

*The only mythology that is valid today is the mythology of the planet – and we don't have such a mythology*<sup>1</sup>



**Rewilding** is an approach to conservation that enables and supports nature to self-care, and in turn allows its native creatures to cultivate their own diverse habitats and landscapes. This concept of rewilding stirred me to reflect on psychological habitats that have been abandoned and psychological passageways that are now dried up, devoid of nature, by theories and opinions, literalism, training, materiality, through greed and power, fear and judgment. It reminded me of Jung's metaphor that archetypes are like riverbeds which dry up without the flow of water, but which water can find again. I wondered how the waters might return to their timeworn, ancient beds.

Re-wilding Psyche invites us to re-consider and re-story psychic systems and habitats. As the course of this talk will change as we move through, like a discourse, I have inserted some titles, not to be more coherent, but to indicate changes in terrain.

*Our psyche is set up in accord with the structure of the universe, and what happens in the macrocosm likewise happens in the infinitesimal and most subjective reaches of the psyche.*<sup>2</sup>

## Rewilding Psyche: *Re-constructing our natural habitats*

*In the course of the millennia we have succeeded not only in conquering the wild nature all round us, but in subduing our own wildness*

- C. G Jung<sup>3</sup>

### **Wildness**

In my generation, wildness was often associated with being untamed and vulgar; actions that were out of bounds, primitive, uncivilized. We were schooled in the sovereignty of causality, evidence and linearity; taught to be rational and value progress. A phobia of the wild permeated and penetrated into our beingness.

Being wild was positioned as the opposite to being cultured. Hence, we became conditioned to domesticating wildness, banishing it, fencing it off, or sacrificing it. Sometimes it languished nostalgically in memories of childhood abandon, adolescent carelessness or transforming life moments. Sometimes it shapeshifted into a compulsion or a shadow lurking on the other side of the city walls. It could be freed momentarily by dancing ecstatically, in an uninhibited erotic encounter, in poetic reverie, an otherworldly psychic experience or in an enthusiastic response to an engagement with nature and spirit. Sometimes it was felt in the profound silence and stillness of a sacred space,

in nature's cathedrals or in the freedom of being unbound by life's routines and responsibilities. It seemed to be located outside the domesticated and tamed world, in dark forests, mountainous terrain and swamplands.

Wildness returns us to the natural world. Wild is a region inhabited by nature, an untrampled place, a natural state of being. We are wild when in communion with nature or when we inhabit the present. Certainly we are wild in our nightmares where we are able to roam in the natural wilderness through uncultivated regions of psyche. We are wild when we meander along nature's paths. We are wild in nature and being nature.

Wildness engages the soul. Though it was equated with a lack of discipline and restraint, ironically wildness or being in the wild was when aliveness, creativity, freedom and enthusiasm was most present, as if the world became ensouled in that very moment. Henry David Thoreau's well-known declaration 'In Wildness is the preservation of the World'<sup>4</sup>, honours the alliance between the untamed, our personal wellbeing and the World Soul (*Anima Mundi*).

Wildness inhabits both psyche and nature. It is present in the libido, energy, instincts and archetypes of our psychic life and in the flora, fauna, minerals and remoteness of the natural world. In the wild we inhabit a region where we experience a connection to a greater presence, an openness to all sentient life and awe at its interconnectedness.

A return from the wild can accompany a feeling of displacement, as the environment we return to feels disenchanting and unenthusiastic; a world that does not converse, exchange, nor participate with its wildness, nor its mystery. No more a universal dwelling or ensouled home, but a unilateral house. A flat world looked at, like a tourist peering from a train window (or perhaps a 'trained' window) onto an cultivated landscape. A binary world where Nature is other.

But the world and nature are not flat nor other.<sup>5</sup>

Jung too spoke of a flat world, well before digital technology flattened the globe with computer screens, smart phones and smart TVs. He reminded us of the embodiment of the wild through shadow, a potent image of instinct (an archetype) which has succumbed to being flattened into a two-dimensional concept, no longer a sentient being in itself. He says:

...we have a body which, like all bodies, casts a shadow, and that if we deny this body, we cease to be three-dimensional and become flat and without substance. Yet this body is a beast with a beast's soul, an organism that gives unquestioning obedience to instinct. To unite oneself with this shadow is to say yes to instinct, that formidable dynamism lurking in the background. From this the ascetic morality [of] Christianity wishes to free us, but at the risk of disorganizing man's animal nature at the deepest level.'<sup>6</sup>

Perhaps it is not only Christianity, but any ism or ideology or 'ology', as Hillman would say, that flattens and demystifies our psychic nature by institutionalizing, domesticating and formulating its dynamism. Wildness is a way of seeing, a perception, not tamed or compartmentalized by rational thought. It is genius in the ancient way of thinking, in that it affirms wildlife and that a divine nature is present in every individual, place, animal, plant or mineral. Wildness is natural to both physical and psychic life. It is not something we need to escape to or conceptualize or find outside ourselves, as it is intimately part of nature. Being wild acknowledges that we are inseparably part of the ever-changing ecological systems that support us.

