

APHRODITE'S GAZE: HONORING THE DARK BODY
USING IMAGE AND MOVEMENT TO CREATE NEW NEURAL PATHWAYS

by

Julie Ann Perkins

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Dr. Maria Hess, Chair

Dr. Linda Cunningham

Dr. Dianne Jenett

Date

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Julie Ann Perkins
Rohnert Park, CA

May 30th, 2012

Contact: hgravity@gmail.com

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Investigative Project Thesis by
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ABSTRACT

This investigative project is an exploration of the intersection between methods and insights of analytical psychology and neuroscience. I utilize Carl G. Jung's theory of the *Self archetype*, which I consider to be *an integrative instinct* and metaphor for a movement of awareness leading to wholeness, and the working models developed in the field of *Interpersonal Neurobiology* (IPNB) that lead to integration, self-regulation and attunement. Within a Heuristic framework, I demonstrate various depth psychological methods of engaging image and symbol, somatically based modes of process, as well as the mindful-awareness practices of the *caring observer* and *wheel of awareness* offered by Bonnie Badenoch (2008) and Dan Siegel (2007) through their clinical work in IPNB.

I posit that the dialogic movement along the ego-Self axis toward wholeness is represented as both a metaphor and a practice to be utilized within Dan Siegel's IPNB model of the *wheel of the awareness*. This dialogue or gaze can be animated via depth/analytical psychology methods by each individual according to their own numinous experiences, to inform and provide the internalization of this state or momentary experience into a trait of compassionate attunement with self or other. As inner attunement leads to further integration, the process never stops.

Key Words: numinous, integration, neuroscience, gesture, dialogue, embodied metaphor, Self archetype, analytical psychology, Interpersonal Neurobiology, Siegel, Badenoch, Gendlin, C.G. Jung

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

This thesis is predicated on the assertion that "...the psyche has an inherent tendency to heal itself" (Kalff, 1980, p. 61). The *psyche* as breath, body, mind and soul, is home for our creative endeavors as human beings. Jungian analyst Estelle Weinrib (1983/2004) defines *psyche* as "the totality of all psychic or psychological contents, conscious and unconscious" (p.81). We are now becoming aware of the fact that what is not conscious in us holds tremendous information and vitality. In the last few decades neuroscientific research has documented "the principle that creative thinking and insight derive from unconscious processes" (Schoore, 2003, p. 145). Albert Einstein, whose psyche has influenced the lives of every person on the planet, was one of the most highly creative geniuses of the post-modern world. One of his guiding tenets was that of a sense of wonder and honor of the grandeur and mystery in nature. He said:

The most beautiful thing we can experience is the mysterious. It is the source of all true art and all science. He to whom this emotion is a stranger, who can no longer pause to wonder and stand rapt in awe, is as good as dead: his eyes are closed. (Leach, 1931, par. 15)

My thesis inquiry is prompted by my curiosity about a sense of something vast and mysterious that I feel behind me, just out of view from my forward looking, conscious vision. It has been percolating for years. In 2000, in an effort to pay more attention to this sensation, I made a purple file folder with the title *Mystery Behind Me* on the index tab. A big spiral image sent to me by a friend decorated the cover. I felt a sense of expansive hopefulness around this new possibility in my life. Then I put the file away and went back to daily life.

Conversely, a growing sense of deep horror and as yet unrecognized grief was also brewing in me. The human suffering via the tragedy of the fall of the World Trade Towers on September 11, 2001 with the emerging knowledge of more suffering to come in the ensuing wars was a big punctuation point in the midst of personal life events such as committing my mother to a nursing home for dementia and losing my hard-won career position during the course of the dotcom meltdown. These events and more set the stage for a deep underlying anxiety in my life.

Last year I witnessed the unfolding catastrophe of the March 11, 2011 nuclear disaster at Fukushima, Japan via first-person accounts and videos on the internet. Deep grief, remorse and outrage rose to the surface of my life. The implications of the far-reaching effects of radioactive pollution on the current and future inhabitants of our planet as contamination from the damaged nuclear reactors spewed into the ocean, atmosphere and land, provoked a deep response in me. Deeply saddened and disturbed, I wondered how we got to this tragic crossroads as a civilization and what we may learn from the suffering of so many. Aggrieved and motivated by the multi-layered tragedies, I wondered what I could do in the face of my growing sense of helplessness and horror.

As I pondered this dilemma, a *dream image* from my childhood reappeared:

I am walking up the cement driveway of our home after elementary school, as usual, toward the kitchen door on side of the house. As I approach the steps, I see my father's head, cut off, down in the small garden area to the right of the steps. There is my daddy's head, alive, placed on a wooden tongue depressor and stuck in the dirt. Shocked and horrified, my eyes riveted on his face, I am wondering what to do to help him when he says: "Your mother put me out here because I am ill." I see the thermometer dangling in his mouth. Then he is silent, looking forward.

This image, which is still so vivid, holds a graphic key to my thesis work. The shock, concern and grief I felt upon seeing my father's animated head on a stick in the

dirt still resonates. Looking back upon that time in my hometown of Houston, Texas, there was a great deal of air pollution from the oil refineries and shipyards, as there were no regulatory laws in effect. I was sick often with nose and throat illnesses. It feels as if this heart-rending dream image of a major nurturing authority figure in my life, cut off from his corporeality, is somehow linked to the massive destructive acts of wars and environmental poisonings that we are witnessing with increasing frequency as we seem to grow ever more disconnected from our own bodies, and from the earth itself. On an inner level, did the return of this image of a split between mind and body indicate the beginning of fragmentation of my *psyche*? A potent symbol, this head on a stick, was emerging in my awareness during the second or third grade, just as the very powers of reason and relatedness were being schooled right out of me, by custom, culture and family. Apparently the need for integration of my own psyche - heart, mind, body and soul - was being brought to my attention through this disturbing dream image, but as a young child, my *ego awareness* had not fully developed and I did not know what to do with this curious and horrifying dream experience. As it has returned to my adult psyche, decades later, many layers of meaning emerge. Through out the thesis, I will use both analytical psychology and findings in neuroscience to explore the layers of meaning.

Swiss psychiatrist Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961) equated the ego with consciousness (1963/1989, p. 109). In his observation of the collective psyche, which is like our mass mentality, he had this to say about the split in western culture and the therapeutic approach of analytical psychology:

The exaggerated rationalization of consciousness...seeking to control nature, isolates itself from her and so robs man of his own natural history. He finds himself transplanted into a limited present...The limitation creates a feeling that he is a haphazard creature, without meaning, and it is this feeling that prevents

him from living his life with the intensity it demands if it is to be enjoyed to the fullest. Life becomes stale and no longer the exponent of the complete man... People live as though they were walking in shoes too small for them. Hemmed round by rationalistic walls, we are cut off from the eternity of nature. Analytical psychology seeks to break through these walls by digging up again the fantasy-images of the unconscious that our rationalism has rejected. These images lie beyond the walls, they are part of the nature in us, which lies buried in our past and against which we have barricaded ourselves behind walls of reason. *Analytical psychology* (italics mine) tries to resolve the resultant conflict not by going 'back to nature' with Rousseau, but holding on to the level of reason we have successfully reached, and enriching consciousness with a knowledge of man's foundations. (Sabini, 2005, p. 199)

My thesis project is an investigation of this sense of fragmentation and of the sense of wonder at what I call *the mystery behind me*. The framework I have chosen utilizes a combination of *analytical or depth psychology*, mythology and *interpersonal neurobiology* (IPNB) an interdisciplinary, scientifically grounded field that explores neural integration. It was created by Daniel J. Siegel in 1999 (Badenoch, 2008). Methods found in depth psychology and the rubric of *heuristic inquiry* form my exploration of images and events that hold significance in pointing toward solutions of repair in my own unsatisfactory experience of life. As the dream image of the *body/mind* split lives in me, I see the effects of this disconnection in my own inner and outer world. The term *body/mind* is taken from the work of Candace Pert (1999, p. 189): "The neuropeptides and receptors, the biochemicals of emotion, are, as I have said, the messengers carrying information to link the major systems of the body into one unit that we can call the body-mind." I include the heart in this body/mind term, as "longing for connection appears to be embedded in neural cells in the chest around the heart" (Badenoch, 2008, p. 65).

At the same time, a felt sense of mystery also lives in me and calls my ego awareness to open to a sense of something vast and unknown behind me, as represented

in Figure 1. In my search for healing, I look at what Jung calls the self-organizing pattern of wholeness and meaning as it emerges from the *unconscious* - the *archetype of the Self*. Jung, a pioneer of analytical psychology, considered the unconscious to be a vital, living part of our psychical existence, but remaining hidden and unknown to our conscious awareness (1960/1969, p. 71). An archetype may be seen as “the pattern of archaic images and behaviors that arise from instinctive trends at the root of the psyche” (Jung, 1959/1978, p. 58). The *Self archetype* is also what I am calling an *integrative instinct*, in that its teleological function engages our attention in many ways, often via our interactions with images, symbols and synchronistic events, to incubate new life in our psyche. Jung (1960/1969) talks about *instinct* as nature and as “typical modes of action” (p. 135).

Organizing Question and Methods

My thesis question is: How does the Self archetype, as metaphor for wholeness and integration, constellate in my life? What models have emerged in neuroscience that may illuminate the way? Answers may be found in my body, a *felt-sense*, and how I may now choose to *move with it*, in an attitude of celebrating the imaginal faculty of the human mind and soul, and the objective reality of psyche, which includes the unconscious and the material universe. I use the method of *heuristic inquiry* (Moustakas, 1990) to explore how I may tend the hidden, the invisible or mysterious, in and around me, through the perceptual practices of *felt-sense*, *tacit knowing*, *intuition*, *indwelling*, and *inner-dialogue*, coupled with the insights interpersonal neurobiology of integrative *body/mind* research and the resulting mindful awareness practices of *the caring observer* and *the wheel of awareness*. I will explain these two practices further in Chapter III. I

use the term *mindful awareness or mindfulness* as it is used in IPNB, and defined by Jon Kabat-Zinn: “to pay kind attention, on purpose, without grasping onto judgments, to whatever arises in the mind from moment to moment” (Badenoch, 2008, p. 175).

The work of analysis in depth psychology can make conscious the many lenses we view life through, from a sub-atomic particle accelerator to the Hubble deep space telescope sending back photos of the vast universe, to the interior eye of the heart, mind and body, and in viewing life as an individual’s soulful perspective. There also are the overarching lenses of civilizations and societies, as the psychological vision informed by cultural myths and mores shapes our modes of perception. As I encounter my interior landscape and dig through many layers of cultural overlay and emotional repression, I find that I am often alienated from the source of life. Indeed, I am like a head on a stick in that dream image from my childhood. From this viewpoint, I feel dry, unenthused and separated from the feelings of wholeness and wonder that I experienced mainly in the past. However, I find that often this sense of wholeness is touched again, when I experience that which is *numinous* to me, and when I connect with another human being to create or behold something of beauty or empowerment. Such an experience evokes a sense of wonder, an opening to something larger and compelling. It is through this alluring movement of awareness of something beyond my myopic and striving egoic viewpoint that I find integration of the experience fulfilled.

The Numinous and meaning-making

In an interview, Jungian analyst and author James Hollis (2000) states: “we are in flight from the summons of meaning-making” as a culture. This flight disavows an inherent human quality, our instinct of *religio*, “a careful consideration and observation

of certain dynamic factors” which are *numinous*, that speak to our psyche (Jung, 1938/1950, p. 5). The word *numen* is a Latin term for “nod of the head, divine power, creative energy, genius” (American Heritage Dictionary, 1992, p. 1242). The *numinous* is the compelling allure of that which is “wholly Other,” presenting itself to us in an experience of “awe-inspiring mystery, fascinating and beautiful,” as described by Rudolph Otto in his book *The Idea of the Holy* (Neumann, 1954/1995, p. 321). Many people experience a sense of the numinous in big events like the moments we first catch sight of a majestic mountain range or the teeming life forms in intricate coral reefs, witness the birth of a child, and in seemingly small everyday events when we experience a sense of the extraordinary and are momentarily struck with a sense of wonder and humbled by that which nature or God has wrought. An experience of the numinous introduces our ego consciousness to a larger and deeper expanse of reality as our personal, ego-centered view is “relativized”; we know in our bones that we are not the entire story, but are a part of a larger whole. Jung warned that a *lack* of such experiences, fostered by our post-modern ethos and urban existence in manmade environments, deprives us of “the psychic influence of the earth and its laws” (Sabini, 2005, p. 199).

The hard won differentiation of consciousness in modern humans seems to have come at the expense of being fluid and open to the reality of the psychic influence of the earth which Jung speaks of. My girlhood dream image of a head on a stick in the humus of the garden seems to belie this situation. Jung advocated many methods of re-invigorating our full body/mind capacities, all led by the imaginal faculty we each have. I believe that the use of our *imaginal*, or ‘meaning-making’ faculties are mythico-spiritual (linking earth and heaven) at their roots. The imaginal faculty is a remarkable

human quality, a vital function that can bring about the opportunities for increasing our conscious awareness with intelligence of the heart, mind and body. The act of true regard, of beholding or seeing *the other*, be that of the world of nature, human, or the transcendent, expands our viewpoint and enlarges our horizons.

Throughout our evolutionary history, the creative dimensions of intelligence in our hearts, bodies and minds are informed by the nature of our earthly home and by the spirit of our interactions with one another. C. G. Jung spoke of the “two million year old man” within and the need for us to reconnect with “the hidden foundations of the conscious mind...the *archetypal* functions that set bounds to instincts and give them form and meaning” (Sabini, 2002, p. 198). Jung’s amazing legacy is the insight that all the archetypal patterns of knowing and becoming in the human heart and mind have evolved from the nurture and nature of our home in Earth, our *chthonic* roots. The word *chthonic* derives from the Greek word *chthonios*, "in, under, or beneath the earth", from *chthōn* "earth" (Liddell & Scott, 1940). For Jung, archetypes are the psychic aspect of our physiology, “systems for readiness and action and at the same time images and emotion...inherited with the brain-structure” (Sabini, 2002, p. 198). Seen through the framework of analytical psychology, these untapped dimensions have much to contribute to wholeness and health, psychic complexity and integrity; they include the intelligence of the heart and the mysterious pull of the numinous. “Beauty does not indeed lie in things, but in the feeling that we give to them” (Jung, 1916/1991, p.169).

My own learned suppression of attention to many such experiences I have had all along, as well as the long-term suppression of feeling and grief, has led to a psychic split, a lack of wholeness in my body/mind and soul. At middle age, this has become a crisis

for me. As I still wish to be generative in my life, I look for solutions, and over time, I find some via the use of depth psychological methods. Along with somatic and mindfulness experiences of the working models of the *caring observer*, offered by Bonnie Badenoch (2008) and *wheel of awareness* practice, offered by Dan Siegel (2007), pathways of integration and wholeness slowly emerge, via processes of inner attunement.

