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Newsletter: more about Véronique

1 message



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MORE ABOUT VERONIQUE

METALEPSIS SEMINARIANS, 9-ERS, AND AUXILIARY MEMBERS:



The soul-psyche theme is worth your time to consider a few overlooked points.

1. Don't be tempted to oversimplify

The literature dealing with the soul is rife with sentimental rot. You have to develop a strict disciplinary attitude here, meaning you must follow my advice about "parsimony" (finding the simplest possible means of describing things so that you can notice how the "variations on the theme" contribute and interact to the traditions of art and literature).

2. Look out for "symptomatic" behavior of scholars

As we have seen in the case of Hestia-Hermes, there is a temptation among scholars to see what they wish to see, to make a "case" for some value or outcome. This has led to a back-projection of a conceptualization — something the mythic mentality could not do! — on to the behaviors and beliefs of the past. We can see correlates of concepts in mythic thoughts, but mythic thought does not and cannot think "conceptually." There must be some drive to impose an

alien structure onto the past by seeing it as content rather than performance. We all do it, but we try, like all good psychoanalysts, to "reduce the number of symptoms" and make them less harmful.

3. Trust some sources more than others

I mentioned Richard Onians at the retreat. His book on European thought is excellent and, although it leaves many questions unanswered, has essential clues. For example, one of them is about the "herms" that some scholars have emphasized as sexual. Actually, Onians points out that the head-to-phallus boundary marker of ancient times was representing the *gens/genius* of the family, since the head was regarded as the source of seed. This made the herm a direct connection to *Hades*, the home of the *manes* (ancestral spirits). This is consistent with the use of the original herms, the pile of stones, as places of silent trade, where the wealth of Hades/Pluto was imagined as the source of traded goods. Overlooking the Hermetic role in silent trade led to a premature gendering of Hermes and simplification of the "kind of space" he represented. Gendering the crossroads is premature, because we know that Hekate/Diana was just as much a part of the boundary tradition as was Hermes. In any event, personification and, hence, gendering, came late in the mythic tradition.

4. Psyche as trial etc.

The Cupid and Psyche story is useful in sorting out the various traditions relating to the various kinds of souls we encounter in tradition. Read *The Golden Ass*, Robert Graves' translation of Apuleius's Latin novel. That way you will never forget the blindness/invisibility component of Eros or its relation to askesis. In *La Double Vie de Véronique* we need to move immediately to other kinds of twins, especially ones who have something to do with architecture. Romulus and Remus and Castor and Pollux come to mind, the former for the documented stories about the foundation of Rome, the relation of this story to the Curtius myth, and the actual archeology of Rome, where "silent trade" led directly to the priestly function of undertakers located in the area that would become the Forum Romanum. Read Paul Wheatley's *Pivot of the Four Quarters* to prove to yourself how the funerary function precedes and prepares for the civic function.

The twins thing has to do with the relation between life and death, so immediately we know that the uncanny and double inscription is involved. Go to the calculus to figure this out!!!

Castor and Pollux are twins in that classic mythic situation where there is one mother but two fathers, one mortal one immortal. (Note that in the story we have two fathers but this perhaps means that there is one father with two aspects, an aspect of particularity and an aspect as a *psyche*, i.e. a family name). Anyway one twin is immortal and the other mortal as a result, and when the mortal one is killed the immortal one makes a deal with Hades to allow them to rotate seasonally. When one twin is in the underworld, the other gets to live; then they rotate.

This idea of twins who rule separate domains means that these domains "can't be in the same place at the same time" but are otherwise paired, the idea of AD, right? And the twin who is in the underworld to give his brother a chance to live, that is DA, right? Well, now, Véronique is going to teach us something about the uncanny!

The shadow seems to be necessarily attached to the object that makes it, but in mythic thought there is some possibility of detachment. A shadow can be harmed and the harm will then come to the person whose shadow it is. Yoruba culture for example has elaborate precautions protecting the shadow of the king and other important people from this kind of abuse. The shadow is an "orthogonal projection" of the living person, so we might consider that death is an "orthogonal projection" of life, that Hades is both attached and detached from the earth of living things and looks like a "gamma" letter: Γ.

This is how Weronika and Véronique are related. One dies "so that the other may live," and Christians always remind us that this is the principle of sacrifice that is key to any religion. So, a theme we visited earlier that sounds like simple religious superstition, the resurrection of the body, makes more sense if we say, by "body" that the influence of death will be realized in material terms.

5. The material imagination

With the planning for the upcoming second Frascari symposium, there is a lot of interest in the expression, "material imagination." One of Marco's points was that the material imagination expressed itself through narrative rather than

rational explanation. This distinguished him from the other famous "material imagination" guy, Gaston Bachelard, whose four books on air, earth, fire and water as imaginative vectors opened up the way to connect psychoanalysis to material investigations. This is not "crass materialism" of mechanistic explanation, but rather the insistence that materiality, being MUTE and BLIND, gives us access — unlimited access it is claimed! — to chains of predication that will be unlimited. Note that "unlimited" means that predication was FIRST limited (set within a causal sequence) and THEN set free, thanks to delayed predication, detached virtuality, and other devices such as cross-inscription (i.e. "twinship") where the causal chain could be disrupted and a place (a "site of exception") could be made for metalepsis.

When metalepsis comes, it comes as an "already-always" thing that has been there but just not been recognized — the stranger among our midst. Thus the \emptyset/\emptyset formula, which is both the phallic rule and the principle of anamorphosis-style invisibility, is important. The \emptyset/\emptyset is Castor and Pollux, the guys who call Simonides outside to the empty street just as the banquet hall (a.k.a. prytaneion) collapses.

You will want to re-think Perez-Gomez's account of the prytaneion once you know more about Castor and Pollux; Simonides gives a subtle critique of all of those bachelor parties ("satesis") where guys praised each other and kicked the women out but kept their 'estia. You will want to rethink the conceptualization of space as either one thing or another. You will want to resist conceptualizing things like space and time — that are ESSENTIALLY PERFORMATIVE — as objects or containers defined by a crass materialism. The material imagination demands that we seek a dynamic and dialectic view, that we resist systems of categories that force use to pervert mythology as conceptu-ology. This will bring bad luck! You will deserve to be cursed by Hekate and her whole crew! Don't say I didn't warn you!

P.S. Bachelard's material imagination was neither. Also, he misconstrued the idea of psychoanalysis, converting it to Jungian "depth psychology." Be wary! Read his books but be critically on your guard.



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