *mundus imaginalis*, a realm of images where the soul's desire for *epistrophē* enters into theurgies emanating from the One, a meeting, Corbin says, that effects an ecstatic encounter with one's Angel, an event in which the soul experiences its ascent to the

69 *DM* 184.1–8.
70 *Re-Visioning,* 93.
71 The Iamblichean vision of the embodied soul: Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul*, 110–120.
72 *Re-Visioning*, 93.
73 *Re-Visioning*, 93.
74 Hillman, "Further Notes on Image," op. cit., 175.
75 *Re-Visioning*, 70.
76 Hillman, *Loose Ends*, op. cit., 50.

Angel as the Angel's descent to the soul. This Angel, Corbin writes, is "itself the *ekstasis*, the 'displacement' or *departure from ourselves* that is a 'change of state' from our [habitual] state."[77] For such a mysterious encounter to be received properly we need *containers*, the *sunthēmata* of theurgy: shrines, myths, images, and perhaps even stones that can hold more of the ineffable than our thinking. And for each soul the intensity of its encounter is measured by its capacity to receive the divinity through the theurgic symbol.

The Corbin scholar Christian Jambet insists that the *mundus imaginalis* must be rooted in the apophatic Neoplatonism in which it developed for the imaginal world to link the sensible realm to the paradoxes of the ineffable One. He warns that if we abstract the imaginal world from this function and place it in a merely psychological context, we risk losing its significance and power.[78] The imaginal then would be reduced to personal imagination and become subordinate to sensate experience; as such it could no longer function as the *place* where the ineffability of the One and the "one in the soul" are metamorphosed into an erotic bi-unity, a reciprocating desire and angelic encounter.[79]

Following Corbin, Hillman explains that the imaginal world is defined neither by our subjectivity nor by what is sensibly external; it is, rather, a third place made up of images external to us yet intimately related to our heart's most ardent desire.[80] Despite Jambet's concerns, Hillman seems to have lifted the imaginal out of its context in the apophatic metaphysics of the Neoplatonists. His touchstone for the imaginal world was Corbin himself, who seems to have functioned for Hillman as a theurgic *sunthēma*, opening him to the mysteries of the *mundus imaginalis*. Shortly after Corbin's death Hillman writes:

> In him imagination was utterly presence. *One was in the presence of imagination itself*, that imagination in which and by which the spirit moves from the heart towards all origination … the invisible Henry Corbin is among us.[81]

For his part, Corbin said that it was precisely in his effort to restore the *mundus imaginalis* that his work coincided with that of Hillman whom he praises for his courage and originality.[82] The gods that Hillman discerns in our diseases and in-

77 Corbin, *Swedenborg and Esoteric Islam*, tr. Leonard Fox (West Chester, PA: Swedenborg Foundation, 1995), 32. Of this encounter Corbin says: "The reciprocity that flowers in the mystery of this divine depth cannot be expressed save by a symbol." (Corbin, *Avicenna and the Visionary Recital*, op.cit., 203). Each of these symbols, like theurgic receptacles, would reflect the capacity of each soul to contain the divine influx.

78 Christian Jambet, *La logique des Orientaux: Henry Corbin et la science des formes* (Paris: Editions due Seuil, 1983), 41.

79 *Ibid.* 40–41; cf. Corbin, *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn Arabi*, fn. 32, 333.

80 Hillman, *The Thought of the Heart* (Dallas: Spring Publications, Inc., 1981), 2–3.

81 *Ibid.* 1–2.

82 David Miller, *The New Polytheism*, op. cit., 4.

fluxes can again be reborn "as gods" Corbin said, in the imaginal world, that is, in the *epistrophē* of the soul toward its origins. The context, then, of Hillman's archetypal psychology *is* the apophatic Neoplatonism of Plotinus, Iamblichus and Damascius – not as a metaphysical system – but as an imaginal experience *embodied* and communicated through the living presence and voice of Henry Corbin.[83]

Like the theurgists of Iamblichus's era, Corbin's Persian Neoplatonists had receptacles and the imaginal capacity to contain invisible powers. The arts of theurgic divination were still alive in the medieval world, but today our "world" has largely been drained of its imaginal richness, its soul, so the only imaginal experience that remains to us is the dream. Dreams, therefore, have become the containers for the "gods" of archetypal psychology through which the soul can still be initiated to see through its self-alienation and make its *epistrophē* to the gods. The importance of dreams as a place to meet the gods was also recognized by the Neoplatonists. Iamblichus spoke of dreams as the most effective way to contact the divine for, he says: "in sleep we are completely liberated, freed as it were, from certain bonds closely held on us, and we employ a life separated from generation" (DM 106.7–9). It seems that today the imaginal vessels of the theurgic art: the sacred animals, stones, plants, music and incantations are accessible to most of us only in our dreams. The dream has become the breathing place for the imaginal soul.