At the time my thesis title *Aphrodite's Gaze: Honoring the Dark Body* first came to mind I did not really know what it meant. What has emerged over the course of my thesis inquiry in the years since is a deep appreciation for the human engagement of imagination and the critical experience of regarding and being regarded. Ground-breaking work has laid the foundations for understanding how the very neural networks of our body/mind are shaped by interaction and eye-to-eye contact with early caregivers (Schoore, 2003, p. 7). Our adult neural networks which link brain hemispheres with the body are thus embedded, but with inherent "neural plasticity" of the brain we actually change our neural connections with each experience that we have (Siegel, 2007, p. 30). He elaborates: "How we pay attention will stimulate neural firing in specific areas, and they will become activated and change their connections within the integrated circuits of the brain" (p. 32).

Perhaps new neural pathways and integrative functions can be instigated or deepened by experiences of the numinous. What is numinous may arrive via our conscious engagement with images and movement or it may erupt suddenly into our lives, as when we fall in love, experience nature, or are transported to a new way of perceiving life through tragedy or loss.

The following creative thesis process holds a container for the work of a newly emerging attitude of tending my place in the world with compassion and regard for the beautiful imaginal faculties of the human heart and mind. How may I tend the hidden, the invisible in and around me? What is the mystery behind me? I long to have a new view rooted in my body/mind and soul in relation to the earth and to others in the world, as constellated by the activities of the Self archetype, the archetype of wholeness. Jung (1921/1971, p. 463) held that:

The Self is not a philosophical idea, since it does not predicate its own existence, i.e., does not hypostatize itself. From the intellectual point of view, it is only a working hypothesis. Its empirical symbols, on the other hand, very often possess a distinct numinosity, i.e., an a priori emotional value...

I have been spent my whole life looking to the outer world with a shallow lens, trying to see what lay ahead, anticipating what may be just around the corner and looking for what others wanted or needed from me. It has been a long, tiresome effort. Now at mid-life gravity calls! What captures my attention, aside from the loss of energy from constantly pushing forward with my head-centered will, is a *felt sense* of something numinous in my body and psyche. It seems that the dynamic pull of the Self archetype leads me to look deeper into the matter of my own body for information. In the coming chapters I look at what is hidden within my daily life, in images I encounter, and within the *felt sense*, the somatic experience, of what is behind me, out-of-view.

Eugene Gendlin pioneered the psycho-somatic term *felt sense* to describe a sensation that is ineffable in the beginning, but with deep interior attention (*indwelling*) and *inner dialogue* (within one's self), the sense of something important can be brought into conscious awareness and mined for meaning - a meaning that emerges from the body. Gendlin (1996) expounds upon the activity of the *felt sense*:

By "feel" we usually mean well-known emotions such as being "scared" or "angry." But one can also have a very distinct feeling that has not yet opened to reveal what it contains. That is a bodily felt sense.

Sometimes we have experiences that cross the lines between thought, feeling, desire, image, and sheer body sensation, but not often. Nor is a felt sense a combination of these many together. Although it can come along with any of them, and also lead to any of them, a felt sense differs from them all. It is a bodily sense of some situation, problem, or aspect of one's life. Usually a felt sense must first be allowed to come; it is not already there. A felt sense is new. It is not already there as a bodily-sensed object. It comes freshly, in something like the way tearfulness or yawning come in us. (pp. 19 - 20).

In following this activity, words emerge to indicate patterns of meaning in the felt sense of my body/mind – they have intrigued me for years. The words point to something wondrous, beckoning, opening and relieving to my psyche: they fuel my desire to find deeper meaning. Some of the words are ‘sense of wonder’, sovereignty and ‘the mystery behind me.’ I have a deep sense of wonder about the mystery behind me as it is palpable, and yet not fully elucidated, or ‘fleshed out.’ It is a felt sense of meaning. I invite the reader to accompany me on the investigation of this meaning. A journey to the underworld of the unconscious is not damnation so much as a very interesting and sometimes profound liberation. In the next chapter I will introduce the felt sense of mystery that leads me into this journey, and key concepts to elucidate the methods I engage in approaching this inquiry.

CHAPTER II

The Mystery Behind Me—A numinous felt-sense



Figure 1. Somatic Art Therapy assemblage: *The Mystery Behind Me*.

My investigation of the *felt sense* of a depth or vastness, what I am calling *the mystery behind me*, reveals the presence of a field that holds in potential all the archetypal forces that exist in the imaginal space and resonate through our body, mind and soul, in our neural networks, and in the space between us which holds us all.

There are levels of reality within us that are much greater than our analytical minds can know. Nonetheless, we can make them accessible to our awareness so that they become channels by which we reconnect ourselves to the great sources of life. Evoking the depth of ourselves is a way to the renewal of our humanity. (Proffoff, 1973, p. xv)

What is the meaning of the *felt-sense* I have of what I call the *mystery behind me*? It feels vast, ineffable and important. Ira Progoff emphasizes the search for meaning: “A major part of the meaning of life is contained in the very process of discovering it. It is an ongoing experience of growth that involves a deepening of contact with reality” (1973, p.13). As the body/mind split seems to be deepening with even further dire consequences for our planet, now is the time for a new search for meaning, within each of us. Our imaginal faculties, led by the intelligence of the heart, are needed more than ever, to reconnect with the earthly reality in which we are so privileged to live.

The Imaginal and the Unconscious

A journey to the unseen, to the hidden or invisible, requires a look at life through the imaginal lens. The imaginal is our capacity to create understanding through the use of symbols, myth, image, felt-sense and personification. Through the faculty of our imagination we connect with the living reality of the *nous poietikos*, the creative spirit (Von Franz, 1980, p. 186). To me, this creative spirit is the mystery of our body/mind and soul which perceives and portrays the hallowed nature of life. Imagination is an inherent quality of being human; through it we form, collectively, the symbols of language and non-verbal communications. Our relationship to the outer world with the natural forces that rule our lives on the planet is extended into our very body/minds. Our psyches are rooted in the unconscious, *what is unknown* to us. Jung called the imagination “the mother of human consciousness” (1977, p. 58). Gendlin (1981) spoke about developing an internal imaginal “working space” which allows one to attend to one’s felt sense and the subsequent emergence of symbolic expression in the form of an image or a metaphor (Schoore 2003, p. 96). It is in the right hemisphere of the brain that

we mainly process metaphor “through an image-generating picturing function . . . where a holistic, synthetic strategy allows individual facets of images to interact with each other on many planes simultaneously” (Rotenburg, 1995), in Schore (2003, p. 96).

Inferior Function

Although I have highly developed imaginal capacities, I have tended to suppress them. My deeply engrained habit of living from the awareness centers of the intellect and egoic will located mainly in my head, neck, shoulders and chest, has contributed to a sense of fragmentation as I try to distance myself from my body, vitality, and all the pain it contains. The years I spent working in the corporate world at a desk, with computer screens, telephones and deadlines as the primary interface with others, has exacerbated my tendency toward this imbalance and contributed to deep well of grief. Perhaps as a child I learned that it was crucial to just “show up and smile” as “you are worth what you produce,” no matter what I was feeling. An automatic reliance on my thinking and judging faculties to the exclusion of the needs of body/mind or heart is not life enhancing, in fact it is exhausting in the long run. An automatic habit, useful in many everyday situations is termed *top-down mind process* by neuroscientists (Siegel, 2007, p. 134). This habit can also enslave us.

To look at my tendencies through a depth psychological lens, I turn to Jung’s theory of *psychological types*. Before the dawning of neuroscientific discoveries, C.G. Jung developed a system of typology based on four psychological functions of the human being: thinking, feeling, intuiting and sensing. Jung called these *psychological types*. These functions, along with the conscious attitude of extraversion or introversion is a system of understanding how people may or may not relate to their environment, inner

life and other people. As a result of testing that one can do, which has expanded into the Meyers-Briggs scale, I found that I am an INFP - the introverted intuitive, feeling and perceiving type. My inferior, or fourth, function is sensate. When Dr. Tom Singer announced in a lecture to the Depth Psychology Department at Sonoma State University on October 17, 2008, "Introverts like to work on the complications of the inner world," I finally understood why the Depth Psychology program was so appropriate for me. Much of my life has been spent worshipping at the altar of the rational, the intellect and the collective will. I have not found this satisfying and now at mid-life, I am called to look into the other ways of living.

I find it most challenging and possibly most transformative to pay attention to the sensing and feeling side, my felt sense of the world, from my body/mind awareness and intuitions that give rise to movement of my psyche and my physical being. As my body/mind is ground zero for this inquiry, I am struck by this comment from Jung: "The inferior function is practically identical with the dark side of the human personality. The darkness which clings to every personality is the door into the unconscious" (1959/1968, p.123). In my exploration of the split between my body/mind or psyche and soma, I was surprised to find that the title of my thesis holds the key: *Honoring the Dark Body*, as my body is my inferior function, and *also is the unconscious mind* (Pert, 1999, p. 141). Leonard and Murphy (2000) point to the vast potential which resides in the body:

There is a profound wisdom in the body, in the pulsing of the blood, the rhythm of the breath, the turning of the joints. Once we are aware of its subtle power, the body becomes a sensitive antenna for tuning into nature and other people. It can serve as a metaphor for every human thought, emotion, and action. It is the royal road to the unconscious. It is a small, handy model of the universe. All the books, computers, and electronic networks in the world contain only a miniscule fraction of the information it takes to create one human body.

Over the next chapters, I investigate the significance of the allure of the numinous and the felt sense of images, movement and gesture, sovereignty, 'sense of wonder'. I include findings from interpersonal neurobiology (IPNB) as an introduction to what has lived mostly in my unconscious, and how this impacts my psyche and body/mind.

CHAPTER III

Sense of Wonder

With Einstein, we always knew where he stood in relation to “God” — it was shorthand for the mystery and rationality of nature, the touchstones of the scientific experience. “Cosmic mystery,” Einstein said, is the most beautiful experience we can have, “the fundamental emotion that stands at the cradle of true art and true science. . . . He who does not know it and can no longer wonder, no longer feel amazement,” he continued, “is as good as a snuffed-out candle.” (Overbye, 2007)

A sense of wonder is a felt sense of something that draws us closer to what we experience as “the other”, either within, or in the perceived situation, person, animal, or natural world, without. I believe that this sense of wonder is a vital part of the creative process, whether it be a sublime feeling of contentment, deep thrilling love, or a sense of uncertainty as we encounter what has been previously unknown. A sense of wonder evokes *eros*, what I call *the movement of psyche*, an opening of dialogue with *the other*.

As lovers, whether our love is with nature, art, or another being, we create an automatic, intuitive bond. We know or sense what is beyond words. During these moments when we feel this profound connection, we know we belong in the universe. We no longer have the sense of being expelled from the garden, of being outcasts trying to reason and earn our way back. When we love, we are no longer in the realm of good and bad, right and wrong; we are linked with the pulse of the universe. When we are aware of our connection to the universe, nothing is hidden. Pain and pleasure dance as brother and sister, both necessary parts of the whole. Our systems know where and when to move or be still. This amazing gift is always there inside us. If we can collect and focus ourselves within, enter the sanctuary of not-knowing, and have the courage to wait; then we can be filled and we will be able to hear, see, and/or feel the essential nature of things. (Palmer, 1994/1999, p. 75)

Jean Shinoda Bolen (1994) attributes the human desire to know and be known to the archetypal influence of Aphrodite. She writes: “When Aphrodite influences a relationship, her effect is not limited to the romantic or the sexual. Platonic love, soul connection, deep friendship, rapport, and empathic understanding are all expressions of

love”(p. 225). Aphrodite is also present as the creative or generative force, alluring us into relationship with the unique experience and expression of one’s own love, be that for people, ideas, nature, the arts, etc. Jung points out the need for differentiation before creativity is possible:

If we do not fashion for ourselves a picture of the world, we do not see ourselves either, who are the faithful reflections of that world. Only when mirrored in our picture of the world can we see ourselves in the round. Only in our creative acts do we step forth into the light and see ourselves whole and complete. Never shall we put any face on the world other than our own, and we have to do this precisely in order to find ourselves. (Jung, 1960/1969 p. 379)

Jung’s words provide a cornerstone of wisdom in depth psychology today: they call us to really look and perceive what we have created, and to create anew. To do this, Jung is calling on us to develop a sense of our selves so that we can become “whole and complete”. Deeper consideration of his comment evokes the immediate sense of the presence of Self as the world and as one’s own self, at the same time. The layers of separation drop off. My own experiences of fragmentation, alienation and a sense of ennui have precluded a sense of seeing a whole picture of life and of feeling empowered as a part of the web of life. As my quest for connection within the web of life spins from one point in space – my physical, emotional and psychic being – to include the entire cosmos as I know it, I find that a sense of wonder is the silken thread which weaves the story. As I begin to write and feel lost again, I turn to notes taken from a class at Sonoma State University and see the words spoken by Greg Sarris in a class lecture (2008) about our state of separation:

The 3000 year old story where we are dislocated and chosen at the same time...the anti-narrative is everywhere. It speaks in our heads: “I can’t do anything – it’s over there – I am defeated. ...The bodiless one is winning.”

Sarris goes on to say: “New archetypes are needed... Don’t be afraid of uncertainty – engage and live in the moment.” For me, even a momentary conscious experience of a sense of being intrinsically of the earth, one of many physical and emotional and spiritual creatures breathing the air of this planet, evokes a deep sense of wonder and appreciation.

Often this sense of wonder approaches with autumn. As the sky turns a deeper blue, I am always filled with a sense of expansiveness and anticipation of an opening into a deeper experience of life. Transformation is arriving. The anticipation that comes with autumn involves a definite feeling of romance, of *eros*, the alluring promise of being seen and revealed, danced with, and of beholding and honoring somebody or something anew. With the approach of this possibility, a new world is created. It rings with its own integral sound, like clear waves spiraling out of a bronze or silver singing bowl. An active imagination method of narrative from my journal in October of 2008:

The prospect of a new way of beholding emerged recently one morning when I opened my drapes – my vision was captured by the bright glow of Venus rising over Sonoma Mountain in the early morning dark. Just the previous day I had seen the spark of Venus reflected in the eyes of Aphrodite Anadyomene as She lay on the seafoam in the ocean, looking up at the heavens, per an image (Figure 8) that became central to one of the collages I made for our Depth Psychology Methods class in September, 2007. A calendar print of the original painting of Aphrodite Anadyomene by Susan Seddon-Boulet had come to my attention as it lay on the table in our collage class. I saved it for my work, not knowing it was Aphrodite. When I read the caption of the image a curious feeling arose and became amplified over the following days.

