

# A Tribute to James Hillman: Reflections on a Renegade Psychologist

In mid-March, 2013, nearly two hundred people gathered in Campinas, Brazil, to honor both the recent passing and the ongoing legacy of James Hillman, the founder of archetypal psychology—or as he preferred to be called, in his own words, a renegade psychologist. The event was a true meeting of North and South, Hillman's favorite psychological nodes, with speakers from Pacifica Graduate Institute in California joining with speakers from Brazil. Two cultures united in their mutual respect, admiration, and commitment to carrying forward the calling of this true maverick of a man. The speakers were amongst Hillman's family, his friends, his peers, and his students, those who knew him only through his textual body and those who were embodied friends and colleagues of over thirty years. The result was an intimate, unforgettable, and engaging exchange, sparked by the ten presentations gathered in text for the first time in English.



Edited by Jennifer Leigh Selig  
and



# HILLMAN AND FREIRE: INTELLECTUAL ACCOMPANIMENT BY TWO FATHERS

Mary Watkins



## Introduction

Accompaniment, *acompañamiento*, used in the Latin American context comes from *compañero* or friend, and from the Latin *ad cumis pan*, to break bread together. To accompany is to walk alongside one another, lightening the load of going the path alone. Intellectual accompaniment can be accomplished by the living and the dead, by one physically near and by one whom we have never physically met, through spoken dialogue and the quiet imaginal dialogue provoked by an intense encounter with written works.

When Camilo Ghorayeb invited me to pay tribute to Hillman's work in Campinas, I thought of São Paulo, that city where at the end of his life Paulo Freire was entrusted with administering the then largest public school system in the world. I knew that speaking here I could not keep Hillman and Freire apart, although they never met and never mentioned one another in their work. I could not keep them apart here because it is here in Brazil that they came together in my life in 1985 when I adopted my oldest daughter from Natal in the *Nordeste*.

My life has been graced by my experience of them as intellectual fathers: Jim through his books, mentorship, and friendship, and Paulo through my deep immersion in his writings. Often those surrounding each of these men found my deep passion for the other's work highly suspect. I trusted in my own sense that while each of their works presented itself as a completed world, that only together, backed up against one another, did I begin to get a sense of the totality of the task before us, as psychologically minded people concerned with the deep economic and social divides between people and the frightening lack of regard for our effects on the natural world that has come to imperil all earthly beings.

Freire and Hillman lived in quite different worlds. Their social locations had radical impact on their work, and its positioning during the 1950's-1970's. We can see this clearly by their very different experiences of exile. Freire was forced into a painful and prolonged political exile after imprisonment for his political commitments. Hillman engaged in a self-chosen exile from his country, stepping aside from the politics of the day—except that is from the politics at the Zurich Jung Institute, which eventually double-exiled him back to his home country. This second exile situated him back home in a way that wider politics began to matter to him. Only in the 1980's did Hillman undergo a reorientation that brought his own understandings closer to Freire's. In the last decades of their lives both were grappling with the effects of globalization on communities.

Paulo Freire (1921-1997) was born in Recife, in the northeast of Brazil, five years before Hillman was born in Atlantic City, New Jersey, son of a successful hotelier. Freire began his life in a solidly middle-class family, with an army sergeant father and a seamstress housewife mother. Repercussions from the Depression in the United States suddenly threw his family into poverty. Freire recalled that while sitting in his classroom as a young boy, unable to concentrate on his lessons due to hunger, he silently forged a commitment to work on issues of world hunger when he grew up. Indeed, he did address hunger, but it was hunger for a sense of voice and agency, hunger for understanding the world one has taken as inevitable and unchangeable, and hunger to

seize the "vocation of humanization" in order to transform the world one lives in.

After an extremely brief period as a lawyer, he launched a lifelong work on a radical revision of educational practices, contextualizing them in the local historical and political circumstances of the students. His work was fed by the Christian socialism of the 1960's and 1970's that rejected excess greed and the exploitation that it feeds on. He began creating cultural and literacy circles in the 1950's in northeast Brazil. He linked the gaining of literacy with learning to decode the socioeconomic and political configurations of power that scaffold one's everyday life. The method he evolved of developing critical consciousness entailed literacy work in a group based on dialogical practices, led by a group leader called an "animator."

Participants were asked what generative words, words at the heart of their daily experience, they would like to learn to read and write. With each word the animator asks questions to bring from the group their knowledge about the lived context of the word. For instance, "water" is a crucial word for a region alternately devastated by droughts and floods, a region where water rights are controlled by forces outside of ordinary people's influence. Generative questions would seek to help the group pull together their knowledge of the situation they found themselves in: Who controls the water? What are the illnesses that come from tainted water? How does water become polluted? Was it always so? Did people used to have access to more clean water? If so, what changed? Initially, said Freire, we accept our daily reality as inevitable, natural, and normal. It is only by beginning to reflect on it in the company of others that we can begin to see how it is constructed. Often then we tend to blame ourselves or particular others for the way things are. With further questioning and dialogue, however, we can begin to see into the deeper societal arrangements that create our daily experience. It is only at this point that we can begin to imagine things otherwise, and we can exercise prophetic imagination with others to vision a more preferred reality toward which we can work in solidarity with others.