*Do you think that somewhere we are not in nature, that we are different from nature? No, we are in nature and we think exactly like nature.*<sup>7</sup>

- Carl Jung

## The Ecological Self

Our word *ecology* contextualizes nature that is both exterior and interior to our being. Let's return to its Greek roots – *eco* is derived from *oikos* meaning house and *logos* which has multilayered meanings, but here let's use one meaning – 'the study of'. As a scientific study, ecology looks at the relationship of life forms and their habitats. Literally, ecology is the study of an organism's natural habitat. As a psychological study, ecology could then be characterized as the study of psychic places and how they are sustained, maintained and renewed.

Our psychic interiority has been disciplined, discoloured and dulled as our sensory perceptions become accustomed to rational and inanimate networks that envelop us.<sup>8</sup> An inorganic environment leaves us disembodied from our animal selves. Like outer ecosystems, inner habitats become civilized, *subduing our own wildness* as Jung reminded us, disconnecting us from natural and sustaining ways of being. Lauren Van der Post's referred to the archetypal layer of the 'wilderness self', which while present each day is often inaccessible due to our alienation from nature.

All around us is evidence that we are disconnected from our natural world. The tireless efforts of those devoted to nature and restoring our connection to the natural environment have always inspired me. The devotion of these psychic explorers and naturalists, archaeologists and poets, environmentalists and mystics invites us to reflect on our disconnection from both our environmental and our psychic nature. They encourage and validate the necessity for the restoration of outer and inner wildernesses; that is, worlds that are now 'other' due to the taming and trampling of the wild and the constraint of freedom. Not wilderness as a place of escape or otherness, but a place where we recollect the inborn knowing that we are interconnected to all lifeforms.<sup>9</sup>

CG Jung often amplified ways of thinking about the systemic balance between ecological and psychological habitats. In many passages he leaves us with no doubt that 'civilized' man has trampled the wild. When domesticity, rationality and urbanity suppress the wildness within and without, the caged animal behind the protective glass rebels. As Jung said:

The growth of culture consists, as we know, in a progressive subjugation of the animal in man. It is a process of domestication which cannot be accomplished without rebelling on the part of the animal nature that thirsts for freedom...<sup>10</sup>

Perhaps it is not so much a rebellion, but a remembrance that our animal nature is as much a part of our nature as our domestication is. Without balance, domestication can be soul destroying; but without domestication, our animal nature can become destructive. We need our outer systems to safeguard and live alongside the wilderness. We need our inner systems to free the animal soul.

As Jung was a psychic explorer, this evokes the question: What is our animal nature that has been domesticated and still 'thirsts for freedom'?

Is this the primeval and primitive presence that communes with nature spirits, knows the stories of the land, dances with satyrs, attunes with plants, ensouls the starry heavens with story, reveres the seasons and sees through the landscape, just as our ancestors once did? This primeval and primitive part is desensitized and derided in a domesticated and inanimate world. How else would we be able to devastate the rainforest, mine the rich red earth and game hunt a sacred beast! We pay a price higher than any monetary gain could ever be when we sever our connection to our animal nature.

In contrast to 'primitive man', Jung said: 'We are more conscious, that is to say more domesticated', while primitive man was much more of a "natural phenomena".<sup>11</sup> We need to psychologically reevaluate the balance between being primitive and conscious, to reconsider the conceptual maps we use to understand psyche and nature. Freed from our embedded beliefs, opinions and correctness, we

are freer to think more symbolically, or use, as Jung said ‘a psychological function of an intuitive nature, akin to what the primitives mean when they say “He has gone into the forest to talk with the spirits” or “My snake spoke with me” or, in the mythological language of infancy, “A little bird told me”.’<sup>12</sup>

What happens to Psyche and psychological functioning in a mechanical and digitalized ecosphere?