On the morning of the autumnal equinox, I parted the drapes at 5:30am and saw a very bright star in the eastern sky. With delight, I realized this is the planet Venus! Venus, Aphrodite, She who rises up from the ocean, and there She was on my collage too, looking up to the sky by my big glass door. A while after the experience of my first sighting Venus rising as the Dawn Star, I read “Remember, Venus (Ishtar-Aphrodite) is the wishing star” (Noble, 1994, p. 46).

If I wish to deepen my experience of life and bring to life a new way of being, who better than Venus/Aphrodite to give me clues and even show me the way? I find that the sense of wonder and appreciation

represented by Venus/Aphrodite is also the Axis reaching out from the Self to touch my heart, mind and body is it calls in a beguiling way to my psyche and my ego. (See figure 2) A numinous feeling emerges - Eros is alive!



Figure 2. Marble carving, 9.5 ft H x 5.4 ft Base. Rudolph Tegner, artist, *Eros flyver med Psyke*. (1920-1921)

Beneath our technological civilization, there still flows the living river of human consciousness within which is concentrated in continuity the life of the kingdoms of animals, plants, stars, the earth and the sea, and the life of our ancestors, the flowing generations of men and women: the sensitive and the solitary ones, the secret inarticulate longing before the mystery of life. The artist is a vehicle of the continuity of that life and his instrument is the myth and the archetypal image. (Modern artist Cecil Collins, in Baring, n.d.)

What was coming to life for me in this active imagination experience was the intersection of the mythological and the real – the archetypal image of Aphrodite and the planet Venus in the sky. The felt sense which emerged ushered in a heartfelt sense of connection with the *Other*, an adventure with the whole of life, via this numinous experience of artwork and nature announcing a new attitude, a new way of beholding life. Michael Babcock notes that Venus, Inanna and Ishtar, all ancient goddesses, were

equated with the “second planet of dawn and dusk” and cites the Latin root of Venus as “winsome, wish and venerate (Seddon-Boulet, 1998, p. 122). He describes Aphrodite as:

radiant and shining, when Aphrodite is present the whole world acquires a soft, golden glow. ‘Foam born’, she is associated with the creative life giving sea and represents a sense of freshness, renewal and hope...She is feminine being in all her fullness, and her realm is that of relationship and feeling. (Seddon-Boulet, 1998, p.22)

The Numinous and Healing

In living with my collage image of Aphrodite/Venus over time, I developed a sense of something numinous about the image as I had placed it on the gold poster board (Figure 8). I would see her image as she floats on the seafoam, relaxed and confident, beholding all in her view with deep regard. At times I could start to feel that relaxation and opening along my back and neck, and behind my heart. It is a wonderful felt sense of something much larger than me, yet supporting me and flowing through my body/mind. For me, the felt sense of the mystery behind me was numinous and connected me to *the Other, the unknown*, transcendent to my normal mode of viewing life. I felt relaxed, filled with wonder, and supported.

Numinous experience is synonymous with religious experience. Translated into psychological parlance, this means the relatively direct experience of those deep intrapsychic structures known as archetypes. ...In the religious literature, what the depth psychologist calls an archetype would be referred to as spirit; operationally they are synonymous. (Corbett, 1996, p.15)

In a memoir called *Bone* (2000) depth psychologist Marion Woodman talks about this archetypal link as she personifies or experiences it, and her new attitude toward living that ensues. It becomes a living symbol that will unite her psyche:

Dr. James said “Live your bliss, Marion. Vision is the best medicine for your immune system” (p. 226).Thinking about psychoneuroimmunology.

Conscious and unconscious have to dance together. An image, a voice, a vibration can be the link. Consciously, I surrendered, accepted the reality of death, thus resolved the conflict. Sophia's love is the glue that can bond conscious and unconscious. I will have to faithfully wait (p. 227).

A numinous image comports us into this healing realm. *Numinous* image means that it evokes a direct experience in us – a felt-sense of aliveness that courses through our limbic system and lights up our whole being – body/mind and soul. The magnetic pull of a dream image can become a felt sense that enables us to live in both the realms of the direct experience and experience of memory of an image that lives inside of us; it becomes a *living symbol*. In my collage work with the Aphrodite image, I noticed the actual morning and evening star – planet Venus in the sky – outside my window, as I saw in the painting that Aphrodite was herself looking up into the night sky with wonder and deep appreciation. This is an experience of *a living symbol*, enlivened by synchronicities that occur as I am *informed simultaneously by the outer world of nature and the inner world of experience*. Research into the astronomically apparent motion of the planet Venus from my vantage point on earth revealed a nice elongated figure 8 motion.

I found the image of the figure 8 intriguing. Later, it became a physical gesture of my right hand as I was imagining my breath moving up from the earth and through the top of my head, back down the front of my body and into the earth. This figure 8 motion mimics the idea that our *libido*, or *psychic energy*, goes down into the unconscious when we work with depth methods that drop our awareness down into that realm which is hidden from our conscious sight. In narrating a depth experience, or writing a story or painting an image of it, we bring the content back up into the daylight realm of the air and land – the conscious part of our being. When I learned about the mythology of Venus and the day and the evening star, this idea was mirrored in my perception of the

movement of our psyche – from earth to heaven, from the unconscious to the conscious and back again. This gesture of the up and down would become a signifier of the growth of a living symbol for me. Confirmation of the inner comes from the outer world in synchronistic experiences or simple awareness of the interconnected nature of life. I now realize that just as our depth psychology program started, in late August, I had my first sighting of numinous Venus. This was the real thing. I was wandering around on the Sonoma State campus in late afternoon. I lay down on a bench behind our building and rested. As I looked up into the blue sky, a tree branch pointed toward a bright point of light, and my eyes fastened on it. I was very curious, and I wondered whether this a star that I can see in the daylight, or a planet? Well, it must have been Venus!

Dazzling Venus is the brightest planet and the brightest star-like point of light in all the heavens. Sharp-sighted people sometimes see this world in broad daylight. The star Antares isn't nearly as bright. The star that represents the Scorpion's beating heart does rank as one of the brightest stars. But all stars pale next to Venus (Beningfield, *StarDate*, 2007/2009).

As I link experiences in nature with my own internal insights via a physical gesture reflected in the sweeping figure 8 motion of the planet Venus in our sky, the attunement of my inner and outer world begins to come alive. Writing a narrative about the experience is an active form of engaging with my imaginal faculties, and serves an integrative function (Siegel, 2007, p. 142).

Another more formal dialogical method of inner attunement is offered by Dan Siegel in his model of *the wheel of awareness*. In the next chapter, I review some key terms, concepts and experiential methods found in interpersonal neurobiology (IPNB).

CHAPTER IV

Literature Review – Aspects of IPNB

Interpersonal Neurobiology

Dan Siegel created the term interpersonal neurobiology (IPNB) in 1999. As a child psychiatrist, his drive to create this interdisciplinary study of mental health arose from his findings on how our relationships with one another shape our brains and the neural networks of our bodies (2007, p. xvii). The IPNB perspective of good mental health is that it consists of interaction between mind, brain and relationship with others in a way that fosters individual well-being and fulfilling relationships via brain and neural integration and attunement (Badenoch, 2008, p. xxii). Coherence emerges as integration of the middle pre-frontal cortex draws implicit experience from the limbic system and makes it explicit, linking the brain hemispheres and body. Complexity of our body/mind system can trend toward states of chaos or rigidity, causing limited modes of awareness and relating to self and others. One of the goals of IPNB therapy models is the emergence of states of mind that are *flexible, adaptable, coherent, energized and stable*, named FACES by Dan Siegel in 2006 (Badenoch, 2008, p. 50). Further explorations of the neuroscience of how well-being and resilience are fostered by secure attachment and mindful awareness practices are at the heart of research in IPNB. The consilient nature of this research has drawn in many professionals from “the broad spectrum of scientific disciplines to the expressive arts and contemplative practice” (Siegel, 2007, p. xvii).

At the heart of IPNB is the goal of integration, the harmonious linkage of differentiated parts of a system, such as those in our body/mind and in our relationships (Siegel, 2007, p.27). IPNB appears to be the first mental health discipline that actually

defines the term *mind*, and this definition is used across other domains of knowledge within the umbrella of IPNB. In a 2010 keynote speech entitled *The Mind, Brain, and Relationships: Integration as a Key to Mental Health* Siegel says that “The mind is an embodied and relational process that regulates the flow of energy and information.” The mind can be harnessed to regulate energy and information flow in our bodies and in our relationships toward integration and create mental health (March 27, 2010). A further elucidation of mind, brain and body in the IPNB model by Siegel is that:

...chaos and rigidity emerge when we don't have integration. ... We show how the mind is intimately connected to the body and relationships, which no other field does. We actually look at this mind-brain relationship triangle as being composed of three facets of energy and information flow—relationships being the sharing, the brain being the extended nervous system that is the mechanism, and the mind being the regulatory, emergent property that arises from the complex system of the nervous system and relationships. (Pearce-McCall, 2010)

The wheel of awareness. The model developed by Siegel to help people integrate disparate parts of body/mind, or psyche, is a metaphor called *the wheel of awareness*. It is useful as a metaphor to assist in the embodiment and deepening of the subjective experience that can emerge through mindful awareness (Badenoch, 2008, p. 174). The rim of the wheel is where all of our thoughts, sensations, emotions, relationships, memories, and complexes reside. Ostensibly, the rim “contents” could include our “*inner community* – that gathering of people inside who continue to speak to us of our value while teaching us how the world of relationships works” (2008, p. 53). As I understand it, the therapeutic movement lay in the *mindful regard* of these contents. In my introduction section, I mentioned the definition of mindfulness, which includes acceptance of whatever is arising as it arises, with kind attention, and without judgment.

The Gaze of Attunement and the Reciprocal Gaze

With practice, all of us can experience sitting in the hub while also participating at the rim, where our thoughts and memories may still have strong affective tone, but we can hold them with compassion from this center of spacious awareness (Badenoch, 2008, p. 175). This act of an intimate reciprocal regard is what I refer to as ‘Aphrodite’s gaze’. It is a simultaneous participant-observer experience that can lead us to a freedom from top-down mind processing (Siegel, 2007, p. 255) and the resultant behaviors that cause us to become rigid or chaotic in our thinking and relational lives. I perceive it as a form of inner dialogue, with the hub of the wheel being inhabited by a compassionate transpersonal center of the psyche. Perhaps this can be embodied according to each person, in their particular form of the Self archetype, that innate psychic patterning whose teleos is wholeness and integration. For me, it includes a feeling of the larger perspective of compassionate and wise presence, flowing through me, from behind me, out of view.

The caring observer. I am interested in the relational effects of inner attunement in the act of integrating psyche by a kind of deep inner dialogue, or gaze. The IPNB model of the wheel of awareness offers a way to behold and tend all the ‘contents’ of one’s life from a seat of a non-judging presence, which Bonnie Badenoch calls *the caring observer* (2008, p. 188). The neural pathways of this kind of empathic attunement start with our early experiences of mutual gaze with caregivers, priming or dampening our ability to have attuned communication with others, or our selves, later in life (Siegel, 2007, pp. 39 - 40). An early experience of the attuned gaze lays the foundation for being able to differentiate and direct the mind to hold implicit and explicit stories of our experiences with compassion, “an act that encourages the emergence of states of greater well-being through neural integration” (Badenoch, 2008, p.188). To approach our

internal world (with an attitude of the caring observer), we welcome all visitors in the field of awareness with curiosity, openness, acceptance and love (Siegel, 2007, p. 222). As the hub of our mind is open and receptive to input from contents on the rim of the wheel “we become an agent of intention, not a controller of perspectives” (Siegel, 2007, p. 248). The experience of one’s awareness becoming the hub of the mind can fill one with a sense of “freshness, compassion, tranquility and gentle humor, and in some sense, mastery” (Badenoch, 2008, p. 175), as one learns to attune to the inner contents on the rim of the wheel.

‘Aphrodite’s gaze’. I find that during the practice of this wheel of awareness, a felt sense often arises to enliven and inform my experience. Employing a metaphor to describe this, I am taking Siegel’s model and Badenoch’s descriptions a step further, to say that the internal empathic attunement with the caring observer becomes an interactive transformative experience of a *reciprocal gaze* with an archetypal imprint. For me, this has the flavor of the alchemical goddess Aphrodite. This reciprocal gaze is one of kind regard – flowing through the hub, it takes in what ever or who ever is there in our inner and outer world (on the rim of the wheel) and consciously holds a space for them, including feelings or thoughts, in a spacious or kind awareness. This honors *the other* as one does not identify with them unconsciously, but regards or beholds them in their otherness and respects them by doing so. This very act of beholding is a form of differentiating and opens the possibility for what Jung calls “the third thing, the transcendent function” to be constellated. Then, the contents on the rim of the wheel may feel acknowledged, and soften or transform under this ‘gaze’. I propose that this empathic self-attunement opens the way for a dialogical movement between the ego and the Self,

intrapersonally, as well as in the interpersonal realm, between one's self and another: "With compassion and empathy toward ourselves, we become our own best friend, and we become open to connecting deeply with others" (Siegel, 2007, p. 322). Thus, the practice of 'Aphrodite's gaze' automatically includes *requite*. It is an act that is *re-quite-ing* in itself because love is invoked in the doing of the perception—the gaze. When a person or problem appears, the first step in any sort of healing is an energetic acknowledgement of the person or issue. "Making the other secure is acknowledging their presence or request" (Palmer, 2007 video). The transforming effects of the human gaze can lay the foundation for a vital, creative life. This 'gaze' may or may not have been experienced with early caregivers, but as adults we can enter into the experience consciously, via depth psychological experiences with images or movement, and also with the IPNB model of the wheel of awareness as the caring observer in the hub and our ego consciousness in the rim. A form of inner attunement is offered, in which

mindful awareness (is) developed through a turning inward, the focus begins with an attunement to ones internal landscape. The deep ways in which we become aware of our own changes in perspective, and the conditions of the transience of the moment-to-moment unfolding of life, bring with them a deep sense of acceptance for the bare essentials of our minds (Siegel, 2007. p. 255).

Siegel (July 27, 2010) has proposed nine domains of integration – nine areas of streams of information that we experience as human beings. An example of inner work with one domain in the wheel of awareness is in that of our inner narrative, where we may recognize a deep feeling of shame (Siegel, March 21, 2011). Here the inner dialogue model of bringing mindfulness to a state of chaos or rigidity is of that of inner attunement via narrative. This is my rendition of an exploration of this relational sector of the rim, prompted by Siegel's *The Wheel of Awareness III*, March 21, 2011 recording:

Upon reflection, we may find that it is an implicit sense that overwhelms us and makes us ineffective in our working life. As we take our awareness to sit in the hub, the spacious center of the wheel, we can imagine a form of internal beholding of our affective state of feeling shamed, and through this we can see that a part of us feels this way, not the whole of us. Through therapy or education, we have learned about the human developmental needs for secure attachment in the infant and realize that when you needed connection and someone does not attune to you, you may have developed shame, the feeling that “I am not good enough”. The shameful state is a pattern grooved into your neural network, but it resides only as a pattern, a feeling or a behavior and is not the totality of who you are. Upon this insight, “shame becomes a part on the rim...instead of it sweeping me up, I have the strength of sitting in the hub. It loses its charge, and that is the liberation” (Siegel, July 27, 2010). We may close with a loving kindness thought of “those positive wishes for our inner beings inside your own inner world, sending love and kindness to yourself”.