Because of the importance of dreams to depth psychology and the treasury of images they provide for imaginal experience, it is not surprising that Hillman was provoked to perhaps his greatest insights in his highly acclaimed work, *The Dream and the Underworld*.[84] Here, Hillman plays on the two themes discussed above: (1) the necessity of seeing through the heroic ego and its "self" importance, and (2) the power of dream images to work on us independently of our thinking. In this latter respect, Hillman's method is a reaction both to Freud, who wanted to interpret the dream in the language of waking life, and to Jung, who saw dreams as compensating for conscious attitudes. Following Corbin, Hillman argues that the dream is a *reality* of its own and should not be reduced to the concerns of waking reality. Hillman understands that to tap the imaginal capacities in dreams we must resist the assumptions of both Freud and Jung that "the dream requires translation into waking language…"[85] He encourages us to go dark, into the dream and away from the literal view of a dayworld that cannot see, in Corbin's terms, sensible things as

83 Subsequently, Hillman recognized his need to elaborate a metaphysics ("I have known this for some time …"), discusses the importance of Corbin, and begins imagining a "psychological cosmology" following Bachelard's commentaries on Plato's *Timaeus*. See Hillman, "Back to Beyond: On Cosmology," in *Archetypal Process: Self and Divine in Whitehead, Jung and Hillman*, ed. by David Ray Griffin (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1989), 214–224.

84 *The Dream and the Underworld* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979).

85 *Ibid.*, 12.

the theurgies of Angels. To the rational mind, to the heroic ego, Hillman's move is madness and he dares to make his intentions plain. He announces that

> ...we must sever the link with the dayworld, foregoing all ideas that originate there – translation, reclamation, compensation. We must go over the bridge and let it fall behind us, and if it will not fall, then let it burn.[86]

Several archetypal psychologists have walked over this bridge and into the dark world of dreaming. Mary Watkins described her journey in a raw and brilliant study, *Waking Dreams*,[87] and, in a more practical context, Robert Bosnak, who was also touched deeply by Corbin, has developed a method of group dreamwork that enacts the principles outlined by Hillman in *The Dream and the Underworld.* It is in the *praxis* of Bosnak's dreamwork that the theoretical similarities between Iamblichean theurgy and archetypal psychology are most vividly revealed, yet because the *praxis* in both theurgy and dreamwork is based on *experiential* knowing, it does not translate easily into the clarity of academic discourse. To equate theurgic rites with contemporary dreamwork is a conjecture, but one that I think may shed light on the existential requirements of theurgy as well as establish dreamwork more clearly in the Neoplatonic tradition as a *praxis* or theurgy required by a rigorously apophatic theology. In effect, I believe that the techniques of Bosnak's dreamwork ensure that Hillman's theoretical insights into imaginal reality do not become merely brilliant speculations but remain – as Jambet insisted – imaginal *experiences* mysteriously linked to the ineffable paradoxes of the One.

III. Dreamwork and the Archai

… the Gods are seen, yet not seen at all.
Proclus

… meeting with primordial consciousness is frightening.
It threatens to burn the straight white mind.
Robert Bosnak

Robert Bosnak's *Tracks in the Wilderness of Dreaming*[88] is not a scholarly book. It has no footnotes, no index, and the author does not try to establish the validity of his claims against recognized positions in the scholarship on dreams. Along with Bosnak's earlier work, *A Little Course in Dreams*,[89] his books read like the

86 *Ibid.*, 13.
87 Mary Watkins, *Waking Dreams* (Dallas: Spring Publications, 1984; 1976).
88 Robert Bosnak, *Tracks in the Wilderness of Dreaming* (New York: Delacorte Press, 1996).
89 Robert Bosnak, *A Little Course in Dreams* (Boston: Shambhala Press, 1988).

field notes of an ethnographer except the natives Bosnak studies inhabit another reality altogether: the imaginal world of Henry Corbin. In his dreamwork Bosnak does not approach dreams as day-residues of the objective reality of waking life (Freud) nor does he treat dream images subjectively as different parts of the psyche awaiting understanding and integration (Jung). The people of our dreams, Bosnak insists, are autonomous entities with a will and intentionality of their own; they are not our "sub-personalities."[90] To meet these dream entities on their own terms requires a slow and careful descent into their world, and it is the method of this descent and the subtle etiquette of encountering dream figures that allows Bosnak's work to fulfill Corbin's criteria for entering the *mundus imaginalis*.

Bosnak has led dream groups into this alien world of dreams for over 30 years, so he is well aware of the obstacles that confront us when we try to cross over into the darkness of dreaming.[91] He highlights two episodes from Jung's autobiography to exemplify the difficulties we all face when we enter imaginal reality.

During Jung's travels in Africa, he recounts a powerful moment when, alone in nature, with "the world as it has always been," he felt himself drawn into a timeless reverie, as if he were "the first human being to recognize that this was the world, but who did not know that in this moment he had first really created it."[92] Reflecting on his awareness of nature, Jung continues: "Man, I, in an invisible act of creation, put the stamp of perfection on the world by giving it objective existence … Human consciousness created objective existence and meaning, and man found his indispensable place in the great process of being …"[93] Despite Jung's considerable experience with the unconscious, in this episode he seems to exemplify the characteristics of the heroic ego criticized by Hillman, claiming that his subjective awareness has *created* the world!