In 1961, he was asked to initiate a literacy program that would



involve teaching five million people previously denied education by institutions of neocolonialism. As in the United States where it was also forbidden to teach slaves how to read and write, such deprivation was used in northeast Brazil to disempower the masses and make claims of their inferiority easier. Such claims then rationalized abuses of laborers, as they do in the United States. Many were consigned to conditions of poverty, malnutrition, and illness in order that a few in power could profit.

In 1962 he directed a project where 300 rural farmworkers were taught to read and write in 45 days. In 1963 President Goulart invited Freire to rethink Brazil's approach to literacy and to coordinate the National Literacy Plan. Freire and his colleagues set up 200,000 cultural circles to host the emergence into literacy of two million Brazilians. A coup d'état replaced Goulart with a repressive military government. Shortly after the coup, Freire was imprisoned for 70 days, and was called an "international subversive," a "traitor to Christ and the Brazilian people," and was accused of trying to make Brazil a Bolshevik country (Gadotti, 1994, p. 35).

While in prison Freire grasped more deeply the essential connections between education and politics. The landowners had understood that through education the peasants would become aware of their social situation and begin to organize to improve their situation (Gadotti, 1994). He was exiled and moved his family briefly to Bolivia, where a coup led to his working in Chile on issues of agrarian reform, organizing peasants and small farmers, and consulting on literacy issues. He relished studying his method in another context, always claiming that a particular locale had to develop its own generative words and readers. During his time in Chile he was able to complete at age 47 *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, first published in 1968, translated into dozens of languages, while being banned in most Latin American countries as well as the Iberian Peninsula during the years of his exile. His method has affected critical dialogical practice on all continents.

In my remarks today I want to draw attention to that fertile crescent of ideas that grow where the independent springs of Hillman

and Freire's works co-mingle. As we face into the gathering storm of globalization's rapacious desires, we need both a psychology of how the oppressed can transform the situations they are born into and a psychology of how what Hillman called "white consciousness" can make a jailbreak from the "tiny cell" of the ego that has predisposed it to see the world as dead and lifeless. While Freire borrowed on Erich Fromm's work to describe the necrophilic character of oppressor consciousness, Hillman grappled with this mode of being at close range. From his own early adult experience, he came to be very aware of how white consciousness can ignore the difficulties of the world, choosing instead only the psychic interior for its engagement.

I first encountered Hillman's work when I was 22, and Freire's when I was 34.<sup>1</sup> In both cases I had a sense of being taken under the wing of a work, a work in both cases that I would devote years of my life to. In my late forties I began an essay comparing and contrasting their thought: "Seeing Through" and 'Critical Consciousness': A Conversation between the Work of Hillman and Freire." It is only since Jim's death and upon your invitation that I have felt the freedom to

<sup>1</sup> I met Hillman first when reading *Suicide and the Soul* (1964/1997) a book recommended to me by my Jungian analyst when I was 22 in the wake of my discovering a woman patient at the hospital I was working in trying to kill herself. In 1973 I went to Zurich to study at the Jung Institute and hoped to approach Hillman to become my analyst. Only when I arrived in Zurich did I find that he had returned to Yale University for the fall, where he had first delivered the Terry Lectures in 1972. These lectures were soon to become *Re-Visioning Psychology* (1975a). In January 1974 he returned to Zurich and gave the lectures at the Jung Institute. The lecture hall was brimming with listeners and there was an unusual stillness and concerted concentration in the hall as he delivered these talks. At the time we could have only mis-named why. In retrospect, it was a beginning moment of the archetypal psychology movement, a movement that stirred and challenged the Jungian community and that was to provide needed critique and extension to depth psychology more generally.

Ten years later in 1984, working as a clinical psychologist, I was on the verge of becoming an adoptive mother to a baby daughter from northeast Brazil. My "pregnancy" was not the growing of a usual seed. My hunger was not for strange food combinations, but for everything "Nordeste": northeast Brazilian music, poetry, politics, and history. In this feasting I met the work of Paulo Freire through reading *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1968/2000), a work that has sparked movements for liberation throughout the world.



return to this essay. Thank you for this invitation.

Despite Freire and Hillman's many differences in life experiences and emphases in their work, they shared several core ideas and orientations: the difference between ideas and ideologies, the work of seeing-through ideas or critical consciousness, the relationship between reflection and action, a suspicion of dualities and a desire to overcome the contradictions they impose, the critical role of the imagination in human life, and our interdependence with one another and with nature.

#### Seeing Through and Critical Consciousness

How different Freire and Hillman's processes of developing consciousness were! Freire always worked with people in groups, believing that this empowered them to begin to think together about their shared situation; Hillman worked for decades in the dyadic arrangement of therapy, until he chose to abandon therapy, assessing that it was often part of the problem for the Euro-American person. Then he too often moved to the group, first in men's gatherings with poet Robert Bly, and then in classroom encounters that grew to be highly dialogical at Pacifica Graduate Institute and other places. He would later say that if groups were not sources of increasing consciousness, we would not find the right of assembly denied when a single point of view is trying to gain ascendancy.