My thesis inquiry has led me to the experience of an integrative function of compassion practices of the caring observer, what I call ‘Aphrodite’s gaze’. As I work with ‘Aphrodite’s gaze’, I find that the contents on the rim of the wheel of awareness are what I call my ‘dark body.’ Chaos and rigidity, the energetic responses to trauma and complexes that shape my habits of attention and behavior, such as repressed grief and feeling, can be addressed in a compassionate manner, within. Also, I find that in my experience of a somatic imprint via the internal mirroring of the image of *Aphrodite Anadyomene* in the collage (Figure 8), I may become more reflexive and move between the walls of separation of my head from my body. Through a somatic mirroring process, equipoise and a felt sense of support behind me deepens into more body/mind integrated experiences of life, and my ability to choose responses that include kindness or loving regard expands. Here the word *sovereignty* arises for me – freedom of choice not shaped by unconscious factors. In the following chapter I investigate the importance of direct experience of nature and the body as well as the nature of my own sense of fragmentation and despair.

CHAPTER V

The Body and the Colonized Mind

David Abram (1996) brings an additional dimension to the story of our currently fractured lives:

Direct sensual reality, in all its more-than-human mystery, remains the sole solid touchstone for an experiential world now inundated with electronically-generated vistas and engineered pleasures; only in regular contact with the tangible ground and sky can we learn how to orient and to navigate in the multiple dimensions that now claim us (preface).

The importance of sensory contact with both ground and sky – the ground as weight of gravity holding my body to the ground and the sky as I am constantly looking up at it, aware of the qualities of light, time of day, clouds, airplanes, birds, satellites or stars, the appearance and position of the moon, planets and constellations, are an integral part of my sense of place on earth. Abram (1996) talks about the twentieth century study of phenomenology and its revelation of “the hidden centrality of the earth in all human experience” (p. xi). In our post modern culture, and in my own body, I feel a great denial of this reality. The chasm that is created by “loss of ancestral reciprocity with the animate earth” (Abram, 1996, p.10) shows up in bodily symptoms and religious fanaticism, were we may find ourselves retreating into either the “supersensory heaven beyond the natural world, or else into the human skull itself, [hence] the ‘inner world’ of our Western psychological experience, and the supernatural heavens of Christian belief” (p.10). Jung cites the central importance of the body in the process of moving toward wholeness, including the banishment of a literalized Self symbol:

The Self as the *Deus Absconditus* can undo its own symbolism for a certain purpose: When the great swing has taken an individual into the world of symbolic mysteries, nothing comes of it, nothing *can* come from it, unless it has been associated with the earth, unless it has happened when that individual was in the

body.... The reason why the whole structure of symbolism is being pulled asunder is that the Self wants its own destruction as a symbolic form. (1976, p.473)

A symbol is something generated in the head, or mind, not necessarily the body.

In contemplation of this passage from Jung, I see my childhood dream image of the head on a tongue depressor, planted in the garden dirt. It seems that my psyche went right for the need to return mind to body, to associate head and mind with the earth, for healing.

Interestingly, Jung has stated: “For it is the body, the feeling, the instincts, which connect us with the soil” (Sabini, 2005, p. 73), and here in our body/mind, that we may actually feel and know what Jung called “the eternity of nature” (p. 199).

David Abram (1996) talks about the extent to which Western civilization has uprooted the living qualities of psyche, as *psychein* once meant to breathe (p. 237), and placed the aliveness of our animate Self into abstract words that become “bodiless Ideas” ...we have even “*stripped the air of its anima, its psychic depth*” (p.253).

From a neuroscientific perspective, psychologist Rick Hanson (personal communication, April 24, 2010) said:

My view is that the human brain is built from a series of progressively more evolutionarily ancient layers, and that well-being, high functioning, and loving relationships require honoring the nature and needs of all those layers. I fear that most of us each day are hyper-stimulating and hyper-working the most recent, symbol-processing layers of the brain - which is stressful and not healthy - while simultaneously neglecting, even suppressing, the older, and neurologically more fundamental layers of nonverbal, sensorimotor, embedded-in-nature processing and activity.

Why have we, as a species, worked so hard to achieve such separation from the natural world and from one another, that we make the locus of our home inside our own mental world, complete with digital screens, or far off in the distant heavens where angels or virgins play harps eternally? Either place is only a partial field to play in. This lack of

dialectic with an animate *other*, our earth and our souls, shuts out the possibility of the third space, or the space between us—the space which holds us all. It is in this relational space that the Self constellates movement, the movement of love or *eros*. It is also the space in which our souls become alive, in the *aqua permanens*, our wet brain/body in the waters of life, the living field which connect us all. Here we can behold with a reciprocal gaze—the seeing of our soul to the outer world, to the other— and to our own inner emotional and thought worlds, in a fluid way that does not freeze us into an automatically reflexive state of a complex. We are free to be alive and move with integrity when we can sense the space between all things, and the space in our own bodies, which holds and contains us. This space and the movement of a vast legacy of love in many forms is what I sense in *the mystery behind me*. This mystery is an invitation, via a felt sense in my body, to open to something much larger than my narrowly focused, strident and self-serving egoic mode where I find myself identifying with my own concepts of what I think others may want or expect from me. I realize that it is hard to enforce my egoic perspective on what is behind my back as I certainly cannot see it as an object!

The objectifying voice of my inner demons may speak in tones of authority, of opinions swirling around that demand perfection, or of self-incriminating reproaches that engender feelings of grief, and then guilt. A positive function of guilt is that it collects the libido toward some act of repair for a perceived offense. The felt sense in my body is one of mobilization to *do* something, but then that impulse is usually stymied by the doubting voices which tell me all the reasons why it won't matter what I do. This feels like a state of being frozen – a mix of the fight and flight response. The result is an energetic shape of constriction and separation from life. This stuck place where conflict

reigns is the home of what I call the *colonized mind*. I find that this usually occurs in repeated instances of abandoning my intuitive perceptions and experience for the patterns and mythos of socially constructed reality. Perhaps shame and lack of confidence builds a prison in my body/mind. This psychic state has been referred to as being *colonized* by the prevailing cultural norms and expectations (Shulman-Lorenz & Watkins, 2002). The colonized mind lives in the land of the dominator and exploiter. It plays hardball in the media, in the church and in the school, and it rules the warring factions of the street and of countries. Within my own mind, it has taken my body hostage as I will show in the two next chapters via the experiences in Somatic Art Therapy and a psychodynamic process called “feeding your demons” (Allione, 2008). Liberation from this mindset lies in the somatic intelligence of our body/heart/mind. Somatic Art Therapy uses movement and body awareness, sound toning, drawing, painting, clay, assemblage, and collage to bring to conscious awareness trauma and other experiences we have stored in cellular memory. Meagan Pugh (2007), the instructor for our depth methods in Somatic Art Therapy said: “When we image our beliefs and attitudes, we can work to change them, allowing for resolution and recovery.”

Investigative Method of Somatic Art Therapy

Part of the visualization process involves the use of archetypes as images of lost energy or memories to be released. Through the retrieval of archetypes, we gain access to parts of ourselves that have been trapped by the trauma. We then bring them into consciousness and begin a relationship with them, eventually integrating these energies into our conscious repertoire of available choices of behavior and feeling. So what was once a painful roadblock becomes a catalyst for change and a rich opportunity to learn more about the amazing journey of life in a human form. By following the messages in the body and unlocking them using the creative process, we can embrace our lives and enlarge our experiences and understanding. (Pugh, 2007)

Active imagination with somatic art therapy. During an investigative class, I created an image of black feather wings for my back and a gold butterfly that I intended to have at the brainstem area (Figure 1). This felt like an embodiment of my thesis title at the time: *Honoring the Dark Body*. It felt very spacious and empowering. I labeled it: *black wings of dark energy and gold butterfly flutters at neck*, which I now call *The Mystery Behind Me* (Figure 1).

The somatic art therapy process helps allow my body itself to speak through creativity, using methods that facilitate the ‘by-pass’ of the part of the ego controlling neo-cortex which holds part of the editing function of the judging and perceiving rational mind. As these intellectual filters drop away, information that is more relational and intuitive streams into awareness from other neglected parts of the somatic experience of my body. Through the felt sense and act of placing the gold butterfly on the back of my neck, my body/mind is telling me that my brainstem area is very important to me. This area was originally called the Reptilian brain (MacLean, 1990). The brainstem is the basic neurologic gateway between the brain and body and it regulates basic body functions such as consciousness, breathing, and cardiovascular rate and it delivers sensory messages from the body to the brain. Metaphorically it may be analogous to the ego-Self axis if seen as the connection between the cerebral brain and the archaic, or limbic areas and it enables our capacity for felt-sense:

The ego-Self axis represents the vital connection between the ego and the Self that must be relatively intact if the ego is to survive stress and grow. This axis is the gateway or path of communication between the conscious personality and the archetypal psyche. (Edinger, 1972/1992, pg. 38)

It feels like I may have shut down a lot of information coming from that area, and the gold butterfly tells me in a shimmering or tingling sense in the back of my neck, that

there is much stored there for my transformation. After reading Peter Levine's book *Waking the Tiger* (1997), I have a better understanding of my attraction to the stuck energy sensations and images at the base of my neck, which is the Reptilian-complex inflection point. The R Complex is a name that Paul MacLean gave to the basic survival response brain structures, some of which are in the brainstem. Although the model is now seen as oversimplified, it serves as a metaphor for my somatic art exploration. Peter Levine (1997) says that fear and immobility cycles that become established from the lack of discharge of energy from a stimulus of fight, flight or freeze response are due to the overriding influence of our neo-cortex to cut an instinctual cycle short. This is the seat of trauma (pp. 100-101). For me, this feels like a gateway for integrating what I have held in my unconscious, in the shadow aspect of *the mystery behind me*. Levine advocates movement to facilitate the discharge of traumatic energy that is stuck in the body.

Gesture and Inner Attunement

As my personal life situation mirrored this stuck energy I had explored in the class, I felt stripped bare after discovering information that led to a sense of deep betrayal. I found myself in the midst of a major mid-life crisis: no career identity, no relationship regard, distressed about the underwater mortgage on my home, my aging body and health concerns. I was living off savings while worrying about the shrinking job market, which brought about a feeling of shame and lack of confidence about further career options. The environment was in upheaval as well; a deep sense of anxiety and helplessness for myself and for all the threatened animals and people around me during months of forest fires and smoke in the air was more than I could take. There was no

escape. My very breath was assaulted and grief was stuck in my throat. I became rigid after a time of seeing no way out.

As I sat at a table, barely able to lift up my head, the words “Hung up on a meat hook and left to rot” came to mind, from the story of Inanna’s descent and paring down to essence in the ancient Sumarian tale of the human ego’s conscious confrontation with the mortality of the body and emptiness of all acquired self-identifications, at least in my recollection and felt sense of the tale (Wolkstein, 1983). All I could do was to try to breathe, and barely at that. A conscious awareness of a motion of the figure 8, the spiral reciprocity of breath, up and down motion, slowly emerged. So this is the bare bones of it all, the essence of being, I thought to myself. It was all I had, all that was I, this movement of the breath, up and down, reciprocal. Beyond humbled, I remember feeling that after inner and outer identities are dissolved, all that is left is the essence of life: movement of breath, of body, by psyche or *pneuma*, the Greek word for air, wind and breath, which we now call spirit (Abram, 1996, p. 238). This experience of fragmentation and dismemberment was memorable. Perhaps the purpose of such immobilizing grief is that the mind can no longer remain in control, spinning a story to try to make sense of that which has undeniable truth – our mortality - and the fact that we have no where to hide when the very air we breathe is poisoned. The earth no longer feels like home.

My body responded to this state of deep distress with a gesture. My right hand started to trace the figure eight motion, vertically, perhaps as a reminder to breathe.

Perhaps in a similar sense, Siegel (2007) talks about this movement as attunement:

Internal attunement and attention to intention create an internal emotional closeness or "becoming our own best friend" and also allow us to attune to others' intentions. (p. 172). One example of intrapersonal attunement would be the practice of breath awareness. (p. 174)

The linking of this figure 8 gesture with my breathing was pivotal. It became a living symbol of both instinct and conscious awareness, as it emerged from the unconscious ground of my body and was reflected upon and acknowledged by my ego and body/mind. Michael Meade (2008) observed: “When people feel lost in life they have lost their rhythm for life. In the midst of the ashes of life it’s necessary to find one’s internal rhythm again (p. 161).” I believe that he is also pointing to attunement.

Another method that uses a psychological, emotional and spiritual process of working with images which emerge from the unconscious is called *demon painting*. One method for consciously attuning to the pieces of our emotional and psychic life that have us ‘between a rock and a hard place’ is the ancient Tibetan practice of “demon feeding”. In the next chapter I will illustrate this practice of “demon feeding” with my own depth method engagement in the process of demon painting. In the class, I found it interesting that the figure 8 gesture showed itself again as I unconsciously gesticulated the motions of the what I call *the dragonfish* to a colleague from the depth program. Later she mirrored the gesture to me with her right arm and hand – that is when the gesture really became active in my conscious awareness. In the following chapter, I elaborate the depth psychological processes and some IPNB underpinnings of the methods called *demon painting and demon feeding*, which also reflect the gesture.

