

COMING HOME.  
A  
JOURNEY BACK INTO THE BODY



by  
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There are age old themes about life and its meaning that have arisen throughout all of mythology, religion and psychology, and perhaps there are few so often imagined as that of the "Journey". I see the images that arise out of my own journey, a journey into psyche, as being both haunting and enticing, all the while compelling me to move forward. Yet it is strange, each step I take echoes something of the past. And it is in this journey forward that I hear the voices calling me back, insisting, no demanding, an ear. It is difficult to imagine that as I encounter the "unexpected", what appears is most often a design woven from the strands of the past. It is as though each truly alive moment contains within it the possibility of all previous moments of my life's experience. These fibers entangle me, and in a not so subtle way, remind me of earlier times when I crossed through the territory from which they originate. The moment becomes an experience which still retains the particulars of the past; informing, molding and actually shaping the self I perceive myself to be. Some of the strands I welcome because of their intricacy, color and beauty. Others are worn and at times very disturbing to view. However, I am compelled to follow them to their originations. Each of these threads extend far beyond the "comfort zone" of the moment. As I feel their tug and am reminded of their presence, I feel wary of where they will lead...but follow I must.

I am reminded of the Dreaming of the Aboriginal's and their description of the "Song Line".

each totemic ancestor, while travelling through the country, was thought to have scattered a trail of words and musical notes along the line of his footprints, and...these Dreaming-

tracks lay over the land as 'ways' of communication between the most far-flung tribes. A song...was both map and direction-finder. Providing you knew the song, you could always find your way across the country. (Chatwin, 1987, p. 13)

I write this paper as a ceremonial enactment of my journeying...my dreaming. I invite the images and call up the feelings and voices, asking that they come to inform and to guide me. As I follow these threads back, I follow my tracks and see in the dust the tracks of my ancestors who have walked this path before me. I wonder, "have I forgotten the song...have I lost my way"? The images, the feelings and the voices, come to me as I attempt to recover my song and remember my way. Yet it feels like such a lonesome journey. So few seem to remember and so few are able to guide. Some have called this form of journeying the "Hero's Journey", the "Path of the Warrior" or the "Way of the Healer". I call it Life.

Following this imaginal ancestral song line I will attempt to piece together a picture of what may have contributed to my early retreat from the body and my taking of refuge in the mind.

The mind does not exist as an entity in the individual's scheme of things provided the individual psyche-soma or body scheme has come satisfactorily through the very early developmental stages; mind is then no more than a special case of the functioning of the psyche-soma. (Winnicott, 1975, p.244)

By discussing my awakening to this mind-body split and subsequent journeying back into the body, I ask myself "how do we build a bridge which really holds over the secret area of the body-mind divide?" (Coltart, 1982, p. 198). I will consider aspects of developmental theory as discussed by Winnicott, Stein, Rank and others. My intention is to follow my path while listening closely to their words as an aid to recovering my song. I listen to their story of early childhood in my continued effort to remember my own.



We are told that "man leads a half...walled away life" that "part of ourselves is buried" and that we must journey inward to locate "that which has been placed on the back burner" (Geis, 1988). Frances Wickes, a leading Jungian Child Psychiatrist, suggests

Experiences of timeless realities may come to the very young child...as the child grows older, problems of the outer world press upon him. His ego must grow to meet the demands of greater consciousness and numinous experience may appear to be forgotten by the ego, but it is remembered by the Self- that Sage who from the beginning lives in the psyche of the child and speaks the defining word in time of peril.(Wickes,1966,p.ix)

This has been an important aspect of my journey. And indeed I might even say that this is where my journey began. In my early twenties, during the Vietnam war, my life as I knew it came to an end early one rainy wet-leafed fall morning in Athens, Ohio. I had spent the night working on a single calculus problem so difficult and lengthy that I had to wax the slide rule several times in the process of my calculations. I was not doing all that well in Engineering School, near failing as I remember it. The draft board breathed a hot, dank breath from over my shoulder while I worked through the night. As a matter of fact, all that I feared seemed to coalesce that night into this thing that sat behind me and seemed to mock me as I drove myself relentlessly forward. I imagine it now as a dragon. He had taunted me for years and threatened to emerge from his dark cave whenever I would rest or veer from my steady march forward.