At the heart of their work was what Hillman called "seeing-through," and what Freire called "conscientization" or the development of critical consciousness. Both sought to denaturalize the taken-for-granted, to reject the lies in many dominant narratives, and to seek knowledge that has been marginalized and even disappeared.

#### Ideas and Ideologies

Both men's stated goals—soul-making for Hillman and

humanization for Freire—are foundationally dependent on working with and through ideas. Whereas Hillman initially focused on seeing-through psychological material and personality issues, through the 1980's he moved to seeing-through societal and ecological conditions, much as Freire had already been doing.

Hillman asserted that "soul-making takes place as much through ideation as in personal relationships or meditation" (1975a, p. 115). Indeed, his opus is a staggering gift that teaches us at every turn how to live in relationship with ideas: loving them, critiquing them, turning them, seeing-through them, wrestling with them, being devoted to them, being animated by them, sacrificing to them, and caring for them. Hillman wrote, "We are always in the embrace of an idea," and our "wrestling with [them] is a sacred struggle" (p. 121).

Freire saw ideas as the scaffolding of our societal structures, and as the *prima materia* with which we transform our world. For both men, it is our unreflected identification with and possession by ideas, which condemns us to mindlessly repeat the past and support the destructive status quo configurations of the present. Hillman saw this work as "dethroning the dominant fantasy ruling our view of the world" (1975a, p. 41). Ideas need to be seen through, reflected upon, taken up as things that are created and which can be transformed. Hillman warned that psyche without ideas turns to ideologies. "Psychologizing sees through what is taught; it is a learning beyond any teaching" (p. 133).

For Freire, the radical is one who can think critically. He is able to doubt, to suspend circles of certainties within which reality is imprisoned. "He is not afraid to confront, to listen, to see the world unveiled" (1968/2000, p. 24). Such bold sight has the goal of transforming the pernicious aspects of reality in concert with others.

When ideas are unworked, the reality they spawn is experienced as natural or inevitable. The experiencer is, in turn, a passive victim. "The soul seems to suffer," said Hillman, "when its inward eye is occluded, a victim of overwhelming events" (1975a, p. 123). Psyche desires vision. "Ideas," said Hillman, "are the nodes that make possible our ability to see through events into their patterns" (p.



121), “dethroning the dominant fantasy ruling our view of the world” (p. 41).

It is the posing of questions for Freire, questions that lead people to reflect on the given, that allow the generative ideas of a situation to surface, and to be reflected upon. For Freire the process of grasping the ideas that structure everyday experience allows us to partake of a process of humanization, which he saw as our ontological vocation. It is this seeing-through that liberates us to create with ideas, rather than only be a victim of them. Hillman and Freire agreed that seeing-through is never accomplished once and for all, but is a continual process. Freire warned that without this ongoing reflection, oppression reoccurs, even if it is the former victims who now perpetrate it, having simply identified with the consciousness of their former oppressors.

The kind of education that both men would seek is education that both exposes ideas and allows us to envision by means of them. The liberation of ideas from the blindness of ideology is a key value for both thinkers. Then, said Hillman, “Ideas are ways of seeing and knowing, or knowing by means of insightful. Ideas allow us to envision and by means of vision we can know” (1975a, p. 121).

### Reflection and Action

For both men, “action and idea are not inherent enemies, and,” as Hillman asserted, “they should not be paired as a contrast” (1975a, p. 116). Hillman saw reflection as an activity and “action as always enact[ing] an idea” (p. 116). He spoke of our needing “to bring soul into action, and action into soul by means of psychologizing” (p. 117). Ideas change practice, he said. “When an insight or idea has sunk in, practice invisibly changes. The idea has opened the eye of the soul. By seeing differently, we do differently” (p. 122). Given Hillman’s commitment to ideas and his relative lack of interest in method and practice, it is important to underscore his clarity about this. Freire also stressed the necessity to move between action and reflection, and thus

not to split into either an activism devoid of reflection or a kind of reflection that degenerates into mere “verbalism.”

Freire, like Hillman, was committed to overcoming contradictions, not being caught in them. He sought to overcome identification with either pole of the duality of oppressor and oppressed. He knew how easily those who have been subjected to oppression can nevertheless identify with the oppressor and breed more oppression when they have seized power. “Man in the process of liberation” was the alternative for Freire to the oppressor-oppressed duality.