*But ask the animals, and they will teach you, or the birds of the air, and they will tell you; or speak to the earth, and it will teach you, or let the fish of the sea inform you*<sup>13</sup>

## Rewilding Psyche

Rewilding Psyche became my metaphor for reflections on what animal habitats need psychic restoration and corridors to interiorize a functional flow between the tamed and the wild. I borrow rewilding from the conservation movements that restore and protect natural processes, wilderness areas and animal habitats. Rewilding is a process, a manifesto for deepening and engaging with our environment. Deepening our engagement with self and psyche. Wilderness is undoing domesticity.<sup>14</sup>

As an astrologer I am constantly working with the metaphors of animal habitats, as the zodiac represents a circle of life, a circle of animals, a heavenly zoo of instincts, energies and archetypes: magical, wild, compelling, enchanting, threatening; divine, human, animal and hybrids. These heavenly images are metaphors for our internal psychic habitats, our nature. Yet, once again, the wild zodiac has been tamed into type, almost stereotyped, disconnecting us from their archetypal essence. Domesticated, animals become severed from their tales/tails, tamed into type, categorized and branded ‘other’.

Rewilding psyche promotes an inquiry into embodied beliefs and socially-constructed ideologies that inhibit legitimacy. It honours the wilderness of our inner environs and respects the *Anima Mundi*, and how we best honour our place within cosmological and universal ecosystems.

I started researching and compiling my notes on the day that our national totem, the koala, was listed as endangered, officially now in threat of extinction. In the last decade, estimates of 25,000 hectares of koala habitat has been destroyed for mining and related developmental projects. Endless reports of governmentally-sanctioned global ecocide exist, closer to home than we are often aware of. In my back yard, on the wind-swept northwest coast of Tasmania, salmon farms are being designed with total disregard and lack of consultation, not only with local fishers and residents, but with other marine and shoreline lifeforms.<sup>15</sup> Without conscious human reverence for all animate lifeforms, marine eco systems are destroyed through unconscious agendas, posing as economic development. These acts of ecocide are images that mirror our collective *animacide*, a word I use to confront the synchronous annihilation of our interior landscapes no longer sustained by imagination, ritual and story, but eclipsed by literality, judgements, technical progress, data and theory.

Martin Mueller in *Being Salmon Being Human, Encountering the Wild in Us and Us in the Wild* echoes many voices who recognize that it is too late ‘to patch up fissures in the story’s frayed fabric.’ Even though our stories of progress reveal remarkable human advancement and are endorsed and authorized by science, technology, law, corporations, media, and politics, these stories are no longer adequate for this critical period. Nor can they be empowered by enough psychic energy to be successful. It is time to abandon our human-centric stories so we can bring forth ‘entirely different stories to live by.’ As Mueller so eloquently suggests:

Our awareness of who we are as humans must grow from a deeply rooted awareness of the larger planetary presence within which (or whom) we dwell, alongside so many other vibrant presences such as salmon, wolf, moose, alder, elm, mountain, river, or thunder.<sup>16</sup>

And may I add koala, bilby, Tasmanian devil, black cockatoo, Christmas Island Fern, Great Barrier Reef ... and all magnificent, endangered, lifeforms - how might our awareness grow 'from a deeply rooted awareness of the larger planetary presence'?

Rewilding is an ecological expression that embraces the intention of restoring natural ecosystems through encouraging reintroduced wildlife to flourish and their habitats to regenerate. It aims to reverse environmental decline by permitting nature to be self-willed and sovereign, a return to the wild. It is a delicate balance, placing mortals in between and in touch with both animal and divine, literally and symbolically. Rewilding has a psychic resonance, which evokes both our animal and also our spiritual natures.

Environmental decline is not just ecological and political; it is also emotional and psychological, echoing the ways in which psychic ecosystems collapse under the weight of unreflective, binary, rational, plastic and artificial ways of being. Familial and cultural ideologies that no longer sustain or nourish Self become embedded beliefs taken for granted. They ossify into unconscious reflexes that inhibit reflection. These ways need innovative narratives to reintroduce the collective back to the wilderness where primordial, natural and elemental life flourishes.

Encountering wilderness in psyche challenges our perceptions of what we consider advancement. Progress is not a flat, linear, upwardly-mobile chronological process. In the wilderness, there is no linear time; in that place, there is no thing. In the wild, we exist before dualism and the domination of the rational. In the wild there is no literal worldview, measuring sticks or progressive ideology. There are sounds and smells and sights and songs and senses that envelop and engage us.