Because of its unconscious component, the Self is so far removed from the conscious mind that it can only be partially expressed by human figures; the other part of it has to be expressed by objective, abstract symbols...Theriomorphic symbols...the dragon. (Jung, 1959, par. 315)

Guntrip presents a concept he called "The Basic Human Dilemma" meaning that we are "born into a situation in which...[we are]... unable to lay the foundations of a strong ego development, and have grown up feeling at bottom inadequate to the demands of living" (Guntrip, 1969, p.179). He sees this "ego-weakness" as being at the "core of all personality disturbance" (p.179). Winnicott tells us of the "False Self" which organizes to hide and protect the "True Self" (Winnicott, 1965, p.142). In either case my identity was closely tied to Engineering School, family business, sports, fantasies of marriage and children, and the War. These became concerns that filled my every waking moment and made up what I then considered to be my self. In my attempt to avoid that dragon which lurked in the shadows, I clung desperately to this "picture" I believed to be me. Guntrip saw such attachments in patients who "operated all [of] his parents' standards against himself even though he disagreed with them. There is deep loyalty to the parental mores" (1969, p. 203).

However, the dragon emerged with a roar of flame from its dark place of hiding and my picture began to melt.

"I therefore am the One and the Many within me." In these words the dragon makes it clear that he is the chthonic [relating to Gods or spirits of the underworld] forerunner of the Self. (Jung, 1963, par. 296)

I had given my full effort to solving this one calculus problem. Coffee and "No-Doze" pushed and jangled me through the night. A close friend and classmate had come into my apartment to gather me for our usual walk to class. After he arrived, we were discussing our choice of problems for the take home test. It turned out that we had each chosen the same one. He insisted upon taking a look at my approach to solving the problem and was

beyond curiosity to know my answer. Reluctantly, I handed him my stack of calculations. Within moments I felt him wince. As he tightened, my entire body convulsed and began to shake. Something major was happening; something beyond words was coming to light. It was too much for me to bear. I began to fall, as though down a deep tunnel. As I was receding into this unknown distant place I could hear his voice as an echo, compassionately telling me that I had made an error early-on in my calculations. An Error! I looked on from this distant place and there it was, right on the first page. I had made a calculation that took me onto a divergent path. I had come up with an answer and it was a correct answer; but it was an answer for a different problem. And my mistake occurred at the very beginning!

At the very beginning! In some mysterious way this struck a deep cord within me and the vibration from this began to shake my very foundation. I was able to hold it together only long enough to tell my friend to go on to class. I told him that I would catch up with him later, yet little did I realize, at the time, that "later" meant eight to ten years. As I closed the door behind him, my world as I knew it began to crumble. Indeed I had made a miscalculation early on... a mistake. I had left something undone...some part of myself was left behind. This calculus problem became symbolic of my entire life to that point. Because of what was being revealed, I could no longer deny that for most of my life I had been "working on the wrong problem". My mind began to flood with images from a time when I was the center of my world. It was a time when color was so brilliant that I could eat it. Smells were not something that would pass by in an instant, they became a vehicle which transported my very being into



that from which the fragrance came. It was not a time in which I experienced life...I was life.

Whatever else the child may suffer from, it does not suffer from remoteness of life, normally...it is fully alive...the child is an inner possibility, the possibility of renewal. (Von Franz, 1979, p. 65)

All that was repressed came back with the fury of a tidal wave. The dragon I had fled for so many years began to emerge from its dark abyss and with no where else to go I turned to face it. My relationships, my schooling, sports, goals, everything fell to pieces behind me. I walked inward into the darkness and was alone. Neumann says "...it is [in] the darkness where recovery takes place, and also those events in the soul which in obscurity, by processes only the heart can know, allow men to 'out grow' their insoluble crises" (Neumann, as cited in Weinrib, 1983, p. 25). Without a guide and with no maps, I took a step and realized that my life as I knew it was over. If I was to continue, I would have to walk back into this dark place alone. "The way forward is indeed the way back" (Hillman, 1975, p. 22). My journey began.

\* ← I was on an unavoidable journey back, in an attempt to remember what had happened that caused me to turn away from so vital a part of my life. Stein asks "What is going on inside when we are caught in this ego trap that makes us so mistrustful of our instincts?" (Stein, 1974, p. 90). Yet how can I say that I returned because "I" as was known to me at the time began to dissolve. My experience was like that of a child's and the world became immense. Fantasy and dreams were real! My world, now full of magic, was at times terrifying but was never more alive.