### The Problematizing and Relativizing of the “Modern Ego”

Hillman did not focus thematically, as Freire did, on colonialism, coloniality, or the effects of colonialism on the psyche. His work, however, can be read as a gradual attempt to problematize—using Freire’s language—aspects of oppressor consciousness, certain forms of the Western or Euro-American ego. As early as 1972 in *The Myth of Analysis* we can begin to track his suspicion of the Western ego, his characterizing it as the most unconscious aspect of a person. He saw its heroic proclivities, and often characterized it as “the conquering ego” or “the imperial ego.” Hillman, a son of the First World, was beginning to work his way out of psychoanalysis’ lauding of the ego. His critique unfolded like a gathering storm that burst upon first Jungian psychology’s adoration of the Self and the individuation process, and then upon a host of embedded assumptions with depth psychology generally about the function of the ego.

As others since have realized how colonial discourse became embedded in the psychoanalytic project, Hillman was listening to the imperialism in the way that Freud characterized the task of the ego: “To strengthen the ego, to make it more independent of the super-ego, to widen its field of perception and enlarge its organization so that it can appropriate fresh portions of the id, where id was there shall ego be. It is a work of culture” (Freud, 1964, pp. 99-100). Hillman read as



“Romanizing” Freud’s metaphorical image of the ego as draining sea-marshes to reclaim land.

In *Myth of Analysis* (1972) Hillman spoke of the ascension of the psyche to the head in 18th century philosophy and saw this as a beginning “of the contemporary fantasy of a ‘strong ego.’” This new ego, he said,

appeared in fears of softness and the influence of Venus, in the strengthening through iron, in the search in the brain for the essence of personality, in the notion of madness as a disorder of brain mechanisms and breakdown of control, in the doctrines of racial and male superiority, in the peculiar rationale of managed torture as therapy. . . .

Most of the language of psychology developed within the same context which saw the rise of the modern ego. This language reflects its context, a psyche identified with the head and without eros, an “empire” of the hard, strong, materialized ego. Thus the descriptions and the judgments in this language cannot help but reflect the point of view of this structure of consciousness, to which we are so habituated that we have come to call it “ego.” Each of us accepts this collective structure so unthinkingly, so irrevocably, that each believes it to be his very own unique and private “I.” (1972, pp. 153-154)

Hillman saw that the identification with the idea of centered rule by will and reason co-constellates an unconscious marked by disintegration and fragmentation. He wants us to see these as styles of consciousness: the center and the periphery, each with their own values, strengths, and patterns of fantasy.

He was looking at how divisions in the self, such as in schizophrenia, were beginning to end the “rule of reason” (1975a, p. 25). Cases of multiple personality, he said, confirmed

the multiplicity of the individual at a time when the same phenomenon was beginning to appear in the culture in general.

Through this multiple schizoid perspective we saw a world no longer held together by reason, no longer held and centered at all. Instead: disordering spontaneity, relativity, discontinuities, aharmonies, an overpopulation of spirits and living soul images—the return of archetypal persons. (p. 25)

He saw central command losing control as individuality of the parts assert themselves against central authority. He was aware that this happens also in grassroot movements, but in this period he was doggedly concerned with the psychic dynamics.

Hillman railed against what he understood as ideologies of development that were consistent with the imperial ego. “The model of thinking is nineteenth-century,” he said, “a primitive Darwinism of evolution, dominant over recessive; a psychological imperialism, colonizing the unconscious or the id with a reality-coping ego consciousness” (1972, p. 184). Hillman said, “We still tend to think of ‘development’ as a progressive march whose retreats are only for a better leap forward. . . and which is modeled upon the hero’s opposition to an irrational imaginal world beyond his powers of control” (p. 184). He understood that “the conceptual structure of psychopathology ha[d] arisen parallel with the specific ego development of the past century and a half” that he was describing (p. 184). A move to the imaginal ego involved removing oneself from the path of development of the heroic ego, the ego of mastery and control, of self-sufficiency, and individualistic achievement. “The imaginal ego,” he said, “is more discontinuous, now this and now that, guided as much by the synchronistic present as by the causal past. . . . It includes the downward turns, the depressions, recessions, and fallings-away from awareness. Psychopathology has its place; it is necessary” (p. 184). He wrote that the movement of the imaginal ego should be conceived more as a circle than as a linear development.

During this same period Freire was also concerned with development, but in his case it is the idea of development and progress that was thrust on some societies by other societies. As liberation theologians had also argued, such imposition actually caused



underdevelopment for many to support the presumed development for a few. Freire and others argued that each society should be free to undertake its own path of development.

In saying "modern ego" Hillman was not including the ego of those marginalized in society. He was describing the ego of people like himself in the West. The problems of passivity, fatalism, and over-accommodation to reality as received that Freire took up as characteristic of the ego of the peasants he was working with is nowhere to be found in Hillman.

In his essay "On Anima" Hillman turned the ego on its head, saying that it is not a king but a janitor, an instrument for day-to-day coping, and that "from the traditional psychology (of Neoplatonism), ego consciousness does not deserve the name of consciousness at all" (1991, p. 33). The myth of the hero, he said, is the myth of inflation. "The hero myth tells the tale of conquest and destruction, the tale of psychology's 'strong ego,' its fire and sword, as well as the career of its civilization, but it tells little of the culture of its consciousness" (p. 32). But, said Hillman, "the ego is not the whole psyche, only one member of a commune" (1975a, p. 31).