After his remarkable "confrontation with the unconscious" in 1913, Jung visited "primitive" peoples whose containers for the unconscious were still explicit and functioning in their cultures. They served Jung as a confirmation and continuation of his own internal discoveries, yet in the face of a truly archaic reality, his habitual North European mentality reduced the significance of nature and all creation to human proportions, imagining that "man" put the "stamp of

90 Bosnak, *Tracks*, 50.

91 I spent several years as a member of Robert Bosnak's dreamwork group in Boston, beginning in 1992. My research into Iamblichean theurgy happened to coincide with my participation in Bosnak's group. My comments about the nature of dreamwork and the imaginal world reflect my experience for over a decade of working with dreams. It led to the publication of a previous article comparing theurgy to archetypal dreamwork, "Containing Ecstasy: The Strategies of Iamblichean Theurgy," *Dionysius*, Vol. XXI, Dec. 2003, 53–88; this article stands alone but shares some elements with the 2003 publication.

92 Cited by Bosnak, *Tracks*, 91–92.

93 *Ibid.*, 92.

perfection on the world" by recognizing it objectively in his mind. Later, when Jung encounters one of the inhabitants of this archaic world, he has a profoundly different experience. During his entire African trip Jung says that on only one occasion did he dream of a "Negro," and he was not an African but an American who had once cut Jung's hair in Chattanooga, Tennessee. He explains:

> In the dream he was holding a tremendous, red-hot curling iron to my head, intending to make my hair kinky – that is to give me Negro hair. I could already feel the painful heat, and awoke with a sense of terror.[94]

Jung says that he realized then that he was "all too close to 'going black,'" and compares his experience to those of soldiers in the First World War who were "pulled out the front lines when [they] started dreaming too much of war scenes, for that meant [*they] no longer possessed any psychic defenses against the impressions from outside*."[95] Bosnak explains that when one of the inhabitants of this primordial reality was about to penetrate Jung's armor and share his "head," his curly and black way of envisioning the world, Jung is terrified and interprets his situation in terms of combat with an alien intruder – he was in danger of "going black."[96]

Bosnak made his own journey to a "primitive" culture among the Aboriginals of Australia, and he highlights the Aboriginals' view of nature and uses it as a metaphor for his approach to dreams. Instead of imagining that human beings bring the world into existence through our objective reflection, the Aboriginals fuse their awareness of nature with the specific intelligence and intentionality of the Ancient Beings who are – even now – *dreaming* the world into existence, into what the Aboriginals call "songlines," the landscape revealing the traces of this "dreaming," the physical world being their song. As Bruce Chatwin put it, in the Dreaming, in the primordial time

> [t]he Ancients sang their way all over the world. They sang the rivers and ranges, salt-pans and sand dunes. They hunted, ate, made love, danced, killed: wherever their tracks led they left a trail of music … They wrapped the whole world in a web of song …[97]

A song the Aboriginals participate in directly in their dances, chanting, and care of the land. Bosnak reports that his Aboriginal hosts tend a specific songline, that

94 *Ibid.*, 98.
95 *Ibid.*, 94.
96 *Ibid.*, 95. If one considers "blacks" in dreams, not sociologically but archetypally – as Hillman suggests – they may be seen as shades of the underworld menacing the ego with death; in this light, it is no wonder that Jung was terrified. See Hillman, *The Dream and the Underworld*, 144–46.
97 Bruce Chatwin, *The Songlines* (New York: Penguin Books, 1988), 73.

of the lizard Ngintaka, and he shares his struggle to enter into the dreaming of this Ancient Being. Bosnak writes:

> Who enters the landscape enters its imagination, its story. We will follow Perentie lizard, Ngintaka, *finding ourselves inside the dreaming of Ngintaka*. We are part of his dreaming. He is the dreaming "I" who lives the story we will participate in for forty kilometers … My Western ego protests. It has always been the center of its own dreaming, its perspective the one from which dreaming was experienced. Who wants to be an extra in the imaginings of a lizard? Haven't *I* been contracted for the lead?[98]

How different this sounds from Jung's African reverie! And in the same way that the Aboriginals enter into the atmosphere and presence of their Ancients through the "songlines" so, Bosnak explains, in dreamwork we enter into the intelligence and intentionality of dream images. Though our "gods" may no longer be contained for us in the landscape, they still reveal themselves in our dreaming, inviting us to participate in their presences, however much I suppose that "my" dreams refer only to me. After all, it is difficult to see through the habit of feeling that my subjective awareness brings "reality" to the world. Not only have we been contracted for the lead but we also believe that we're sitting in the director's chair.