CHAPTER VI

Demon Painting – a Core Complex

My thesis inquiry of how the activity of the Self archetype may lead to wholeness and integration is vital for me, as it feels as though my ego and persona are no longer effective. I experience a loss of libido, or energy for life, and I am wondering about *eros*, as in *moving toward or dancing with the Self*. As this is my psychological and emotional situation, I am interested in seeing *what is*, my sense of ennui and my sense of joy, both. Estelle Weinrib (1983/2004) states that the core aim of depth psychological work is to “*relativize the ego to the Self*”. As she elaborates this goal, I am reminded of both my demon images (Figures 3 and 4) and of the dream image of my father’s head on a stick:

As modern consciousness evolved, the ego gained preponderance over the Self, particularly in Western intellectual development. The primacy of the intellect has resulted in an unbalanced, overly rational personality that is peculiarly subject to neuroses. The autonomy of the ego is limited, since the ego's roots are in the unconscious. The ego is vulnerable to influence by emotionally charged complexes acting in a compensatory way. The more the ego tries to suppress or ignore an activated complex, the more the complex will rob the ego of control. That is, the ego must relinquish its illusory dominance, in order to re-establish a connection and continuing relationship between consciousness and the unconscious. (p.20)

One very striking method for making conscious a core psychic problem, or complex, is the art and therapy of demon-painting. My experience of this particular depth method, as taught to undergraduates in the psychology track at Sonoma State University by Maria Hess, was quite impactful. We sat in quiet contemplation before our blank watercolor paper. I had no preparation for my emotional reaction in the simple act of picking up a paint brush and choosing some colors to put on my paper plate palette. Just seeing the colors there stirred up a limbic response, below the threshold of my conscious awareness. Tears came to my eyes and a deep sense of gravitas in going about this

process took over. Jung says “colors are feeling-values” (1963/1989, p. 248). Free-form gestures came out of my hand and mind to paint a black mass of grief with a bit of red blood oozing from it, as it floats or is entangled in the watery like blue and green swaths (see Figure 3). Next I formed the black triangle in the middle, the things over it which later became demonic eyes, then the outline of the water below with an amoebae like biomass inside...the energy was being sucked out of the little amoeba by the fiery mouth of the demon. The teal blue fish emerged on the left hand side, as a silent sentinel, a witness to this demon sucking the life force out of a living being. This teal blue fish I will later discover represents *the caring observer within*. The apperceptive quality of this teal fish is like ‘Aphrodite’s gaze’, allowing the psychic situation or complex to be brought to consciousness and then addressed in a calm and abiding manner.



Figure 3. October 2008, author’s painting: (15” W x 11” H)—*Soul and Soulessness*.

Core Complexes

As a group we bore silent witness to our creations in class, which was a very good container for this depth process. We were instructed in how to work on our own with the unfolding meaning of these paintings. I have found that over time, learning about my top-down mind habits of dominating my body by judging feelings as unworthy, brought clarity about the deep wound sustained in childhood and the embodied complex that rules my life, to this day. The grief and complicit behavior not to stir up any emotions in my house grew into a large demon that is embedded in my limbic system. This “demon” holds neural patterns from my neo-cortical mind that are repressing content with what Siegel (2007, p. 252) calls *invariant representations* that can “enslave our primary sensory inputs to conform to a previously established classification scheme”. Thus, my emotional and expressive nature has been ossified and I may lead my life mainly with my overactive rational mind, which has become “demon-like”. My head is effectively cut off from my body and I have become like a spiny puffer fish, dried out and hanging from the ceiling like the trophy that greeted me in a rental house in Kauai during a vacation. I had been working with the image of an amoeba with spiny arms and legs, which I had drawn in an earlier class. It was me, trying to do everything people were demanding, all at once. It became a puffer fish, which pricks out when it was threatened, and has sharp spines all over. No wonder the image of my body, ego and persona appeared as a defensive creature in my imaginal realm. Perhaps the main perpetrator of abuse was my demon mind, with a vast inner community of critics to bolster its judgments against me.

Chodorow (1991) explains:

The affective core of the complex gathers around itself a collection of interrelated ideas, impressions, memory traces and behavior patterns. This network of

affectively interwoven associations may include not only aspects of personal history, but cultural and primordial themes as well. (p. 47)

Within the complex represented by the puffer fish image, a psychic split resides, echoing the head on a stick dream image from my childhood. For me, the affect in this demon painting is a sense of being driven to frantically perform and accomplish infinite tasks and goals of the exterior world, as well as frightening feelings of being sucked lifeless by an overarching mind outside of my own psyche. It feels like a fiercely judging specter of brain power coming to assess my current thoughts or activities. I was not aware of the power of these patterns to influence my life to the extent in which they are deeply embedded in my limbic system to such life diminishing effect. Siegel talks about *top-down* influences that can become engrained brain states, wherein we can become “enslaved by earlier experience and embedded beliefs in the form of mental models of right and wrong and judgments of good and bad” (2007, p. 135). It took an emotional experience of deep grief with the images of the big demon-eyed face in Figure 3, and reflection upon the meaning of the spiny amoeba that I drew, to bring this inner situation of an emotional and psychological split to my attention. Jung said: “...emotion is the chief source of consciousness. There is no change from darkness to light or from inertia to movement without emotion” (Chodorow, 1991, p. 96).

The opposite movement toward integration is separation. In reviewing the methods I used such as demon painting, I find new meaning in the dream image from childhood of the head on a stick in the garden. My father’s head, symbolizing my own inner attitudes that were developing, gives me a potent reference point for naming some of the resulting complexes. Some of these are cultural and familial, and some from repressed grief and emotion. The psychic splits occur in repeated instances of

abandoning my own experience and inner knowledge for the patterns and myths of socially constructed reality, or from what I perceive that others expect or need from me.

Greg Sarris, author, tribal leader and Guest Chair of the Literature Department at Sonoma State University spoke to our depth psychology class in 2008 about the tendency for modern humans to live in a mental and physical attitude of non-relatedness to others and to the environment. His remark: “Separation itself is a living beast and it doesn’t want to die” really caught my attention. I also noted his citation of the theologian Paul Tillich who said: “Separation is the original sin.” My thesis inquiry about how the Self archetype constellates and how it may lead to wholeness developed later, but it became vital for me, as I became more aware of the fragmentation of my ego and persona with my devastating situation at midlife. In my normal zest for life, the pattern of moving forward with my will and intellect, checking in with the needs and expectations of the outer world to draw my energy out for living became less functional as I started to miss deadlines. I could no longer show up for others with a heartfelt attitude of accomplishing what ever they or I wanted and needed to do. This loss of what had been my normal zest and energy for life was barely perceptible to me at the time.

Indeed, I was sucked further into the black hole of a spiral shape that spins in upon itself, especially as I did not reach out to others for understanding or feedback. Grief and shame were hidden at the core of my black hole, and this generated a loss of libido, that psychic and physical energy which is also eros, a moving toward or dancing with life and genuine connection with others.

In the following pages, I look at solutions for addressing the state of rigidity indicated by my images of the spiny puffer fish and the flaming demon-fish.

Feeding the Demon Fish



Figure 4. November 2008, author's painting: (15"W x 11"H)—*Feeding the Demon Fish*.

“If you're still interested in my head, it's yours. I'm tired of it” exclaimed Baron Munchausen” (Gilliam & McKeown, 1989, p. 144).

Figure 4 is a painting of my fiery demon-fish splash landing in the ocean with its mouth gaping wide open, sucking in the 'aqua vitae' as I called it, the waters of life. The huge demon-fish with flames coming out of his forehead and through the ends of his winged fins comes flying down into the sea with his big mouth as wide open as it will go, to suck in the living waters. That is what he needed, as I painted the demon being fed, spontaneously, in Maria's class. This painting is a metaphor, a visualization process of something moving within my psyche that is an inkling of a healing of my body/mind split. I see the fish being movement between the inner soul/body as instinctual being and the mind/spirit driving force which has been over riding my being with culturally conditioned, colonized mind, top-down neo-cortex referring to the outer world as that

which it must manipulate to keep itself going. It is like rampant consumption without really being fed, or without landing anywhere substantial. This flaming aerial creature is headed for the water, the ocean, the soma of my body. The movement indicated is a desire for integration with life-giving embodiment, with what Siegel calls the *bottom-up* processes of direct experience of the body (2007, p. 138). So this demon fish is actually a *dragonfish* as he goes up and flies in the air until he gets too solar and flaming and then he comes down into the water and is fed and soothed and swims with others.

The demon-fish is also my willfulness, an unrefined will-power that is focused on my self without regard to others, without the thoughtful beholding an 'other' either internally, in my own heart and mind, or as they are, externally. My disembodied mind is the big flaming red life force sucking eyes of the un-integrated rational top-down mind, and the instinctual body of beauty and silence is that of the teal fish in my first demon painting. Jung (1951/1959) speaks to the appearance of this symbolic demon-fish and its need: "The symbols of the self arise in the depths of the body, and they express its materiality every bit as much as the perceiving consciousness. The symbol is thus a living body" (p.173).

Demon Feeding Depth Method

What calls to me is the possibility for everyone to feel intrinsically valued - valued by ourselves and valued by the matrix from which we arise. If home may be a felt sense of *chthonic sovereignty* informed by individuation and archetypal energies from the earth, how can this process be better facilitated or engendered in our fragmented lives and fractured psyches? We have left our humus, our cultivated strip in the biosphere, our embodied natures, to march to the tunes of the commercial edifices we created to control

and exploit our resources. For so long our world cultures have looked skyward and worshipped the solar impulse, the unchecked and disconnected rational mind. Now we are being burnt by the stratospheric heights our minds inhabit, farther and farther from nourishment from earth as matrix and mater, imbued with intrinsic self-regulating systems of the ecosphere. So here is the theme of separation again!

My demon work is on my own disembodied mind (Figure 5). After seeing what my demon looks like, a huge mind that is judgmental, thirsty and angry, I imagined what it would look like when it was fed, as Maria Hess instructed the class in this process while we all sat with our blank paper in front of us. She told us to imagine that we feed the demon with “with the nectar of our body” until it is satisfied. This was very appropriate in a metaphorical and a neurological sense for me, as my demon appeared to be a dried up separate organ from my body. My over-active mind, disconnected from the grounding reality of soma, body, needed to be beheld by a cooling gaze within, as it needed the stream of sensory awareness to wet the layers of neo-cortex from the bottom up (Siegel, 2007, p. 137). This means that my ‘demon’ mind was in need of a direct sensation of resonance within my body/mind with something larger than my ego consciousness. The repose of Aphrodite Anadyomene in Figure 8 offers a solution.

Integration. The therapeutic method of working with images from the unconscious by externalizing them as images of the unconscious complex that is gripping us by painting it, allows me to behold it, and then offer up what is needed. Maria’s presence provided a continual sense of support, acceptance and cohesion, which was necessary for the process internally. This way, I can behold both: the externalized psychic content and my conscious ego, heart and body, all deeply affected by the

visualization of such a 'beast', in a safe container. Thus recognizing the imbalance, what was my previous demon may turn into an ally of psychic energy when brought into an integrated state, given what it needed; in my case, reconnection of my head with heart and body, to be in a relational embodied state. The teaching is that if we fight our demons or ignore them, they often grow stronger and we may end up projecting them on people or situations (Allione, 2008, p. 21). However, if I can understand or even have compassion for this disowned part of myself, then I may experience more energy for compassion and fluidity in my life, and extend this attitude toward others.

While working with the quiet, numinous large teal fish in my first painting, perhaps a representation of the caring observer within, and in seeing the demon-fish painting of my dissonant egoic mind state, I came to the image of a dragonfish to represent the movement between the demon-fish and the teal fish in my gesture of the figure 8, the living symbol of moving between the opposites. There is both the over-active egoic mind and the caring observer within me. In a simplification the fish moves from my unconscious – the implicit ocean of my body to my conscious mind, the explicit neo-cortical will and processes. The dragonfish represents the motion of the dialogue on the ego-Self axis, a reciprocal beholding of conscious and unconscious contents in the ocean, or waters of life of my body/mind. The imagistic description of an implicit mode of operating with my disembodied egoic mind as the big flaming red life force sucking eyes of the un-integrated rational top-down mind contents and attitudes while the beauty and silence of the teal fish in my first demon painting is my instinctual body, connected to the Self, the witnessing ground of being of the compassionate observer. Going back to feeding my demon, the dried up spiny puffer fish, with waters of life – the caring

observer beholding and accepting my over-bearing intellect and mode of self-betrayal, and having it swim in the compassion or intelligence of the field of spacious awareness is a valuable practice of inner attunement, if I can remember to do it.

In the spirit of inner dialogue, Tsultrim Allione (2008) offers questions to ask of one's demon (p.178): "What do you want from me?" and "What do you need?"

Listening with a felt sense in the body, or to words that come to mind, we are linking language to emotions, thoughts, inner states or attitudes toward ourselves, and this is integrating (Badenoch, 2008, p. 182). I find this method of demon feeding to be a very similar exercise as that of a caring observer dialogue between the hub and the rim in mindful awareness wherein one may actively and compassionately observe and say "I see that a part of me feels shamed because it has been judged and neglected long ago". This is the act of naming, linking language or words to implicit senses, which is the act of beholding as an empathic observer within the hub of the mind. The act of feeding the 'content on the rim' or one's demon is seeing the context and need for the complex to have such an affective charge and then "it loses its charge, that's the liberation" (Siegel, 2010b).

The demon may even ask for one's life force. It feels as though the demon wants to devour us, but if we can feed it "relaxation and fulfillment", it may rest in spacious awareness, integrated, or turn into an ally image (Allione, 2008, p. 178). As I review my demon work now, after learning about Dan Siegel's wheel of awareness, it feels as though a neglected part of my ego, represented by a sector on the rim, is liberated or peaceful, at least temporarily. By addressing it from the hub as a caring observer or deeply empathetic agent who can give my egoic mind acknowledgement of its state of

upset, I feel a soothing of the affective demand of the complex and opening to the possibility for transforming its core energy. The demon painting and demon feeding methods are wonderful examples of learning self-regulation through intrapersonal attunement.

For me, to make this real on a physical level, a gesture helps to integrate and remind my body/mind of a new way of being. The gesture of moving my right arm up and down, to mimic the up and down motion of this dragonfish, is part of the fluidity that has an opportunity to be encoded in my neural system if I can bring conscious attention to the movement or even have it mirrored by others. In Figure 4, the large flying demon-fish's mouth is wide open, sucking up the needed healing waters of life, and I imagined that it would get all it wanted in the big ocean of my body. In the final painting, my demon-fish was now one of many normal happy fishes swimming along in a school in the sea currents, with seashells below on the ocean floor! A classmate viewed my painting and told me that the feeling of fluidity came to her as she enjoyed the fish in the sea. As an explication of some of my inner process with the demon feeding practice as a depth method, I am including entries from my journals in the fall of 2008 and summer of 2009:

Getting into my body via the fish...we all have an inner fish!
The intriguing thing, from an Aphroditic embodiment perspective is my feeling of having flexible fish fins where my feet and hands are - after having a massage, for the first time in a year. Perhaps this is a phylogenetic memory of mermaidship made conscious!

“We actually have inherited morphological elements from fish” (Shubin, 2008 ,p. 8).