#### Psychic Polytheism and the Imaginal Ego

In the early 1970's, in the rather closed society of the Jung Institute in Zurich, the way that Hillman proposed an undoing of this psychic empire was by a turn from psychic monotheism to polytheism, a turn to the multiple psychic figures that animate what Jung called the mythopoetic function of the psyche. In "collapsing the rule of the old ego," Hillman was aware that the "abandonment of psychological monotheism is radical indeed" (1972, p. 265).

In this period Hillman advocated for a radical change in the function of the ego, from a Romanizing ascendancy of an ever more powerful ego to an imaginal ego. This latter ego's function is far more humble. It is to host the multiplicity of the psyche through active imagination and reflection through archetypal lenses. While almost

wholly inner oriented, this period in Hillman's work was crucial to his dethroning of the ego, and his own intimate witness of the vibrant wilds of imagination that are then accessible, not only as feared inbreaks of psychic symptoms, but as regions with interest of their own, and which offer refreshment and revitalization to the parched and retired leaders of Roman legions.

In 1972 Hillman saw that "fantasies are incompatible with my usual ego, and because they are uncontrollable and 'fantastic'—that is, away from the relation to ego reality—we feel them alien. . . . *our fantasies are alien because they are not ours*" (1972, p. 182). He understood that "the ego expands. . . at the cost of childhood's godlike, dimmer light of wonder, of imagination, and the symbolic, natural mind. Creativity through the ego is necessary and yet it is a theft, a sin, a Luciferian fall" (p. 45).

A few years later in *Re-Visioning Psychology*, Hillman proclaimed with an air of certainty, "Personifying is the soul's answer to egocentricity" (1975a, p. 32). During this period he focused on the autonomy of the psyche, the capacity of the psyche to generate fantasy, to see in terms of psychic figures. His project was a decentering of the psyche through a relativizing of the ego, and an emphasizing that consciousness resides in each psychic figure and landscape, not only in the ego. In *The Dream and the Underworld* he maintained that the "first move in teaching ego how to dream is to teach it about itself, that it too is an image," to teach it how to move in the dark (1975b, p. 102).

In doing so he was clear that he was following Jung's lead in trying to develop a new kind of ego consciousness through "taking the dream ego with utter seriousness and by training consciousness to think symbolically or psychologically" (1972, p. 183). He said,

Jung thus seemed to make war on merely rational thinking, and thus he relegated the will to a smaller role. These powers of the soul, and the ego attitudes derived from them, prevented awareness of another sort. He had found that therapy in depth depended upon just this other sort of ego consciousness, an imaginal awareness that leads to another sort of ego attitude.



While Hillman saw Jung as "pointing beyond the ego concept of the nineteenth century with its emphasis upon head, will, and reason," he believed that analytical psychology had not worked "out a concept of the ego corresponding with Jung's" intuition, "which puts such stress on imaginal consciousness—dream, vision, fantasy—and on a life-style (the symbolic life) in which the ego lives and behaves primarily in terms of imaginal consciousness. The old concept of ego development is anachronistically retained" (1972, pp. 183-184). For this reason Hillman focused on what he called the "imaginal ego," using Henry Corbin's sense of the word "imaginal," pointing to an altogether different realm of the real, not the "imaginary." He proposed that the imaginal ego is that part of the ego complex that can engage in imaginal reality. This shift to an imaginal ego, Hillman suggested, would allow us to be in contact with what can heal us, a realm always otherwise beyond the threshold of the heroic ego (1972). He asks us to question our own location in the ego and to bare ourselves to encounters with those standpoints far from the center of ego consciousness.<sup>2</sup>

In *Myth of Analysis* in 1972, Hillman was conserving the individualistic self, even as he struggled against the ego. The attention is given to what arises within oneself. The gaze is inward, to the margins of consciousness, and down into the psychic depths. He saw that we are living in a sliver of ourselves, suffering an amputation of consciousness, splitting us off from libidinal springs of the imaginal. But there is no link to the larger world within which such an ego resides, no link yet made between the psychic and the social depths.

<sup>2</sup> In commenting on Hillman's idea of the imaginal ego, volume editor Thomas Moore (1991) says in *A Blue Fire* that Hillman's move toward the poetic basis of mind, moves consciousness away from heroics to "a more receptive and malleable posture." "A relaxed ego that honors the many offers considerable rewards. We find vitality in tension, learn from paradox, gather wisdom by straddling ambivalence, and gain confidence in trusting the confusion that naturally arises from multiplicity" (p. 38).