Bosnak continues the efforts of Hillman to undermine our habit of consciousness that always sees itself as the lead, the center of significance and arbiter of reality. In our heroic fixation we fear to lose control, to be penetrated by the other, to "go black." Like the Greeks of Iamblichus, like Jung in the barber chair, we have become caught up in our self-importance and fear to re-enter the archaic way, to feel our awareness curled back in *epistrophē* to the primordial rhythm of the Egyptian, the African, the Aboriginal … not that we should try to mimic them literally, but to encounter them theurgically, as symbols of what is most archaic in the soul and most alien to our habitual consciousness.

Since 1979, Bosnak has been leading groups into these archaic and alienating experiences that form an essential part of his dreamwork. While "archaic and alienating" sound mildly unappealing in the abstract, when we re-renter a dream and descend into its atmosphere to feel its images viscerally, when we find ourselves *inside* the dream and it is no longer "in my head," we are subjected to much greater anxiety, vulnerability and pressure than we are accustomed to. Putting a body on the ineffable paradoxes of the One can be nothing short of terrifying. The first principle in Bosnak's work, therefore, is to create a vessel to contain the pressure provoked by re-entering the dream. According to Bosnak, when a group descends together into the atmosphere of a dream and is able to absorb

98 Bosnak, *Tracks*, 98.

the density of its images, the increased pressure is contained, and this allows the dreamer and the dreamworkers to be penetrated, or "cooked" as Bosnak puts it, by the atmosphere of the dream. This "pressure cooking" loosens our heroic fixation and gradually allows awareness to be distributed into several parts – defined by the dream images – rather than remaining fixed and defended in our singular daytime self-consciousness.

The loosening of the ego's centrality in dreamwork corresponds to a fundamental principle in Iamblichean theurgy. Since our embodied identity is fundamentally alienated from the soul's original nature, Iamblichus maintained that we must conform ourselves to divinities that seem to come to the soul *from the outside* (*exōthen*) in order to recover the "more ancient" presence within the soul.[99] The form the encounter takes is always relative to the capacity of the soul, yet whether it comes in the form of animal sacrifice, burning incense or chanting the names of the gods, the soul is awakened to its lost divinity by immersing itself in the ritual. To neglect these rites condemned the soul to a blind subservience to those very powers that – if they were given containers – could awaken the soul to its divinity. In fact, the soul's disorders indicated to the theurgist what god needed to be propitiated theurgically and given a ritual receptacle. In every theurgy, Iamblichus emphasized that our self-identity had to be sufficiently drawn into the rite to allow our awareness to fuse with the ritual actions and participate directly in the activity of the god. As Iamblichus put it:

> All of theurgy has a dual character. One is that it is a rite conducted by men which preserves our natural order in the universe; the other is that it is empowered by divine symbols *(sunthēmata*), is raised up through them to be joined on high with the Gods, and is led harmoniously round to their order. This latter aspect can rightly be called taking the shape of the Gods (*DM* 184.1–8).

Allowing for changes in culture and rhetorical style, the same process occurs in dreamwork. Like theurgy, "all of dreamwork" is dual and in precisely the same way. If we do not reduce dream images to external reality or to aspects of my "self" but see them as autonomous entities, then we can appreciate that their often familiar appearances in dreams are shaped by our own receptivity and despite the personal context from which the image is drawn, its essence remains independent of my subjectivity. Rather than seeing the dream as a commentary on the day, Hillman prefers to see it as a *digestion* of the dayworld,[100] transforming it into an imaginal reality and, in the process, drawing our day life ever closer to the imaginal. "In dreams," Hillman writes, "we are visited by the *daimons*, nymphs,

99 *DM* 165.14; cf. Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul*, op. cit., 138–139.
100 Hillman, *The Dream and the Underworld*, 96.

heroes and Gods shaped like our friends of last evening."[101] So in dreamwork, although the dreamer's associations to a dream figure may reveal characteristics useful for the dreamworker's sensitivity to the image and may provide emotional texture to help strengthen the vessel of the dreamwork, the image itself is never taken literally as the dreamer's mother, father, sister, etc. Each is an imaginal entity who *takes on the shape* of a familiar figure.

In dreamwork, to the degree that we are able to enter the atmosphere and activity of the images, we *become* that atmosphere and can sense what the images want, we feel *their* voice and *their* will lead us, inhabit us, *possess* us, and yet we remain a small group of people sitting in a dimly lit office doing dreamwork. Dreamwork shares theurgy's duality: on the one hand the rite is conducted by people with identities in *this* world, yet on the other hand, by means of the dream images we are led into another reality, become possessed by its figures and, like Iamblichus's theurgists, "we take on the shape of the gods." Just as the theurgic *sunthēma* does its work on the soul without our thinking, so the dream images influence us to enter *their* dreaming, to participate in *their* world.