As my thesis looks at how activity of the pull toward wholeness via the Self archetype shows up in my life, I am finding that the dragonfish gesture of movement between mind and soma has become a living symbol for the gift of fluidity between heart

and mind. At these times I experience life in an embodied, interior and powerful way. A continual movement of embodied infinity, it feels like the miracle of what I call ‘eternity’s breath’, the fact that we exist, as human beings, in the stream of eternity. During these moments, there is no top-down mind domination but rather a celebration of the knowing and presence in the body. This is *honoring the dark body* with Aphrodite’s archetypal wisdom of loving regard and reciprocity, which leads to integration. Metaphorically, if Aphrodite lets my psyche marry Eros, her son, then I am swimming along nicely with other fish in the great sea. As Jung says: “It is only possible to live the fullest life when we are in harmony with these symbols; wisdom is a return to them” (1960/1969, p. 402). However, in the myth of Psyche and Eros, there were many tasks that Aphrodite required Psyche to complete, before she could be united with Eros in the conscious day world. In the next chapter I bring to light the many symbols of these tasks such as relating to another in mirroring and gesture to create what Daniel Stern (2004) calls a *shared feeling voyage* in which “two people traverse together a feeling-landscape as it unfolds in real time” (p. 172).

CHAPTER VII

Gesture, Mirroring and Attunement

As I review the demon paintings and reflect on the meaning and felt sense, a gesture emerges – it is that of my right hand going up and down as if swimming from the depths of the ocean up to the surface and then back down, in a continual motion. This gesture evokes a sense of attunement for me. Siegel (2007) explains the neuroscientific aspects of this:

As we reflect on our own internal states, the resonance circuitry that evolved to connect with others' minds is primed to sense the deep nature of our own intentional world. Linking perception and action we create the neural maps of our own intentions and sensory experience, moment-by-moment, as we create an internal resonance, the essence of attunement. (p. 327)

Jung's Mirroring Discovery

As a young resident in psychiatry at the Burgholzli Clinic in Zurich, Jung made a remarkable connection with a severely regressed and mute patient by mirroring her odd head and hand movements. Apparently Jung experienced a *felt sense* within, a mirroring in his neural networks, of something from her body and her unconscious which he was then able to translate into a few words and speak out loud to her. It is reported that the patient's response was "How did you know?" From that point on she was able to speak about her dreams and experiences, and she was later discharged. After this, Jung frequently relied on the symbolic meaning of unconscious motor phenomena to understand and communicate with patients who were extremely withdrawn (Chodorow, 1991, p. 45). In the next pages I describe different experiences of my own limbic system resonances and attunement through images that became living symbols, and the acknowledgement of the gestures that emerged, by others.

Spiral gestures as the caring observer. There must be something numinous for me in the somatic sensory movement generated by drawing a spiral. When I was in kindergarten in Texas, I remember sitting on the cold linoleum floor next to a large piece

of white butcher block paper. The teacher had asked us to each draw a picture of God. I remember feeling puzzled by her request while leaning over the blank white paper and knowing that others would be trying to draw a face for God, like some kind of big old man. Even though I thought I should also draw a man's face, I found myself drawing a big spiral. Forty-six years later, in a class called *The Body and the Feminine*, I found myself drawing a large colorful spiral shape on a big white sheet of paper. Whatever came out was to be called "the kind auntie," our instructor announced, as she asked us to draw *the witness* to our previous drawing of ourselves where we felt conflicted or in pain. I took the colors of golden yellow, orange, red and pink-lavender pastel crayons and held them all in my fist in a straight row, touching the paper and starting in the middle with a circle, and moving out into a big spiral that filled the page. I acted spontaneously, and it felt so soothing and right. Others in the class witnessed our work as we held up our images and talked about them. The somatic gesturing in the act of drawing an image in response to a narrative inquiry is one way of strengthening vertical and horizontal integration of our brain hemispheres. It seems that the somatic intelligence in my body drew an implicit impression of a caring observer so that I could see it with my pre-frontal cortex, and feel it in my heart and arm, as it was soothing, thus experiencing both an implicit and explicit dialogic movement along my ego – Self axis.

Another example of the caring observer in the form of both gesture and mirroring was brought to light. When we are witnessed and mirrored in our childhood, we often form implicit memories of delight or shame. As an example, trace memories of being seen and beheld in early childhood re-emerged during my depth methods class of 2007, as I was again beheld in a gestural state, trying to share a story of my fascination with the

spiral form in image and in a dream to Dianne Jennet, our instructor. I told her about my attempt to make a myth out of the inspiration I found in the recent Hubble telescope photographs of barred-spiral galaxies and the NASA map of our own barred-spiral galaxy (*figure 4.*) along with a recent dream of a flowing red shawl. I also included the story of a recent spontaneous ‘jig’ dance that I had done. In the dream, which took place in an old art gallery that I managed, a young peasant woman put on a crudely woven red ‘art piece’ that she and her sisters had come to sell. The weaving turned into a long flowing shawl as she danced in fluid spirals with it growing off of her arms, longer and longer. Dianne patiently watched me gesticulate as she listened to all three of my examples and remarked: “Now when I look up in the night sky and see the Milky Way I will always see a woman with that red shawl spiraling in a dance overhead.” Her comment shocked me, as she put the dream, my actual dance and my fascination with the NASA image of the Milky Way galaxy together in one statement of embodiment on her part. It was a co-created narrative that affirmed both of us. I felt seen, beheld and joined in the creation of something new, with Dianne’s witnessing and response. This experience is what Stern (2004) indicated with his term for the process of a *shared feeling voyage* in which two people may “ride the crest of the present instant as it crosses the span of the present moment, from its horizon of the past to its horizon of the future” (p. 172).



Figure 5. Barred Spiral Milky Way
Illustration Credit: R. Hurt, (SSC) JPL-Caltech, NASA

The visual stimulation of a spiral shape can help regulate between chaos and rigidity. The shape offers a blending, an alternative to the psyche, where there is both fluidity and directedness, evoking a sense of growth and aliveness. I was struck by this new astronomical information and image of our galaxy – the Milky Way’s spiral arms are fed by the stars birthed in the *barred* regions. Later, as I gazed at the photo on my desk, I became aware of a new association to the ego-Self *Axis*, which births new levels of consciousness and vitality. As this interplay of the astronomical information and model of the ego-Self axis emerged in my awareness, it filled me with delight and wonder. The barred arm is the *Axis* – the conduit through which energy and information flows from the dynamic engine in the center of the Milky Way, a black hole. The image sparked a metaphor of the dynamic between the ego and the Self as a pulsing, a dancing. The spiral galaxy illustration on my desk has become a living symbol, replete with multiple levels of meaning, including a memory of a *shared feeling voyage* with Dianne.

Mirroring from our ancestors. After my spontaneous dance to the 17th century song, I was cleaning out my mother's closet in her former home and came across a letter dated May 1962. It was a typed letter from my grandmother who lived in New York City at the time, and it was a response to a previous communication from my young mother. My grandmother asked about "the little clipper" which was a reference to me, as my mother had written to her about how I was dancing next to the piano with my red skirt flying. I realized that my grandmother was referring to me, endearingly. As I read these words, "red skirt flying" and "the little clipper", I associated this image with the dream of the peasant woman dancing with the red shawl. Her woven creation, which was the most primitive of all the artistic offerings the group of women brought in to sell in my art gallery, turned into a long red flowing and alive shawl as she put it over her shoulders and began to dance in a sweeping spiral with a sense of thorough enjoyment. The felt sense of this movement in the dream and the aliveness of the red shawl was similar to the experience of delight and natural grace, with an innate sense of aliveness as I spontaneously danced in my living room to a 1990 Dorian Recording by the Baltimore Consort entitled *On the banks of the Helicon: early music of Scotland*. As I swirled and leapt vertically, I felt buoyed by the earth itself. It was as if being a strong empowered woman in this movement of dance was a very old and very true thing to be. The jig may have originally been played for two people. I felt as though I was acknowledging human life itself, or my imagined partner's presence, through movement and sweeping gestures that were deeply informed by the very land I danced on. It was effortless. This experience is a somatic re-memberance and a descriptor of what I term *chthonic sovereignty* as *chthōn* indicates "earth" (Liddell & Scott, 1940).

One vibrant experience of a living symbol emerged as I moved my body in a spiral dance as shown to me by both the arms of the Milky Way galaxy, and the animated red shawl arms swirling around the peasant woman in my dream. These body movements, propelled by sound, evoked limbic memories and tacit knowings of innate sovereignty, may have been embedded in my neural nets via song and dance when I was a child. In turn, the form of the Scottish dances and tunes are shaped by the needs and intentions of those who homesteaded and defended those particular places on Earth, as well as by the instruments they could make. The motion and gestures of my 'red shawl' dream and the jig dance are made into explicit meaning by me, in the writing of this narrative. My neo-cortex and verbal function are beholding (and shaping) the experience I had via narrative, as new insights weave a felt-sense along with the image into a new memory. This movement of psyche, of body/mind integration is also represented in Figure 6, where I find the image of a Nereid, or sea goddess riding a Hippocamp, a seahorse, plying the waters of my unconscious, bringing content up into light, air, or conscious apperception and re-membering. Again, the numinosity of image and the felt sense it engenders, play an important role in motivating my somatic and mental efforts toward integration. In the next chapter I investigate this image as is has held a fascination for me over time.

Chapter IX
The Nereid and the Hippocamp



Figure 6. Roman Mosaic, Third Century: Nereid on Hippocamp.

A Nereid, or sea-goddess, rides the Hippocamp, or seahorse, who is swimming or galloping along the surface of the ocean (Figure 6). At her feet, dolphins are frolicking in the waves alongside them. All the figures have eyes that gaze straight out at the viewer. The mosaic was on the floor of in wealthy Roman home, in what is now Tunisia, where this mosaic resides in the archaeological museum of El Jem, Tunisia (Abed, 2006).

What do the figures in this mosaic denote? Dora Kalff (1980), a Jungian analyst who pioneered Sandplay therapy, offers a lens for the (sea)horse image:

First of all, the horse is a symbol of the instinctual sphere. On this level, it is closely connect with man in the relationship of horse and rider. In fairy tales, the horse leads lost prince home. The horse is often mentioned as being clairaudient and clairvoyant. These capabilities make it a psychopompos (a leader of lost souls). The winged horse of Greek mythology is Pegasus who opens the spring, Hippocrene, with his hoof. For this reason, the capability of bringing the unconscious (water) to light is attributed to him. Horses further symbolize psychic energies, because of their fast gate and intensity (horsepower). (p. 94.)

Seahorse and rider show confidence and grace as they journey up and down from the unconscious to the conscious, accompanied by playful dolphins, which give us a hint as to how this motion is achieved. The importance of play for creating what Stern calls shared feeling voyages (2004, p. 172) will be elucidated in the following paragraphs.

Also importantly, I find an echo of the up and down motion of both the dolphins and the Nereid in the gesture of the figure 8, a living symbol for the movement of dialogue along the ego-Self axis.

Living Symbol in Mosaic

The Nereid in figure 6 embodies what I call Aphrodite's gaze as she represents an awareness, via her wide open eyes staring straight out at the viewer, of this dialogue, or movement of our memory through the waters of life, the *aqua permanens* of psyche. The dolphins are delighted; they leap and see as well; their gaze echoes that of the Nereid and of the Hippocamp. The 'gaze' that creates a safe transitional space is hopefully experienced with early caregivers, but it may also be experience via depth psychological interactions with a living symbol and embodied movement as well as with other human beings who can play, appreciate and move with psyche in a shared container of love and acceptance. Acceptance is a compassionate move in that it does not try to change the

other. Play fundamentally involves acceptance of the other, just as they are. Play also invites the inner other, the unconscious, into active participation in the present moment. I find that play is a function of engagement with the other that opens us to many new realms of experience in a spontaneous manner. The image of the dolphins playing while looking directly out at the viewer, along with the Nereid and the Hippocamp plying the waters, suggests the experience of “the voyage of riding vitality affects across the span of a present moment” (Stern, 2004, p. 154).

Impulse and reflection are both encompassed in the act of playing, as one shares a rich psychic landscape of creativity with another. Gesture and laughter can be hallmarks of play. Humans are not the only creatures who play, as many animals appear to interact with one another this way, as otters and dolphins leaping up out of the water and diving back down into it may be at play with the elements and each other. I certainly was enlivened, perhaps certain neural networks lit up in my body/mind, by being in the ocean with Spinner dolphins as they leapt up and came back down into the water.

Play and Dolphins. Neurobiologically, dolphins are unique mammals in that their two brain hemispheres sleep at different times – they alternate to be able to be conscious enough to breathe, as they must swim up to the surface of the water for air. There are many examples of dolphins in mythology, from the rescue of Enalus from his leap into the ocean to join his sweetheart in the depths to the assumption of a great dolphin form by Apollo who lead a Cretan ship to Delphi where he established his oracle and shrine of Apollo Delphinus, to modern stories of encounters with dolphins in the wild. I have a friend who was in deep exhaustion and despair over the failing health of her son. She went out on a boat trip advertising encounters with dolphins in the ocean off

the coast of Kailua-Kona, Hawaii. Although she had no prior experience, Susan was approached by a pod of Spinner dolphins that surrounded her and seemed to include her in their playful pod, and ultimately lead her to view a live dolphin birth. I have a photo that she took underwater of a dolphin with its eye closed, facing her camera. It appears to be sleeping. The dolphin must have felt safe enough to be so close to her. She was overjoyed by this meeting with the dolphins in their frolicking, birthing and sleeping mode. The next day when she went out again, a few of the dolphins had pieces of plastic bags or straps on the tips of their fins which they would pass off to one another in a kind of game. Susan reported that her sleep problems disappeared and her heart was lightened immensely by these joy-filled dolphins. It has become so popular to go on guided trips for swimming with dolphins that an industry has sprung up, complete with regulations, in the state of Hawaii, as when dolphins appear they usually are in play or feeding mode. Tour boat visits may disrupt their behaviors, so the commerce is restricted.

I also swam with the dolphins in Hawaii and I find a lot of joy in their movement through the sea. With a snorkel mask on, I watched the Spinner dolphins leaping up out of the water and diving back down into the ocean. In my witnessing of the leaping up out of the water and diving back down under the surface, the felt sense of the movement of up and down, from body to mind and from mind to body, from unconscious waters to light filled brain, was experienced on an implicit level. I know this because I took such delight in being in the water with the dolphins and watching their play and leaping. Perhaps they are scouting for food or other dolphin pods, or perhaps they are just playing. From a vantage point above the water, when I was on a boat, I saw the dolphins passing off a plastic bag to each other, from the end of their flippers. It looks like playtime to me.

In myths, dolphins carry gods or humans through the deep waters and bring them up to a new place – a theme of death and rebirth into a new mode of being. They act as guardians of the spirit, and replenishers of the soul and journey companions through the depths. They are mammals who show us how to swim and cavort in the waters. Donald Kalsched (1996/2004) comments:

Mythic images cement the symbolic relationship between that intelligent “center” in the unconscious psyche which Jung called the Self and the miraculous, intelligent, playful and uniquely human-related denizen of the underwater world, the dolphin. This connection, and its primal guardianship of the personal spirit, are seemingly as old as mankind (p.59).