### White Consciousness

In his essay "Notes on White Supremacy," Hillman (1986) took up the white supremacy of the Northern European and American psyche that sees whiteness as superior to darkness. He tracked how this whiteness is likened both to superiority and with the supposed purity and innocence of the child. He understood how "the convention informing geographical discoveries and the expansion of white consciousness over Africa. . . informs psychic geography, the topological language used by Freud for 'the unconscious' as a place below, different, timeless, primordial, libidinal and separated from consciousness" (p. 45). This psychic geography "recapitulates," he said, "what white reporters centuries earlier said about west Africa" (p. 45). Then he made a bold claim that I would like to underscore:

It is this unconscious white consciousness that is the proper object of depth psychology, depth come home to roost, out of Africa; depth in Freud's sense of the omnipotence fantasy and Jung's sense of shadow, ever present and always mine, the very me I am now, imagining myself eternal and unblamed. . . . And so the entire modern psychological effort to raise consciousness, and the ego drafted to enact the endeavor, is one more manifestation of whiteness, perpetuating the very fault it would resolve. The project can never succeed since the unconscious it would redeem lies in the instrument of its intent, in the eye of its light. (1986, p. 46)

Hillman described the historical path to white consciousness:

As modern psychology recognized this double delusion—that its selective consciousness does not really require another and that this consciousness really does refer to another—it had to divide the mind. It had to invent the unconscious in order to remind consciousness that it could never be as white as it wishes. The "discovery" of the "unconscious" came as a late



stage of modernism, indicating its decline by turning its projective roots back onto itself. The “discovery” was actually a self-discovery, a backhanded welcoming of reflective consciousness’s own delusional base, turning the delusion into irony and joke, a way to look back over its own shoulder, to reflect its own downfall, to become “post.” The ego that feels itself as weak attempts to assert more and more control of what is alien. (pp. 54-55)

Hillman went on to describe the psychic orientation of white consciousness as one whereby one believes one is seeing others, but is only seeing oneself. Further, one is unaware that one is being seen, by human others and even other-than-human others, including night itself. White consciousness has to “discover” otherness; it has to realize that it is an infinitesimally small island in comparison to all that is around, above, and below it. White consciousness can travel far abroad without realizing what it contributes to what it falsely pronounced that it “discovers.” Its racism and the unconsciousness of its missionary zeal go unquestioned, perpetuating harm where it only sees the “gift” of its own whiteness.

The alchemical opus takes place *in vivo* as well as *in vitro*. There is the vessel of the world which too is psyche. Which too has eyes. . . . This yielding to the image-pregnant materiality of the world is how I would today define “psychic consciousness.” The world does not need the missionary; it is already converted, enlightened with its own opalescence. . . . Today we will say psychic consciousness is not creative but created, and we the world’s creatures. All we need to do is to open our eyes to its eyes. (1986, p. 52)

Until we open our eyes and see others looking at us, the world is cast as dead and we treat it as such: the people, the animals, the streams, the air, the mountains.

Here Hillman and Freire’s work back up into one another, each

requiring the other’s insights into the mindsets that both manufacture and are affected by oppression and exploitation. From the trajectory of his own depth psychological work, Hillman began to describe the roots of what Freire called “oppressor consciousness.” Freire followed Erich Fromm’s lead in distinguishing biophilic from necrophilic consciousness, and associated oppressor consciousness with the latter. “And the more the oppressors control the oppressed,” said Freire (1968/2000), “the more they change them into apparently inanimate ‘things.’ This tendency of the oppressor consciousness to ‘in-animate’ everything and everyone it encounters, in its eagerness to possess, unquestionably corresponds to a tendency to sadism” (p. 45).

Hillman began to experience the eyes of others, saying “They’ve got eyes on me; I am their referent, their text. ‘I’ have fallen out of my mind, out of the twentieth century, no place to hide and everywhere to go” (1986, p. 42). In *Myth of Analysis* in 1972 he described how “the ‘strong’ ego, that first aim of psychotherapy, is thus opposed to and then overwhelmed by the numinous Wholly Other” (p. 185). There he was referring to the imaginal other. In 1986, 14 years later, the others who were seeing him were human, animal, and earth others, in addition to imaginal others.

### Jailbreak: Ensouling the Ego

White consciousness walls itself in,<sup>3</sup> and is distressed that what it finds is always dead. Our failure to see the life in things “imprison[s] us,” said Hillman, “in that tight little cell of the ego” (1998, p. 103). This is indeed a problem for those who inhabit such consciousness, and it is a problem for all that finds itself deanimated and exploited as though dead already. From one perspective, Hillman’s work is a committed opus to the ongoing work of jailbreak, a form of psychic decolonization of oppressor consciousness.

First, he worked his way out of the imperial and colonizing ego

<sup>3</sup> “Having walled itself in, it blames it on the wall” (Hillman, 1986, p. 54).



by turning his attention to the multiplicities of psychic life, to its imaginal figures. Living in Zurich, away from his own native politics in the U.S., Hillman turned to the interior world to work within. In the 1980's, now living back in the U.S., he began to understand the enclosed psychic universe that he had participated in. In a 1994 essay, "Psychology, Self, and Community," he confessed: "I stayed there [in Zurich] until unable to differentiate individuation from alienation" (1994/2006, p. 109). He clarified that the locus of the soul was not and had never been internal to the person, but that rather the person is *in* soul. The person is ensouled, along with each and every other: human and other than human. It came out awkwardly at first, by his noticing toasters and bad chairs. Later he saw sparks of life in animals, taking note of their eachness and particularity. He found he had to abandon the practice of psychotherapy in order to facilitate his own jailbreak from the tiny tight cell of the ego, to release his noticing into the wider world. He was seeking to awaken from what he called the anesthesia of "the subjectivism of psychotherapy, as if the end of the world were an 'inner problem'" (1998, p. 125).