Lest "taking on the shape of the Gods" sounds too elevating and heroic, it is important to remember that the shapes the gods most often present to us reflect the pathologies of the soul in the material order: the corruptions, ruptures, collisions and decay of generated life. It is one thing to write about this process, quite another to experience it: to feel involuntary spasms and contractions in the gut, breathless constriction, quivering of limbs and the desperate panic of the mind. Like Iamblichean theurgy, dreamwork too, begins with the material gods and the pathological habits in which we have become coagulated and fixed. Like theurgy, dreamwork also requires a firm foundation in those very elements we most abhor and try to rise above: the shit, the mud, the ugliness of our existence.[102] To contain the pressure of these encounters requires great precision and care on the part of dreamworkers. They must lead the dreamer slowly into the atmosphere of the image at a pace determined both by the image and by the dreamer's resistance to the image. This process often requires drawing emotionally charged associations from the dreamer's dayworld in order to strengthen the vessel of the work. Bosnak provides an example.

He refers to the dream of a middle-aged man to show that associations from the dayworld can be used to serve the nightworld. At the same time, he demonstrates how a pathological image, properly *contained*, allows the dreamer to reach the "god" who resides in the image. The dream:

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101 Hillman, *The Dream and the Underworld*, 62.

102 Iamblichus speaks of the hieratic value of the image of mud in the Egyptian symbol of the lotus holding the god Harpokrates; see Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul*, 63; Hillman, *The Dream and the Underworld*, 183–85; Bosnak, *Tracks*, 47–59.

> A middle-aged man dreams that he is sitting by a refrigerator. He feels lonely and rejected. His wife has left. The refrigerator is empty.[103]

Through re-entering the dream and making a slow descent into this cold and lonely place, the dreamer is led into the icy atmosphere of the refrigerator. He remembers, by association, the coldness of his mother, the fears of being alone as a child and now again as an adult. Rather than draw the dream images out of the dark to focus on personal problems, Bosnak uses the emotions released by the associations to strengthen the vessel of the work and move into a deeper identification with the dream image, importing the emotions of daily life to serve the soul's dreaming rather than exporting imagery out of the dream to serve the dreamer's "self-development." Bosnak describes this deepening:

> As we make this importing move, the feelings in the dream are magnified: he suddenly feels himself in a deep freeze. A *spontaneous* transit has taken place to the interior, frigid core of the freezer. The deep freeze pervades his entire body. He begins to feel a drugged glow of well-being … He has been moved to the core of cold. The feeling of isolation has been *essentialized into a concentrated emotional substance through distillation* … The dreamer knows the essence of coldness (my emphases).[104]

By penetrating to the essence of coldness, the dreamer begins to feel his loneliness turn into "an ability to be alone," clinging less to the warmth of his wife, and in turn, the dream wife feels less constricted by the husband. The man's dread of loneliness and coldness which had poisoned him has been intensified in the pressure-cooking of dreamwork into its own antidote, a process Bosnak compares to homeopathic distillation where the *pharmakon* as poison is transformed into medicine: the dreadful coldness of the refrigerator becomes, in its essence, a cure, allowing the dreamer to contain the "concentrated emotional substance" of cold. In theurgic terms, the dreamer, plagued by *daimons* of loneliness, isolation and cold, reconfigures his awareness into a receptacle of the god who has authority over these congealing and isolating powers. By properly receiving the god, the dreamer is cured of its ill effects: loneliness, frigidity, and rejection.

This god, Iamblichus would tell us, is Kronos, whose ancient power "stabilizes" the soul, but when improperly (unconsciously) received he is experienced as "rigidity and coldness."[105] Ficino, similarly speaks of the power of Saturn (Kronos) to effect a frozen experience like death.[106] The arts of theurgy and dreamwork allow the soul to receive the god, to contain the "concentrated emotional

103 Bosnak, Tracks., 53.
104 Ibid., 53–54.
105 *DM* 55.5–10.
106 Thomas Moore, *The Planets Within* (Great Barrington, MA: Lindisfarne Books, 1990), 170.

substance," through a ritual in which the god reveals himself as "Refrigerator": the *sunthēma* of Kronos in his crystalizing power.

Clearly, there can be no map or guide book for these excursions into imaginal reality. Abstract schemes, for example, that would equate refrigerators with Kronos cannot help the dreamworker. The next refrigerator, after all, might be full of cool, moist fruit, thus creating an atmosphere entirely foreign to Kronos-The-Deep-Freezer. Similarly, the dreamworker *cannot know* how she will enter the dream, but must learn how to trust her not-knowing and be willing to follow the dreaming of imaginal beings, guided often only by the affects aroused by her *resistance* to those beings. Bosnak admits to experiencing "a not-knowing so profound that it makes me shiver. I *passionately* don't know," he says.[107] Yet, like the theurgists who share in this not-knowing, he enters the activity and atmosphere of dream images and learns how to swim in their currents. After a number of such excursions, the dreamworker begins to recognize changes in the texture and density of atmospheres in the imaginal realm, but this can only be learned in increments of *experience*, not by theoretical study. Similarly, Iamblichus explains to Porphyry that knowledge of the gods in theurgy can only be learned by experience. He says:

> Only theurgists know these things in a precise way since they have experienced these activities. Only they are able to know what the perfection of the sacred operation is (*DM* 229.17–230.2).[108]

One element that may distinguish dreamwork from Neoplatonic theurgy is the degree to which the participants are possessed by the images. In theurgy, the possession was occasionally total and the theurgist sometimes entered a trance that entirely obliterated discursive awareness.[109] In dreamwork the participants ordinarily remain awake, and however much they are possessed by the atmosphere of imaginal beings, they remain lightly tethered to this world. This is also what distinguishes Jung's active imagination from theurgic work with images, not – as Hillman argued – that theurgy attempted to work *on* the gods and coerce spirits to serve human desires. Perhaps because the cultural context of late antiquity presented less resistance to the imaginal world, the trances that occurred in theurgy simply reflect a cultural difference in boundaries with imaginal beings. As regards such trances, I suspect the possessions in theurgy were different in de-

107 Bosnak, *Tracks*, 11.

108 Compare also his response to Porphyry's theoretical approach to theurgy: "Some of these [questions], such as require experience of actions for their accurate understanding, will not be possible [to explain] by words alone (*DM* 6.6–7) … [I]t is not enough simply to learn about these things, nor would anyone who simply knows these things become accomplished in the divine science" (*DM* 114.1–2).

109 *DM* 110.12–111.2.

gree, but not in kind, from the possessions in dreamwork. In fact, Iamblichus maintains that the deepest contact with the gods come when the soul is in a hypnagogic state, "between waking and sleeping" (DM 103.13), the kind of awareness exercised in dreamwork.

Bosnak's dreamwork may be described as a *collective* form of Jungian active imagination. The difference in Bosnak's method is that a group of participants can intensify and contain images that might otherwise overwhelm an individual and, more importantly, without the help of dreamworkers, it is unlikely that dreamers could overcome their unconscious resistances to the dream. Before the middle-aged man was able to enter the deep freeze, the participants in his dream had probably already entered the frozen atmosphere and had begun to feel its affects in their bodies, noting, through its location and intensity, resistances to the image but not-knowing if this was their own resistance, that of the dreamer, or both. This symbiotic capacity allows the dreamworker to use physical affects as guides to gently ask the dreamer how *his* body or parts of his body feel, using whatever sensate image the dreamworker feels most likely to intensify the affect in the dreamer's body and deepen *his* experience of the image.[110] By allowing themselves to carry the affect of the refrigerator, the dreamworkers help the dreamer do something he could not consciously *will* to do – experience an *identification* with the freezer.[111] For someone who is terrified of the cold, this transit would be impossible without the support of other "containers" sharing the load, so to speak, so that he could experience the distillation of his fear and dread into the *essence* of coldness.[112]

Identifying with refrigerators may seem to have very little to do with Neoplatonic theurgy, but that perception only reflects our own literalness and rigidity as regards the gods of Platonism. The Neoplatonists knew that no one has ever seen the gods despite the abundance of theophanies reported in the literature. The gods are entirely ineffable and invisible, so if they are seen, even in visions or dreams, they are clothed in the imagination of the dreamer. Proclus explains this:

> … the Gods are seen, yet not seen at all. In fact, those who see the Gods witness them *in the luminous garments of their souls* … Each God is formless, even if he is seen with a form. For the form is not in him but comes from him due to the incapacity of the viewer to see the formless without a form. Rather, *according to his nature* he sees by means of forms.[113]

110 Bosnak, *Tracks*, 21–26.
111 *Ibid.*, 31.
112 *Ibid.*, 59.
113 Cited in Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul*, 246–247; from Proclus *Commentary on the Republic* I.39.5–27; 28–40.

The luminous garments described by Proclus refer to the soul's *ochēma*, our subtle vehicle or body which is intimately tied to the soul's *phantastikon*, our image-making power: the imagination. Since the ineffable symbols of the gods are clothed "in accord with our nature," then it should not be surprising if these long-forgotten powers would appear to us, as Hillman says, shaped like familiar friends, lovers, relatives, or even refrigerators! Our imaginal experiences today tend to be restricted to dreams while in Iamblichus's time daytime experiences were also common, yet the soul's imaginal body, its *ochēma* was, and continues to be, the vehicle in which we encounter the gods. Hillman recognized the connection between his imaginal work and the Neoplatonic *ochēma* for he writes, describing dream images:

> [They] become the means of translating life-events into soul, and this work, aided by the conscious elaboration of the imagination, builds an imaginal vessel or "ship of death" (a phrase taken from D. H. Lawrence), that is similar to the subtle body, or *ochēma* of the Neoplatonists …[114]

Bosnak's dreamwork is just such a labor, building a vessel of the imagination, and while it would be unreasonable to think that dreamwork reproduces the theurgical art in an explicit way, it clearly follows the seven principles central to Neoplatonic theurgy enumerated above:

1A. Just as theurgy was not an attempt to manipulate the gods, so dreamwork is not so much our work *on* dreams as it is *a discipline that allows dreams to work on us*.