The archetype of the child...as Jung saw...[is the]...prefiguration of every change that we go through in depth...all the faces of

the repressed, the personally forgotten and the primordially unknown, will return in a child-like style. (Hillman, 1975, p. 21)

As Jung again points out

Childhood is not only important because it is a starting point for possible crippling of instinct, but also because this is the time when, terrifying or encouraging, those farseeing dreams and images come from the soul of the child, which prepare his whole destiny. (Jung, 1960, par. 98)

I recall a dream where I am standing on a huge, infinitely large ball and it is black...it is all black. There is another large planet that extends in all directions as far as I can imagine and it is about to touch down on the exact spot where I am standing. I am paralyzed with fear and the weight is tremendous. This dream occurred over and over in my night dreaming. It haunted me and left huge holes in my understanding. I worked this dream many times but each time it eluded understanding. Certainly it spoke to me of a time when the world was too much for me to bear; a time that was too much to endure for a child and therefore repressed. Perhaps it speaks of a time when the anti-libidinal forces began to take their toll. These came in the form of relentless emotional and psychic abuses from disturbed family members and a family minister who deceived me. I possessed a sensitivity — beyond which my world could embrace. I could find no place in the world which would receive that which I perceived as "me".

They [children] have all developed the art of not experiencing feelings, for a child can only experience his feelings when there is somebody there who accepts him fully, understands and supports him. (Miller, 1981, p.10)

Eventually I directed my will against that part of myself which I imagined was causing me the most pain. Guntrip speaks of this as the "antilibidinal ego", a concept of Fairbairn's which acts "against needs and



[it] is basically an internalization of the outer world's intolerance of the needy infant who is regarded as a nuisance to be kept quiet" (Guntrip, 1969, p. 183). I left the richness of my play, in the streams and the dirt of the wooded ravine behind my house, and attempted to fit into a world that seemed totally alien to me.

"When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things" (I Corinthians, 13:11, King James Bible).

I joined everything I could think of joining...sports, choir, orchestra, church and Boy Scouts. I joined in an effort to ignore how separate I was becoming inside. To be who I was became too painful to bear. So I imagined "another" and tried to live up to that image. It is Guntrip who tells us that "In order to achieve this repression of his original self, the child must borrow an ego from elsewhere to do it with" (1969, p. 205). I distinctly remember, as though seeing through the eyes of an old wise man who lived within me, that I was giving up a part of myself. I have no doubt now as an adult, that when I was perhaps five or even younger, I was aware of losing my innocence and purity. I remember a deep feeling of grief at this loss and a tremendous fear that what I was leaving behind could never be reclaimed.

The story of Adam's exile from the Garden of Eden shows that there is a certain time in a man's life when he is in the Garden of Eden, and after that time he is exiled from there and no longer experiences that joy and happiness and freedom that once the soul possessed. There is not one soul in this world who has not experienced the Garden of Eden, and that Garden of Eden is babyhood. (Hazrat Inayat Khan as cited in Armstrong, 1985, p. 52)

Eventually, as a young adult in college, I became the very thing that I as a child perceived as so threatening to my survival. In a sense I became

self castrating. "We have eventually learned to clip our own wings, castrate ourselves and to wrap these muscular bands tight enough..." (Geis, December, 1988). I became disembodied and was capable of action, thoughts and words that too, were disembodied. In other words I could cause harm to myself or another and not be aware of the pain until long after the action, if at all.

Woodman tells us that "the more quickly the ego moves ahead, the more terrorized the body becomes. The task then is to find some means of going back to the point of wounding to reconnect with the abandoned child. The body, like the child, tells the truth..." (Woodman, 1985, p. 55).

The truth about our childhood is stored in our body, and although we can repress it, we can never alter it. Our intellect can be deceived, our feelings manipulated, our perceptions confused, and our body tricked with medication. But someday the body will present it's bill, for it is as incorruptible as a child who, still whole in spirit, will accept no compromises or excuses, and it will not stop tormenting us until we stop evading the truth. (Miller, 1986, p. 316)

Shehorn relates that "it costs everything to go your own way" and reminds us of the words of Rume with "sell your cleverness and buy your bewilderment" and with the words of Rank he tells us we are to "live the irrational" (December, 1988). This all suggests a Will that is capable of withstanding the opposition that arises both from inside and outside when one takes such a stand. Perhaps as an adult this is conceivable; but as a child it would have meant certain destruction. Childhood is a time when survival means adaptation. In all societies, that which sticks out is cut off; so best to hide it or better yet, bury it deep within so that no one is the wiser.