In his 1982 essay "*Anima Mundi*: The Return of the Soul to the World," he leveled a corrective critique against the subjectivistic and narcissistically oriented interpretive practices of depth psychology:

To interpret the world's things as if they were our dreams deprives the world of its dreams, its complaint. Although this may have been a step toward recognizing the interiority of things, it finally fails because of the identification of interiority with only human subjective experience. (1998, p. 80)

He continued,

Having divided psychic reality from hard or external reality, psychology elaborates various theories to connect the two orders together, since the division is worrisome indeed. It means that psychic reality is conceived to be neither public, objective, nor physical, while external reality, the sum of

existing material objects and conditions, is conceived to be utterly devoid of soul. As the soul is without world, so the world is without soul. (1998, p. 95)

Freire was quite clear that subjectivity should not be divorced from objectivity, from the concrete realities in which our lives unfold. Hillman came to understand the importance of the objective sociocultural context much later, but when he did, he was clear that it had been a blind spot in the Jungian and archetypal psychologies he had spent so many years working within. Once he understood that soul is in the world, and that we are in the soul, his vision turned outward. The pathology he had tracked so carefully on the interior was now clearly in the world, in our systems, our ideologies, and our relationships.

### Imagination and Annunciation

Hillman and Freire meet again in underscoring the importance of imagination. Seeing-through and the development of critical consciousness are intimately related to the capacity to imagine. Hillman said: "Ideas allow us to envision and by means of vision we can know" (1975a, p. 120).

As one develops a critical consciousness of a particular situation, one understands how the situation has been constructed, created. One can denounce the destructive aspects. The work does not stop, however, with denunciation. Denunciation opens the path for what Freire called annunciation, sometimes treated as prophetic imagination. Freire activates creative imagination by recognizing the possibility for creation inherent in all impasses. In his language, "limit situations," where we at first seem unable to imagine how things can be otherwise, are the very location where the most intense experiences of prophetic imagination can occur.

For each, there is a preparation for imagining through ideas and through a realignment of the self. Given their difference in social



location, however, the preparation is different. For the oppressed, conscientization empowers the self. One moves from a sense of being a victim of history with an attendant sense of pervasive fatalism and helplessness to a sense of oneself as able to understand and analyze in concert with others. For Hillman, who was working through and out of what he called white consciousness, the ego must relinquish its propensity to overcontrol and dominate, its tendency to attribute what is to itself. The ego must undergo a transformation in which it is humbled and finds itself in a world not of its own making. The ego, chastened and reduced from its hubris and self-enclosure, can now attend to what is unfolding, to all that is autonomous. Hillman learned this first in the realm of the imagination, and thus equated this different kind of non-heroic ego to what he called an imaginal ego.

Reading these two men side-by-side, we experience a kind of transcendent function. While Freire emphasized imagination as an empowering act that is preliminary to creating and acting in the world, Hillman emphasized the way in which imagining is a gateway for our presence to what is created beyond us by the objective psyche. If we are truly attentive to the imaginal, I would argue, we find that the objective and the subjective merge. The social, political, and economic bleed into images, just as the wild abandon of images that have yet to be embodied break out into the world to invent the new and the deeply desired.

#### Arriving at the Commons

Today we face the task of alterglobalization, of creating global social movements that reject economic and neoliberal globalization while working to protect human rights, indigenous rights, and climate and environmental well-being. When I imagine scholar-activists meeting at this global commons, Hillman is coming from the North and Freire from the South. In their conversation, the *socius* and the psyche converge, granting us clearer vision for our work ahead.

Once Hillman was clear that the soul is surrounding us, his attention, which he termed *notitia*, turned outwards to meet it. In 1988

he returned to Alfred Adler's work in his essay "Power and *Gemeinschaftsgefühl*." Hillman said that in Jung we do not have "a social feeling, fellow feeling, community concern, *Gemeinschaftsgefühl*" (p. 99). "Freud and Jung had located depth in only one place. They did not grasp the true depth in the 'out there,' in the *Gemeinschaftsgefühl*" (p. 99). He critiqued Freud and Jung for not imagining, he said,

far enough, fundamentally enough, into the disorder of the world of concrete things, government institutions, commercial practices—the physical, political, and economic unconscious—those symptoms and those pathologies. Freud and Jung and their schools internalize the world and believe it can be dealt with mainly in an internalized fashion.<sup>4</sup> Clean up your own neurosis and that will clean up the world. . . .