2A. In each session of dreamwork, the group enters a trance-like state defined by the contours of the dream. Although the dreamworkers become "possessed" by the images of the dream, they remain tethered to their awareness that they are doing dreamwork. Like theurgists, they inhabit two worlds.

3A. The descent into dream reality provokes intense emotional reactions that would push us outside the dream unless a vessel is carefully built by the group within the texture of the dream images. Like the theurgic *hupodochē*, the strength of this vessel is determined by the capacity of the dreamer and of the group to contain the intensity of emotions released.

4A. In dreamwork the "gods" appear in a variety of forms, veiling (and revealing) themselves through images of friends, relatives, or even household appliances. Like the theurgic *sunthēmata*, these images allow us to contact the depths hidden in the soul.

5A. Perhaps the most important and certainly the most difficult principle of dreamwork is that dreamworkers *do not know* what the dream means nor what

114 Hillman, *Archetypal Psychology*, 28.

they will do with the dream until they are in it. As Iamblichus said of theurgy, "we don't perform these acts intellectually [i.e., interpretively] for then their energy would be intellectual and depend on us...."(DM 96.11–13). In the same way, dreamwork is determined by the images and the subtle atmospheres in which they are received. This follows Hillman's appeal in *Dream and the Underworld* to sever the link with the dayworld and resist our habit of translating the dream into waking language.[115]

6A. Dreamwork is a discipline of the imagination and a way of consciously re-entering a world where images "do not depend on us" but act on us, affecting our mood and activity. The capacity to endure the pressures released in dreamwork is a function of the strength of our *ochēma*, a body of imagination that, according to the Neoplatonists, endures the brokenness of embodied dismemberment as well as the beatitude of a unified multiplicity.

7A. Hillman, following Jung, asserts that today the "gods have become diseases" and that we must now recover the gods in our pathologies. To seek transcendence prior to a full recognition of our psycho-pathology, Hillman says, is "an exercise in self-deception."[116] Just as theurgy required a preliminary worship of material gods who preside over the suffering of generated lives, so dreamwork involves an encounter with these pathologies and understands that each agony, each poison of the soul, is also a medicine, a god waiting to be properly received in the pressure-cooking container of dreamwork.

Of course, there are also significant differences between contemporary dreamwork and theurgy. Iamblichus had the cultural support of well-respected traditions of worshipping the gods in sacrifices and divination to which he could refer. This provided a familiarity that archetypal psychologists lack, for they are limited to dreams and illnesses as the only archaic and uncontrolled experiences that we must, reluctantly, recognize in our psyche. It is, therefore, more difficult today to draw people into imaginal reality because of the terror we feel in the face of the unfamiliar, the other, the alien. Bosnak must therefore work through much denser emotional resistance to the "other" than the theurgists of Iamblichus's or Ficino's time. Because of our heroic resistance to darkness, the work must go very slowly. Bosnak explains:

> In dreamwork we constantly modulate pressure in order to keep a balance between the imperative of dreamwork to press deeper into the sensitive areas that repel consciousness and *the need of the dreamer to feel safe* (my emphasis).[117]

115 James Hillman, *The Dream and the Underworld,* 13.
116 James Hillman, *Re-Visioning Psychology*, op. cit., 70.
117 Bosnak, *Tracks*, 73.

To press too hard or too fast breaks the vessel and we rise to the surface, out of the imaginal and into our *opinions* about the dream. Then we are no longer *in* the dream, but the dream is in us and subject to our control. Iamblichus may have spoken of similar details to his students, but we have no knowledge of it. He may also have recognized a symbiotic way of knowing through a kind of physiological grammar that Bosnak describes,[118] but our evidence is too meagre to pursue it.

IV. Conclusion: Hailing Hermes

> Our ancestors dedicated the discoveries of their wisdom to this deity, inscribing all their own writings with the name of Hermes.
>
> Iamblichus

I have attempted to show that archetypal psychology and dreamwork in particular follow the trajectory of the theurgic Neoplatonism initiated by Iamblichus. By reversing Plotinus's disembodied psychology, Iamblichus was able to recover the great wealth of Plotinus's insights into our awareness of the gods in the material world. Iamblichus elaborated these insights, and in theurgy he developed a praxis that coordinated the needs of souls with appropriate ritual vessels to mediate the presence of the gods and bring the soul back into their company. Because Hillman misread theurgy as an attempt to manipulate the gods he did not draw deeply from Iamblichus's insights but developed his own psychological praxis that coordinates our psychic needs with images that contain the "gods" in a theurgic way and effect the soul's deepening. Following the ground-breaking work of Jung, Hillman's archetypal psychology is a brilliant contemporary expression of Neoplatonic *epistrophē*, drawing the soul back to its archetypal roots, but the effect of Hillman's theoretical insights might be short-lived and the *epistrophē* perverted if the principles of archetypal psychology are left in the hands of intellectuals, who, like Iamblichus's "Greeks", worship at the altar of discursive brilliance.