The Transcendent Function and Ensouled Place

Jung (1966) claimed that the process of developing the transcendent function would lead to "a considerable widening of the horizon" and "a deepened self-knowledge" which might also "humanize" us and "make us more modest" (p.137). The more we engage in this work, the more fully we can be with others in the world. Finally there would be, Jung (1973) wrote, "no distance, but immediate presence" (Shulman-Lorenz, H., & Watkins, M., 2002, p.298).

To me, this widened horizon includes the earth, the cosmos, the dirt or concrete under our feet, animals, plants, people, and even buildings. Craig Chalquist's words in *Terrapsychology* (2008) speak eloquently of gifts found in a *locus* of ensouled place:

Every spiritual awakening not only blossoms in a particular place, it amplifies the sense of emplacement, of one's special place in a living world. The lowliest stone or mustard seed can ignite this epiphany of return, and send the bemused seeker home. (p. 112)

The final frontier of a locus for me, given my inferior function being that of the sensate, that “special place in a living world” is my own body/mind and psyche enlivened by my conscious reciprocal awareness of the archaic, chthonic ground of a much larger world.

The symbol of the dragonfish and the gesture of the figure 8 are not the ends in themselves; they evoke a new attitude, a felt sense of reciprocity with which I move

through the day. Shifting back and forth between egoic and contracted modes where my personality in its habitual shortcomings may call the shots and then moving toward the deeper, interrelated, expansive mode of the Self, I am less likely to become stuck in a state of chaos or rigidity. In addition, via an active imagination engagement of the wheel of awareness, I have more freedom to access choice, to feel my breath and body and then invite to mind and heart the intelligence of the hub, wherein I may relinquish the controlling top-down mind habits, freeing myself and others to relate in a more skillful, fluid manner.

Hippocampus - Enriching and Consolidating Memory

As memories are lit up and mirrored with new conscious associations, I value the part of me that can dance and delight in nature and images and music – I feel embodied. When my associations and creative expressions are valued by others through their beholding or mirroring, I imagine rich neural connections are made and often new narratives or attitudes emerge or are remembered. A sense of joy, fullness and even self-forgetting seems to change the nature of time, with this special joy of sharing with others. Figure 6, the *Nereid riding the Hippocampus* has become a living symbol of this inner reality of experience for me. The naked sea goddess gazing directly out at the viewer, gracefully rides with one hand in the bridle of the seahorse, and one holding her flowing scarf, through the ocean, up and down across the cerebral and limbic waters of our wet body/brain, with dolphins leaping in the waves at her feet. The movement and the animals symbolize the deep neuroplastic shaping which occurs when we play and share life intimately with others. The hippocampus is a regulating gate between the numinous and the separate feelings in the brain (Newberg, 2001, p. 87). As a living symbol for me,

the act of the Nereid riding the waves of information flow from the felt sense of the body in response to an experience of the numinous, or with another person, there is a softening of the ego and the new imprints from the Self are received and woven into memories ripe with enriched meaning from the transpersonal center. Another way of being in dialogue with the *Other*, this movement along the ego-Self axis, is how I see this celebration in the image of the Nereid riding the hippocamp – the Nereid is the caring observer, the choice point of the gaze, as she directs the memory as meaning making in the hippocampus of our brain. Our imaginal faculty can be used as a regulating feature in our brain and limbic system – perhaps we can attend to what is numinous to our body/mind to be transported to a unitary state. The felt sense invoked by caring observer in me is Aphroditic in character: alchemical and transforming. The reciprocal gaze will take in the good OR the sublime in order to be more awake, aware, at choice, sovereign. Empathic apperception is a choice point of our gaze either within, or in beholding the world.

The image of the Nereid symbolizes the conscious intention to engage my imagination and associate new or broader meanings and narratives to traumas or good times experienced in the past. Water also brings to mind tears and emotions. In the next section I will address the potent therapeutic function of intentional memory formation, via an exploration of an image of another beautiful woman in the ocean.

Chapter VIII

Madonna of the Rock

Top-Down Imprisonment and the Living Symbol

An image that captivated me so much that I had to hang it on my wall is a large painting called *Madonna of the Rock*, an acrylic on board in an old wood frame:



Figure 7. Painting by Tom Gardner: (25" W x 35" H)—*Madonna of the Rock*.

I saw the painting *Madonna of the Rock* at an art show I happened to stop by at the San Geronimo Valley Community Center in West Marin in the spring of 2006. The

light and shadows reflected on her face, and the waters teeming with fish delighted my heart and eyes. I was overwhelmed with a compulsion to take it home. Even though I have worked in many art galleries over the years, I had never purchased a large painting before. After a day or two of deliberation, “She” won. I was captivated by the solemn brown-eyed woman, a personification of a place on the earth that I know pretty well, as she beholds creatures in the waters, swimming as fish and dolphins, like the creatures that human beings evolved from long ago. The artist has blended the image of the Madonna with Alcatraz Island, located in the San Francisco Bay. Her countenance, the same colors as the rocks on the island, exudes a lunar glow, even as it is lit up by the setting sun in the west. A sense of familiarity with the actual site, as I have sailed around Alcatraz Island many times over the years, gave me a satisfying *felt sense* of the special place in which I had lived. The lively quality of western sunlight playing the colors of the rocks of her face, the reflection of the water in her eyes, the moss in her hair and pale blue and pinks in the cloud halo above her head is remarkably true to what I have seen at different angles up close and afar, from a sailboat. I can hear the waves lapping the side of the rocks and birds jostling for scraps as I see this painting and yet the image evokes the presence of a woman, as well as the place. As this memory is activated by viewing the painting, my love of the place and the beauty of the metaphor for a way of being that *Madonna of the Rock* represents fills me with a sense of peace, and my body/mind relaxes. Of course, the prison on top of her head is a disturbing element, but she seems to bear it calmly.

James Hillman (1991) talks about personification: “Loving is a way of knowing, and for loving to know, it must personify. Personifying is thus a way of knowing, especially knowing what is in the invisible, hidden in the heart” (1989, pp.46 - 47). It

seems to be a natural tendency in the human psyche to anthropomorphize or make mythopoetic images as ways of relaying the feeling of a place or object, as it is taken in by the gaze to neural circuits around the heart. As I am drawn to this particular personification in Figure 7- *The Madonna of the Rock*, I notice her wistful attitude of contemplation and solid posture of the eternal witness of the waters of the San Francisco Bay. Quietly beholding the aquatic life teeming in the water around her, she patiently bears the mark of the outcast and imprisoned in our world, as the very top of her head is colonized by the remaining brick and metal edifices of Alcatraz penitentiary. She is an icon of contemplation of the inherent tragedy and beauty of the embodied condition as she brings the graces of the spiritual, a beholding far beyond the apparent. She is reflectively beholding all without judgment, as the waters of feeling, or the tears of grief are rising up to her nose. This Madonna beholds creatures in the bay, with a prison on her head. She stands her ground while the waters are rising, a compassionate presence.

Siegel (2007) describes what I perceive this image represents, in IPNB terms:

Direct experience gives rise to the sense that mindful awareness involves the dissolution of the influences of prior learning on present sensation. This is the way we diminish the effects of automatic top-down processes and it enables us to create that state of ‘nonjudging’ experience (p. 134).

Becoming reflexive enables us to move beneath the walls of these top-down prisons. Reflective thinking engages imagery as the fluid language of the mind that disrupts the automatic ways in which as adults we tend to become limited by inflexible descriptive summaries of experience (p. 326).

Gazing at this painting melts some of my habits of top-down mind judgment and brings an implicit knowing of a caring observer forward, into the hub of my awareness. Perhaps then I may behold the sorrows in the inner and outer world without being overwhelmed.

Water as Symbol

The symbols that have arisen in my inquiry process reveal an interesting journey from water, then to the ocean, and finally to fish and then to Aphrodite as she emerges from the sea. Water has been my favorite substance for a long time. I had a dream in college that has stayed with me about the nature of water on our planet. In the dream I saw water in many different places – as the ocean, as a pond, a flowing stream in a pristine valley, and finally as a pool of murky water that had collected inside of an old tire in a dump. My dream ego's eye went all around the world focused on water. As I saw each action of H₂O, I felt an increasing sense of love – that water is love for all of us, it carries all, connects all, flushes all, abides in all creatures and beings and forms, even old tires. The dream left an indelible sense of water as the medium of loving kindness on our planet. Jung (1959/1968) said:

Water is the commonest symbol for the unconscious. The lake in the valley is the unconscious, which lies, as it were, underneath consciousness... Water is the "valley spirit," the water dragon of Tao, whose nature resembles water—a yang embraced in the yin. Psychologically, therefore, water means spirit that has become unconscious. (pp. 18 – 19)

In the next chapter I will elaborate more on the aesthetic nature of the therapeutic imagination in a beautiful rendition of Aphrodite Anadyomene, "She who emerges from the Sea".

CHAPTER X

Mythic Metaphors and Collage Work

Aphrodite Anadyomene



*Figure 8. Collage (2007), detail of Aphrodite Anadyomene image from Seddon Boulet, S. (1990/1998) *The Goddess paintings*.*

This image is the central feature of a collage I made as a depth method in 2007. To amplify the meaning, I explored the avenue of self-dialogue (Moustakas, 1990) with archetypal resonances speaking from place via sculpted or painted image, as did the

ancient Greeks through their pantheon of Gods and Goddesses, to see what resonated in a felt sense or tacit knowing manner. When I read about the title of the main figure in my collage, the meanings in the image were enlivened, and lead me on to further associations. In fact, as I was looking up the mythical birthplace of Aphrodite of the Sea, I found that it was in Paphos, on the Greek Isles, where she came to shore, accompanied by the graces and carried on a shell, propelled by gentle winds. A photo of the cove of Paphos, where the mythical *Aphrodite Anadyomene* (She who emerges from the Sea) is historically believed to have come to land, appeared on my screen. Instantly, I remembered a dream image of a huge resplendent teal fish appearing in a cove on a Greek isle. The similarity of the landscape was identical to the photo of the cove at Paphos. I was astounded. So this numinous fish was somehow symbolic of Aphrodite! Perhaps She was the caring observer in my teal fish painting (Figure 3) as well. In one mythological tale, Aphrodite transformed herself and her son into fishes to hide in the waters amidst the reeds to escape Typhon, the great West wind that wreaked havoc. I associated Typhon with the assault of the disembodied spirits or the hot winds of the inflated ego. To take refuge from the assault, the goddess went under water, and perhaps into the unconscious, or into the body.

Here is the classic myth of the birth of *Aphrodite Anadyomene*:

And so soon as he [Cronos] had cut off the members [of Ouranos, the sky god] with flint and cast them from the land into the surging sea, they were swept away over the main a long time: and a white foam spread around them from the immortal flesh, and in it there grew a maiden...and came forth an awful and lovely goddess, and grass grew up about her beneath her shapely feet. Her gods and men call Aphrodite...because she grew amid the foam. (Theogony 185-200, Perseus, n.d.)

I can imagine that the mythological sky-god *Ouranos* is my demon mind, cut off, raging and an unhappy product of unruly animus domineering energy...egocentric to the max. My demon-fish! And it went flaming down into the water! My own flaming, disconnected mind, illustrated by my demon-fish painting, is like *Ouranos* the sky god's testicles, cut off from his body, disenfranchised and unconscious libido! *Aphrodite Anadyomene* was born from the foaming that occurred when these 'members' hit the surface of the ocean. The flaming bits of seed from sky god fell into the body, the waters, the unconscious and a marvel was born...perhaps this is the mythological rendition of integration of the disconnected cultural mind with the eros of our earth/sea body of humanity and instincts. *Aphrodite Anadyomene's* emergence from the foaming on the surface of the ocean represents the union of these opposites – psyche/soma, body/mind, spirit/nature. Her mythology heralds the generative force of relatedness, regard and compassion as a new form of human empathy that became recognized and celebrated in the ancient world. Her qualities of reciprocity, openness, receptivity embedded in a sense of sovereignty indicate an emerging configuration in human consciousness. Bolen (1984) writes about Aphrodite consciousness, “which provides the energy field or the backdrop for communication or creativity to happen.Discovery—the birth of something new—is a key element in creativity and communication” (p. 229).

Collage making

“In reflective thinking, the movement to imagery disengages the descriptive categories of information processing” (Siegel, 2007, p. 255), thus freeing our experience from past habitual modes of the top-down neural net assemblies (p. 325). This freedom points to a sense of sovereignty for me... to have my psyche come alive in imaging

experience within my body/mind with a very fresh and unfiltered flow from the unconscious. The activity of cutting images and making a collage was very interesting and nurturing, especially in a group of people. As sense of un-self-consciousness emerged as we all sat around the table intently scouring the materials for images that spoke to us in no pre-determined ways. I found that the collages I made from this day still hold patterns of meaning and have a transformative effect on me. The images I pasted were the planting of the seed for my thesis process. The new imaginal realm for the perceptual processes that emerged from an image in the collage, unbeknownst to me at the time was, that of Aphrodite/Venus gazing up out of a large gold collage board, resting on a beeswax sheet that I placed there. What came to life, the new experience, was a desire to share in the happiness of Aphrodite – I had actually pasted the phrase on the collage above her head. Clements, Ettling, Jenett and Shields (1999) speak of the place for a muse in Organic Inquiry methodology:

So we may see that at one end of a continuum which represents the process of an organic study, we find the spirit of the research topic as a muse or a deity, perhaps a personified image with a twinkle in her eye who knows the truths of the topic under investigation. She holds universal teachings and is ready to share them with the world.

As I see Aphrodite Anadyomene beholding the night sky and all the creatures in her field of view, I see that she is not alone. Indeed, she has many ‘other selves’ within her body. She floats effortlessly, completely relaxed in her birthplace of foam – a mixture of seawater and air. I have done this in a modified manner, when floating on the ocean in a fairly calm place. To fully relax, I must trust my body and the forces which hold it. I cannot see behind me, or know what may be coming. In active imagination, reflecting upon her image in my collage (Figure 8), I experience a felt sense of this as

well. The sensation is very similar to what I feel when I speak of *the mystery behind me*. Trust is required - I must rely on an internal somatic wisdom to know how to flex with the currents and where to re-orient for air if the waves inundate me – as if there exists an internal gyroscope. On dry land, when I can remember this felt sense of something much larger and far beyond my control is just at my back, I am living in this trusting state of somatic knowing and my normal dry demon fish ego mind is “relativised” – it is no longer ‘command central’. I find this very relaxing as it opens my body/mind/soul to a much larger world than my normal mode of operating. When I bring this awareness into my everyday world, via intentional attunement with the bodily felt sense of this collage image, life holds a sense of flow.