While we might feel helpless to change the tides of corporate and commercial ecocide, we are not powerless in terms of rewilding psyche and re-storing and re-storying its natural ecosystems. Jung reiterated that 'every civilized human being, whatever his conscious development, is still an archaic man at the deeper levels of his psyche.'<sup>17</sup> It is these deeper levels, in the wilderness of psyche, where we find our meaningful stories.

Psychic layers are like the storeys of any structure. From this archaeological perspective we can imagine many layers and grades of the psyche all with their own civilization and stories. At what layer might we find stories of wilderness? Of nature spirits and animate earth? When did the alphabet emerge? religion? philosophy? When did earthy adjectives like dirty, muddy and soiled come to mean unclean rather than earthy? When did primitive lose its value in our way of thinking? We need to dig below the psychic layers encrusted with categories of behaviour, typologies and opinions to find stories of the wild - before judgement of the sensuous and the wild became embedded in the layers of our language; before rationalism and realism repressed symbolic truth.<sup>18</sup>

Jung uses the word 'gradient' when speaking of how psychic energy might be redirected: for instance, 'Psychic energy is a very fastidious thing which insists on fulfilment of its own conditions'. And while 'much energy may be present we cannot make it serviceable until we have succeeded in finding the right gradient.'<sup>19</sup> A gradient is like a natural course that psychic energy takes. 'The libido has, as it were, a natural penchant: it is like water, which must have a gradient if it is to flow.'<sup>20</sup> Dammed up water may provide us with the energy of electricity, but if the natural gradient of water becomes redirected, this disturbs the interconnected ecosystems of the waterway. Metaphorically we could reflect on the effect when feelings are dammed up, then redirected, and how the natural creatures of our inner world become dislocated and homeless.

Rewilding psyche invites us to reflect on ways in which unconscious and animalistic ecosystems are harnessed to the power of human desire and domesticated to only serve the human environment. How might we re-story these limitations so psychic energy and soul sensitivity can flow more freely? Dreamwork is a powerful way to do this, because we are shown in every dream unconscious patterns

yet also given wildly creative solutions to our questions. Dreams are animistic, a wild refuge where we meet our animal spirits. Astrology, like dreams also reveals our animality, the *zoe*, that is, the life of both spirit and soul. Dreams animate the anima, the animals and the ancestors of our wilderness. Primitive myths and symbols reanimate and reconnect us to the *anima mundi*.

*Deep inside us is a wilderness. We call it the unconscious because we can't control it fully, so we can't will to create what we want from it. The collective unconscious is a great wild region where we can get in touch with the sources of life.<sup>21</sup>*



## **The Call of the Wild**

The very place that we often call wilderness – at civilization’s end, before culture, in the solitude and stillness, where instinct and image reside – is where the call of the wild is voiced. So much of our psychic wilderness has become polluted by theory, barren and stagnant, drained of fantasy and imagination, stripped by information and deforested by scientism. What is called progress has turned its back on the wild; at times even environmental ‘progress’ is destroying our wilderness.<sup>22</sup> Therefore, it is often through trauma, deep grief, isolation, depression we hear the call of the wild. When we become alarmed by meaninglessness or our own inner death, something else can take shape in us. As Jung said:

....your inner emptiness conceals just as great a fullness if only you will allow it to penetrate into you. If you prove receptive to this “call of the wild,” the longing for fulfillment will quicken the sterile wilderness of your soul as rain quickens the dry earth.<sup>23</sup>

When did emptiness lose its value?

Similarly, James Hillman, when amplifying animal presences says:

Humans touch nature via depression. They drop into slowness, the muteness of animal, vegetable and mineral being, the bafflement of mind’s inability to find words. Depression restores us to the dumb animal, the futility of explanation, of language itself.<sup>24</sup>

Jung and Hillman remind us that inner emptiness returns us to meaningfulness, the wild and animal soul. In hearing the call of the animal soul, we return to a silent knowing without descriptions, prescriptions, reasons or categories.

I have always been interested in the widely-held belief that hearing is the last sense to yield to the dying process. Scientific research suggests that some people are still able to hear while lying unresponsive during their end-of-life passage. I have a vivid memory of being the only one with my friend and workmate Idella that day in her hospital room as she was near to death. I was 30 years old. She had been unresponsive for days. But this day, she sat up and said “why is that dog barking?” I could not hear a thing. But when I opened the window, I could faintly hear a dog barking in the distance. So faintly, I would have never registered that sound without opening the window and straining to hear. Idella sunk back into unconsciousness. It made a profound impact and left me

wondering that when on the threshold of death, could she hear one of Asclepius' dogs. Dog as guide, as soul emissary Was the divine in the guise of the animal calling her? Like it always calls us. Especially when we are on the cusp of bodily extinction.