Iamblichus was by no means anti-intellectual, but he understood the titanic impulse of the discursive mind and knew that it needed to find its limits, to be contained. The praxis of theurgy provided that container. In a similar way, Robert Bosnak's dreamwork provides a container for the theoretical insights of Hillman's archetypal psychology. Dreamwork moves intellectual insight into imme-

118 The symbiotic and telepathic knowing Bosnak reports among his Aboriginals (*Tracks*, 20–22) sound remarkably like the reports of supernatural powers attributed to the later Platonists; see G. Shaw, "Platonic Siddhas: Supernatural Philosophers of Neoplatonism," in *Beyond Physicalism*, ed. by E. Kelly, A. Crabtree, P. Marshall (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), 275–314.

diate experience, ensuring that the understanding so necessary for *epistrophē* is not co-opted immediately by our discursive ability and the hubris that so often attends it. The mysteries, Aristotle tells us, are not a matter of knowledge but *experience*,[119] and dreamwork is a contemporary expression of initiation into the mysteries, the Neoplatonic *mustagogia*. If we wish to be more than intellectually entertained at Hillman's call to burn the bridge to the dayworld; if we dare to no longer face and reflect only the light of our habitual daytime knowing; if we are willing to encounter shadows in darkness and become a shade ourselves, then we must accept the unglamorous discipline exemplified in dreamwork.

The theurgists were right, I think, in attributing all their intellectual discoveries to Hermes, to a god capable of containing unbearable things, mysteries that would inflate us. It seems that Hermes/Mercury must also be credited for Bosnak's discovery, for it was in an encounter with this god that he "stumbled upon an insight specific to *my* work."[120] While dreaming of his native Holland, Bosnak finds himself near Leiden University, his *alma mater*. He notices an ancient statue in the canal and dives in the water to pull it up. "It is Mercury," he says exaltedly, "the one of the winged feet, carrying his staff with the two snakes, his left hand up in the air *in the way you would hail a cab* in New York City (my emphasis)."[121] After a solemn struggle to pull the statue out of the water Bosnak stands to look at it. He says:

> It is at this point that I realize I am dreaming. I look at the bridge and see that it is entirely real. I feel the ground under my feet and know it is firm. I look at the sky and observe the clouds. This world is absolutely real, and yet I know for sure that I am dreaming …[122]

Excited to share this knowledge with someone, Bosnak rushes out to the street to stop a taxi. He continues:

> The cabdriver lowers his window and looks at me, a questioning look on his face. I yell at him, "I'm dreaming. This is all a dream. You are part of my dream!"
>
> At first the cabdriver looks incredulous. Suddenly he seems to realize that I must be some kind of lunatic, and the expression on his face is a combination of boredom and slight disgust. He rolls the window up and drives off.[123]

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119 Describing the Eleusinian mysteries, Aristotle said those who enter the initiations "do not learn anything (*ou mathein ti*) but experience (*pathein*) something by being put into a changed state of mind (*diatethenai*)" Aristotle in Synesius Dio 10; cited by Marvin Meyer, The Ancient Mysteries (New York: Harper Collins, 1987), 12.

120 Bosnak, *Tracks*, 50 (his emphasis).

121 *Ibid.*, 11.

122 *Ibid.*, 12.

123 *Ibid.*, 12.

We don't know precisely how the face of this cabdriver affected Bosnak, but it was enough to throw him out of the hubris of seeing dream figures as parts of his personality. The "lucidity" Bosnak describes has become a much sought for experience by those wanting to control their dreams. Fortunately, in this initiatory dream into the world of Hermes, Bosnak receives a profoundly different experience and lesson: the dream images are real, *entirely real* in the imaginal world of dreams. *The taxi driver is not part of me*.

Hermes is the god who escorts the dead into the underworld, the winged god who takes souls across the bridge into the world of dreams and shadows. Did this wily god, the "very crafty, super subtle Hermes"[124] appear twice for Bosnak? Once in his traditional form, the Great Archetype pulled out of the waters to the surface, and then later, after Bosnak looks at the god and his own surface awareness is pulled into the dream, when Bosnak wants to announce his god-likeness to someone, again Hermes appears, but now in the form of the taxi driver, the one who takes us over the bridge. It is this *living* Hermes, hidden-and-revealed in his archetypal activity, who teaches Bosnak with a wordless gesture that the entities of the imaginal world are not sub-personalities, not parts of his dream. Dream images must not be met while wearing our heroically inflated armor. Shades must be met by a shadowy, imaginal ego. It was this taxi driver, Bosnak says, that provided him with the key, his *sunthēma* to the imaginal world. Fortunately, this cabdriver was just a bit disgusted with his discoverer, enough to allow Bosnak to realize the autonomy and reality of dream images.

124 *The Homeric Hymn to Hermes,* 22–23, tr. by Charles Boer (Asphodel Press, 2006).

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