Transcendent Function and the Act of Aphrodite’s Gaze

Did the reflections with my collage of Aphrodite Anadyomene and with the demon-painting process constellate the *transcendent function*, the hallmark of ‘holding the dialogic tension’ between the opposites? Possibly, as Jung talks about evaluating a symbol as in a dream-image or fantasy as “constructive treatment of the unconscious [which] paves the way for ...insight into that process which I call the transcendent function” (1960/1969, p. 75). The transcendent function leads to a state of integration, or wholeness, as Jung (1959/1968, p.183) states:

As I have shown, the alchemical fish symbolism leads directly to the *lapis*, the *salvator*, *servitor*, and *dues terrenus*; that is, psychologically, to the self. We now have a new symbol in place of the fish: *a psychological concept of human wholeness*. (emphasis mine)

The dragonfish as metaphor for embodied way of being, going up to the world above the waterline and then back down again, swimming with a natural grace or ease, brings to mind memories of being held in the buoyant salt water as an experience that

brings a deep sense of peace and vitality to me. Perhaps this rhythm is the mediatory movement of the Transcendent Function between the known and the unknown, the conscious and unconscious. The movement of the internal rhythm could be seen as swimming like the fish in the waters... or as a dolphin, coming to the surface for air, leaping up out of the water to view its location, spinning, and back into the depths of the sea to locate its pod or food.

The repose of Aphrodite Anadyomene in the collage image (Figure 8) conveys a felt sense of relaxing into something vast, yet unpredictable, while feeling held. This correlates to the somatic experience of floating on the surface of the ocean and to the felt sense of the mystery behind me, which I represented with a mass of black feathers in Figure 1. There is also a sense of receptivity to what is being perceived. From this place of support and fluidity, I can engage the caring observer more often and choose to relate with the *other* from a place of wholeness rather than neediness or complicity.

The fish is also our phylogenetic ancestor (Shubin, 2008). After a long while I have come to realize that this fish is also my body. Even though I painted my demon as a fish like creature in many instances, it did not dawn on me that the fish could also be my mind, split-off from my somatic senses, appearing in demonic form, with spines or flames coming out of its body. But the up and down symbolic movement and gesture of the dragon fish from the unconscious to the conscious was the gift, to feed my separated top-down egoic mind with the waters of life, sensations from my body and heart. I found that the dragonfish became a living symbol to light up my body/mind in the reciprocal gesture of movement, pulsing between the part and the whole, and almost numinous in its affect.

Figure eight gesture and inner attunement. My psyche was impressed by the felt-sense of the dragonfish (as discussed in Chapter V) via the motion of rising to the surface of the water and dipping back down into the sea. This became a physical gesture of a sweeping figure eight motion of my right arm and hand, which opened up new ways of moving and feeling. Taking time to be in a completely natural environment usually opens me to an experience of an enlivened sense of place, a place with its own rhythm, and surprises. Allowing it to inform my physical and emotional body, even if unconsciously, has been both natural and important to my experience of life as it seems to promote a sense of ease and inner attunement. The gesture reminds me to inhale up-breathing from the belly up to the top of my lungs—then exhaling fully, softening down the front of heart and belly. As this figure 8 motion also represents my own breath and aliveness, with freedom of movement between the contents of my mind, my emotional states and the centered state of Self. I can then relate to the image of the hub and wheel and hold a space for the compassionate witness or the caring observer to behold all the parts of myself as well as others with deep compassion and regard. My adaptation of the energetic posture – the compassionate yet sovereign *equipose of Aphrodite Anadyomene* is my resolution – the re-wetting of the dried up spiny puffer fish, back to into living in the waters of life, back to being embodied with soulfulness, knowing both the above and below in my own suffering and loving, and giving gracious room for others to be just as they are. It is a big ocean, after all.

Caring Observer: The Gaze of Aphrodite Anadyomene

The skills of shaping our awareness include mindfulness, “a form of relationship with the self” (Siegel, 2007, p. 325) which “helps harness the ‘hub’ of our metaphoric

wheel of awareness” (p. 324). To be no longer automatically reacting from my deeply grooved neural pathways of reaching out to see what others need of my energy before I consider my own needs at all, I am now in a more wholesome relationship with my body/mind and heart. I may now move, breathe, cry, desire, love and be, as a sovereign person. In contextualizing the new neural pathways being made, my conscious awareness may now apperceive the *other* while I am “allowing” or referencing the intelligence of the field to “handle” demanding affects of the *other* person or situation. In the equipoise of Aphrodite Anadyomene, I do not have to take in an emotion or need of another, and react out of my own habitual patterns. This feels very good and true; there is a felt-sense of clarity and ease as the best for all is at hand, rather than the best for one over the other. There is no burden of being in this open state. In fact, it sets the stage for a deeper and more vibrant reciprocity with others, for a possibility of a true marriage of eros dancing with psyche as it exists in my body, heart and mind and that of the larger world.

In the IPNB framework Siegel (2007, p. 324) speaks of a “dynamic equilibrium” that seem to be present in what I experience as the felt sense of the *equipose of Aphrodite Anadyomene*, as she is the caring observer in me. His description of dimensions of reflection and integration is what Aphrodite’s gaze encompasses for me:

Being receptive, opening our awareness to whatever arises from the rim of our wheel, creates a spacious mental center of gravity that enables body, mind and relationships to achieve a state of dynamic equilibrium. We can actively note and assess the contents of our own mind as mental events, not the totality of who we are.A reflective mind has awareness of awareness itself. (p.324)

It seems highly probable that the psyche and the psychical are not two independent parallel processes, but are essentially connected through *reciprocal action*... (Jung 1912/1928, p. 18, Italics mine).

Psyche's inherent ability to bring forth images that my body/mind can relate with for healing and wholeness is the gift of the numinous constellation of the Self archetype. My love of the expansive vista of the night skies is captured well by the image on my collage of Susan Seddon Boulet's painting of *Aphrodite Anadyomene* (Figure 8). As I look at the collage image my vision lengthens and my upper body relaxes as I see her floating on the seafoam, surrounded by beloved animals and resting her head on the gentle luminescence of the moon. The depth psychological practice of active imagination allows one to 'try on' and embody new physical and psychic attitudes, new ways of being. In the neuroscientific view, emerging research is pointing to the positive utilization of imagery for integration and self-regulation, as well as the positive influence of the loving-kindness meditation practice (Siegel, 2007, p. 200). When I am able to deepen my attention into the spaciousness of *Aphrodite's gaze*, it feels as if the archetypal force of the Self in the center of my hub of awareness gives my ego and body/mind a sense of capacity to navigate the turmoil of life, as well as a much needed sense of self-acceptance. Edinger (1972/1992) describes the Self as "the center and totality of the psyche which is able to reconcile all opposites can be considered as the organ of acceptance par excellence. ...this sense of acceptance of the Self gives the ego its strength and stability" (p. 40). It is from this clear space of self-compassion that I can practice loving-kindness.

Empathy and mirror neuron theory. The vertical integration of brain hemispheres and neural networks into our body is associated with the von Economo neuron - the spindle cell that whales and dolphins and horses have as well. It is called the "mirror neuron" and it is the link between the effect of an image on one's psyche and how

one embodies it to the way the other person or creature is feeling or intending, as their postures and gestures belie (Badenoch, 2008, pp. 30 - 31). Ideally, an embodied sense of open curiosity and non-judgment allows the intelligence of the space between people to configure without an overlay of neo-cortical invariant representations that take command of our behaviors. I believe that this can also come about intra-personally, via depth methods of painting implicit felt sense images, allowing them to inform us of novel ways of being that liberate our stuck psychic energies or complexes. This is an instance of the *dialogic movement, a pulsing back and forth*, on the ego-Self axis. For example, while working with the quiet, numinous large teal fish in my first demon painting (Figure 3), perhaps a representation of the caring observer, and simultaneously seeing the demon-fish painting of my dissonant egoic mind state (Figure 4), the image of a dragonfish emerged to *represent the movement* of the demon-fish or the teal fish in my hand gesture of the figure 8. For me, this dragonfish is a living symbol of moving between the opposites. In a simplification the fish moves from my unconscious – the implicit ocean of my body to my conscious mind, the explicit neo-cortical will and processes. It also represents the pulsing between my personality and ego, and the larger Self. The silent witnessing of the teal blue fish, which had also appeared in a dream, gave my ego a new figure to relate with, a new mirror-neuron experience.

Apperception of an *other* starts in our nervous system during the attunement with our primary care-giver. I am positing that a form of attunement can take place via active imagination with imagery. Progoff (1973) writes about therapeutic method of active imagination as developed by Jung:

Active Imagination calls for an intense attentiveness to the larger and more significant figures and symbols that arise out of the deeper layers of the

unconscious in dreams and fantasies. Underlying the development of this method was Jung's conception that the psyche carries all the necessary answers within itself. He was not thinking in terms of consciousness, however. In fact, his conception was quite the opposite of the conscious introspections that looks into the personality for self-analysis. (pp. 77 – 78)

For Aphrodite Anadyomene, the ocean and sky were her primary 'other' as she was born, held on the seafoam, fully matured. Mirror neurons fire in my body/mind as I gaze upon *Aphrodite Anadyomene's* serene face, and I feel the vast ocean behind me, holding her body as she floats. A relaxed feeling of *sovereignty, a being-at-home-in my body, heart and mind* comes through my back. This quality of sovereignty, of being not pulled upon by demands of my own demon-fish mind, or that of other people's, creates a gracious space for my own body/mind and heart. From this place arises a pure energy of appreciation and re-quite to all that I perceive, whether of the *other* or that within myself. The practice of relating with people and animals while being able to hold the gaze without identifying with or judging content or agenda, but as we both simply exist in pure spaciousness, is work I am building up to. Non-reactivity is a core feature of mindfulness (Siegel, 2007, pp. 209-210).

The initial sense of wonder that I experienced years ago, represented by the image of the spiral that I place on my file folder entitled *Mystery Behind Me*, returns to mind now, years later. I feel that the gesture of the spiral represents an attention to interiority and a creative subjectivity that is an interior witnessing presence. There is a sense of vitality emanating from the spiral shape: *eros* is the full, compassionate and active beholding of myself and others, through acceptance and celebration, rather than a reductive shaming or a harsh judgmental stare that demands change, as the face of a wrathful god, angry parent, or even a straight line, might represent. The emergence of

the spiral image as a young girl drawing a picture of “god”, and of the cover on my file folder labeled *The Mystery Behind Me* has revealed itself to me as a living symbol of *eros*, the relational feeling engagement with the world.

The image of a sovereign goddess (Figure 8), a spiral adorning her forehead, held by the surface of the sea and surrounded by many forces, many creatures and many wonders, evokes a strength and constancy as I engage in a somatic and visual active imagination with the image as painted by Susan Seddon-Boulet. As a felt sense emerges and fills my conscious awareness, I find that Aphrodite Anadyomene is the caring observer in me! She is reflected in the creative and loving force of my soul, at the hub of the *wheel of awareness* within me, as it is informed by all the energies and elements of our cosmos. She beholds the sweeping movement above and then below earth’s horizon line of her namesake planet, Venus, known as both Evening and Dawn Star, as she sinks below into darkness and resurrects back up into the night or daytime sky.

The archetype of the inner stream of ‘intending to attend’ is what She evokes as a felt-sense of a vast, compassionate awareness, thus my ‘dark body’ is lit up when I *intend to attend from the hub or center of spaciousness*. It is the beholding of what is in my world, on the wheel – all the content – impressions, feelings, knowledge, complexes, memories both conscious and unconscious, as the world exists in my psyche as well. Recovery of feeling function, being more aware of the life of my body fully, accepting the vicissitudes of life and the promise of suffering and death, along with the joy of sharing time with others, are some of the gifts from knowing *Aphrodite’s gaze*.

I find that *Aphrodite’s gaze* is a movement or action which *is* the third thing, the transcendent function, the action or movement between ego and personality which is the

human quality of embodied choice or sovereignty, and the underlying ground of the vast container of space, which is Love. The human quality of sovereignty as one relates to self and other with a deeply loving regard rather than a needy ellipting or pushing away allows either people or creatures to be present and undefended. I find that there can be a deep sense of quiet enjoyment and ease.

CHAPTER XI

Conclusion

In the framework of this project, I have investigated occurrences in which the Self archetype emerges in image, living symbols and experiences, as prompted by and revealed in my symptoms of fragmentation and an unnamed over-arching anxiety as well as in moments of resonance and attunement with a deep peace and sense of relatedness. The heuristic methods used have allowed me to observe how my own life self-organizes within the movement of the Self archetype, revealing dark places of disconnection and alienation, and then constellating movement, thus furthering intrapersonal attunement, as I deepened into the work. Study of the IPNB models for attunement have yielded a working model that I can return to for practice in re-connecting with the core sense of self as part of the caring observer in my body/mind.

Attunement internally emerges as we sense the primary “who” beneath the secondary chatter of our busy top-down minds. It is this internal attunement with our primary self that yields the powerful feeling of coming home. As poets have so often urged us to consider, we live so far from this person who has loved us for so long but has been so blindly ignored: our primary self. (Siegel, 2007, p. 372)

As my investigative project is concluding, many threads are weaving a new sense of well being and gratitude for all the experiences, good and bad, I have had along the way. Allowing grief to accompany me over a long period of time and open inner spaces that needed conscious tending, taught me more empathy for myself and others.

One gift that emerged is the gesture of the figure 8, which has become a living symbol of movement of the butterfly, of psyche, reminding me to practice integrative breath and attend to the experiences of my ego, body, mind, heart and soul with the compassionate regard of the caring observer, seen from the perspective of eternity in the

moment. The butterfly with wings opening and closing also evokes the gestural movement as the figure 8 of my hand, reminding me of intrapersonal and interpersonal attunement, the dialogue between self and *Other*, and the fluidity engendered via the integration of neuropathways in my body/mind. The movement along the ego-Self axis, constellated by the Self archetype, is the act of Aphrodite's gaze, honoring my 'dark body' and opening the way for true regard of others.

The butterfly as a living symbol of this movement reminds me to embody and be aware –it enliven my neural nets, opens my heart and creates what I call *Soul Space* – a feeling of a vast clarity, presence to the environment, and love and deep appreciation for life and all those I share it with. This Soul Space is what is real, underneath all my mental and emotional obscurations. I may easily slip out of this Soul Space, but am reminded when I see a monarch butterfly or experience inner attunement with the outer world.

I believe that intrapersonal as well as interpersonal attunement can emerge over time with practices of self-compassion including the active imagination or mindful awareness of the caring observer for self and others. *Aphrodite's Gaze: Honoring the Dark Body* describes a method of beholding the life experiences of my own body, heart and mind from a transpersonal center, enlivened by numinous experiences. My hope is that the reader will attend to the numinous in his or her life with fresh regard!

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