I think an Adlerian must see things very differently. If the out there is a primary place of the unconscious, then the ways of the world must be tackled directly. Hence, we understand Adler's interest in teachers and tailors and in the socialist movement. Politics is psychology: depth psychology is also depth sociology; to go truly deep is to go into the soul of the world. (p. 101)<sup>5</sup>

He embraced Adler's fellow feeling and renamed it "common" feeling, and then he extended it. Hillman said, "If we follow the ironic logic of *Gemeinschaftsgefühl* fully into community, community does not stop with human beings" (1988/2006, p. 104). Adler recognized what he called "the general interdependence of the cosmos from which

<sup>4</sup>This is less true of certain Freudian schools than of Jungian ones. See Ellen Danto, *Freud's Free Clinics: Psychoanalysis and Social Justice, 1918-1938* and Watkins & Shulman (2008), Chapter Four: Symptoms and Psychologies in Cultural Context, in *Toward Psychologies of Liberation*.

<sup>5</sup>Hillman continues, "Yes, power conflicts operate between parts of the psyche, Yes, there is an internal struggle to master and suppress. But let us not forget the clash of powers in the psychic depths of the world soul disguised as political, natural, social, and economic" (1988/2006, p. 101).



we cannot abstract ourselves completely!" (Adler, quoted in Hillman, 1988/2006, pp. 104-105). Hillman argued that we should not reduce the cosmos to society, to human beings only. He added "the rocks and the waters, the soil and the air, and all the material things made by the human community as well. . ." (p. 105).

When Hillman and Freire meet at the commons to share in the project of alterglobalization, they realize that they have each been involved in the work of psychic decolonization, Freire of those marginalized and Hillman of those who have found themselves inside the prison of what he called modern consciousness. Each confides how in their early thought they did not pay any attention to land, water, mountains, and animals. Freire at the end of his life was working on the Earth Charter, which is said to have been on his bedside table at his death. Hillman helped to launch the ecopsychology movement with his essay in Theodore Roszak, Mary Gomes, and Allen D. Canner's edited volume *Ecopsychology: Restoring the Earth, Healing the Mind* (1995). Hillman shares with Freire that he learned that the word "therapy" originally meant tending, caring for, giving attention to, in service of (1988/2006, p. 106), and that he came to understand the importance of "service to the soul of the world, a service that practices inferiority rather than overcomes it" (p. 106). He tells Freire how he turned to a therapy of the world, turning his eye to architecture, transit systems, schools, battlefields, the terrible love of war.

As he does in his essay about Adlerian psychology, he invokes the Commons in Thompson, Connecticut, a hundred yards from his home. Hillman riffed on the word "common": "as the village green in my New England hamlet was once a common for all bodies, human and nonhuman, to take part in common, care for in common, enjoy in common, common as ordinary, as common to all, this world so very common, so very dear, so much the source and the goal of our feeling" (1988/2006, p. 106).

What a trajectory from the imperial ego, to the commune of the psyche, to delight in the common—to the taking up difficulties-in-common! Hillman railed:

Herbicides, landfills, river pollution, strip mining, and other multinational agribusiness conglomerate horrors, even the litter in our streets begins not merely in the need and greed of industrialized consumerism. The way we treat the world out there begins in excluding it from the realm of soul, as if it were a great Cartesian corpse. (1988/2006, pp. 103-104)

I began this essay from that place in my own intimate life experience where the work of Hillman and Freire co-fathered me. We have arrived at the end of the essay, hopefully however, in seeing the need for the convergence of liberatory psychologies from the North and the South—not into a single proscriptive psychology that is ignorant of geographical and sociocultural differences—but into a sustained reflection on the common roots of our intersecting disorders. That imperial ego that has drained the resources of so many regions of the world, that has so crassly used the labor of millions, and practiced terror to sustain its untenable grasp, this imperial ego, Hillman showed, also starved itself. It gradually became so tightly contained in its cell, that it was removed from all sense of childhood wonder, encapsulated by a world it regarded as dead. It lost its vision and could only see its own backyard. It forgot that others also see; that their sight registers the effects of tyranny and terror, of kindness, compassion, and beauty.

In their own ways, both Freire and Hillman were revolutionaries. Psychiatrist and revolutionary Frantz Fanon in *Black Skins, White Masks* (1952/2008) called the middle-class "a closed society in which life has no taste, in which the air is tainted, in which ideas and men are corrupt. And I think that a man who takes a stand against this death is in a sense a revolutionary" (p. 225). Jim became this kind of revolutionary. He visited Civil War Battlefields, and spoke with bell hooks on racism in America. He could speak dialogically with students, and be the center of state occasions in Italy. He enjoyed the beauty in life, and had a soft fondness for animals. His opus, considered at this distance, constitutes a jailbreak from the imperial ego. Giving up the institutional politics of the Jungian world, abandoning



psychotherapy as his practice, and returning to America from his self-imposed exile, he walked into a wider world that one sensed had an undeniable sweetness. At the very end of his life, he would frequently smile gently and wryly and announce that he was happy, that he felt truly loved. He seemed released, indeed, and in the sweet embrace of life.

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