Wilhelm Reich spoke of an armored body and an armored soul.  
And you can armor yourself, or life can force you to build such

an armor. But firstly, such a lot of energy goes into building such an armor. And secondly it doesn't allow you free movement. Last of all it armors you against the good things as well as the bad, which is the vicious thing about armor. You develop it to protect yourself from bad effects. But it protects you equally from the good influences, or should I say, it prevents them from reaching you. And that has something to do with the human psyche. (Bettleheim, 1962, p. 219)

It is only when one has the power to protect and nourish one's own uniqueness that one dare take the risk of letting others know of its existence. Yet so often we, ourselves, forget that we have something so precious buried so deeply within.

Moments when the original poet in each of us created the outside world for us, by finding the familiar in the unfamiliar, are perhaps forgotten by most people; or else they are guarded in some secret place of memory because they were too much like visitations of the Gods to be mixed with everyday thinking. (Milner as cited in Winnicott, 1971, p. 39)

In hindsight I can realize that a core part of my being was terrified and under heavy repression and that the dragon was an image that embodied all that was denied and repressed within me. I can perceive my quest and eventual slaying of this dragon as a spiritual journey back, to free the energies that were laying dormant, and to begin a reclamation of that True Self. By slaying the dragon, I began to reclaim and embody all that was previously hidden within me and denied a place. I can say that I began to heal a split between body and mind.

I can acknowledge that what was repressed was seen as a weakness by others and eventually by me. And in denial of this aspect of myself this hostile, unconscious figure arose to embody all that was being repressed. It came in numerous forms to haunt me and to eventually demand my attention. At times this part of myself was seen as something to be disposed of and



even despised, for to claim and attempt to hold on to it, would have exacted too great a price. At the time it may have threatened my basic survival.

The False Self was once in the service of my True Self by walling it off and enwombing it, so as to allow it to incubate, and find protection and nourishment from within. However, that which was once the protector eventually became the jailor and acted to repress this aspect of my self which lay buried within. This was the beginning of a betrayal; one aspect of self turned against another and the outer False Self worked to repress and inhibit the True Self that lay within. Eventually the dragons began to emerge to wreak havoc on the outer False Self as a reminder that something early on was neglected and left behind. This all culminated one night around the calculus problem. It was no longer possible to ignore the "buried life".

A person can give up conscious expectations, but attitudes deeply rooted in unconscious feelings of early childhood cannot be given up until they become conscious and have been experienced not only by the present but in relation to the past. (Miller, 1986, p. 76)

The dragons were loose and had to be acknowledged. The journey began and I found myself on the path. The path to re-covery. This suggests that the dragon was not something to be slayed, for this negates a whole aspect of the psyche. The dragon was, in many ways, my ally. Imagining the dragon allows the invisible to become real. Much like the explorer who returns from a long journey to tell us his tales of the experience, the figures of our imagination emerge and hint at something mysterious and not quite knowable. In a sense they become the messengers who bring with them a song from a land we may never visit.

How often do we mistake the messenger for the message; and if the message displeases us or we don't understand it, how often do we attempt

to slay the messenger? Perhaps the land beyond is not so much the part of ourselves which we left behind or buried. Perhaps it is something much greater. Perhaps the messengers that speak of this land are sent from those who have walked a similiar path before us...the ancestors. Perhaps what is important is only that, the quest, and not what we imagine to find on that quest. Perhaps it is only necessary to ask the questions and listen to the words of the story. For after all "if you knew the song you could always find your way" (Chatwin, 1987, p. 13).

Tim,

I am impressed by how much of the theoretical material you could integrate into your personal account.

The opening image of the ancestral song line also closes your piece. To view the figures of the image as sent by - & as representative of - our ancestors rings a note within my thinking of late. They <sup>had</sup> their own song - and as I gope forward - hearing & feeling their lives within me becomes even more crucial.

Michael

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