Nature is also *thanatos*, that is the bringer of death.<sup>25</sup> We are closest to nature when we are closest to death, both literally and psychologically. Inner emptiness, depression, loss, death are when we may hear the calls of the wild. Our ancestors knew how to ritualize this natural passage, this mystery that myth and ritual so eloquently narrated.

The call of the wild is also heard when we vacate the noise of the outer world; when we hear the divine peace of *a still primeval country*, as Jung did when he travelled to Africa. He says in his MDR:

'My companions and I had the good fortune to taste the world of Africa, with its incredible beauty and its equally incredible suffering. Our camp life proved to be one of the loveliest interludes in my life. I enjoyed the 'divine peace' of a still primeval country. Never had I seen so clearly 'man and the other animals' (Herodotus). Thousands of miles lay between me and Europe, mother of all demons. The demons could not reach me here – there were no telegrams, no telephone calls no letters, no visitors. My liberated psychic forces poured blissfully back to the primeval expanse.'<sup>26</sup>

Being in the majesty of nature humbles us.

Today psychic energy is poured into creating more noise in the world; the libido regresses to noise when disconnected from the flow of stillness and silence. As the call of the wild can always be heard, no matter how indifferent we may be, I pose a reflective question: "how might we allow our 'inner emptiness' to penetrate into our being so we may hear the call of the wild?"

*The clearest way into the Universe is through a forest wilderness*<sup>27</sup>

### **Animal-ness: Instinct to Archetype**

Let's return to the image of the animal in us or the symbols of what Jung often referred to as our instinctual life. But first let's recall that the etymology of the word *animal* is from the Latin *anima* suggesting soul and *animalis* meaning 'having breath'. Animal-ness is soul, the breath of life, the creature in us who is still and silent and sentient.

The concept of instinct branches out in many directions. Its many theories and hypotheses cover the spectrum from impulsive and automatic reactions to inborn natural tendencies towards certain stimuli. Instinct is sometimes considered to be blind, a lack of consciousness or understanding. Instincts are inbuilt in all animals and present in all species. For human creatures, they can range from impulses or compulsions to intuitive reactions that spontaneously emerge without the influence of rational thought.

When conscious of our inborn intuitive reactions, perception and apprehension can be applied to the awareness of instinct; what Jung called archetypes. Psychologically, archetypes are like the recognition of an instinct, ways of seeing and perceiving, like a self-portrait of the instinct itself. Marion Woodman expressed it this way: 'What DNA is to the physical body, the archetypal world is to the psychic body. It simply shapes configurations in the psyche that we're born with.'<sup>28</sup> It returns us to nature. We share many instincts with animals, but as humans we have the cognitive ability to formulate these into a coherent pattern of meaning, which often separates us from the animal itself, as experienced today.

Jung approached an instinct from the view that it is 'characterized by an unconsciousness of the psychological motive behind it.'<sup>29</sup> Hence instinct is a form of inner necessity, like fate in a sense,

which interrupts the continuity of consciousness. Jung conceptualized that ‘from the psychological standpoint five main groups of instinctive factors can be distinguished: hunger, sexuality, activity and reflection and creativity.’<sup>30</sup> While Jung considered creativity as an instinct, he suggested it needed special attention, preferring to categorize it as a psychic factor, as if it were a soulful calling that aroused a deeply resonant chord within.<sup>31</sup> Perhaps all instinct is a calling. When an animal’s habits and habitats are disturbed, so is psyche’s.

Jung refocused instinctual life from biological to psychological. While instincts compel us to specifically human modes of existence, archetypes characterize and shape our ways of perception into human patterns. Therefore, as Jung says: ‘The instincts and archetypes together form the “collective unconscious”’.<sup>32</sup> The instinct finds its way to consciousness via archetypal riverbeds. The corridor formed between the animal or instinct and its image in the human psyche or archetype is maintained by nature. But nature can be impeded by the elitism of human thought; that is the superiority of positive, rational, linear, profitable, productive and triumphant theoretical templates. The exclusivity of human reason closes off psychic corridors to other sentient beings and other worlds. We know things but can no longer be things.

Archetypes, like instincts, are characteristic of shared urges and desires in us all, advocates for the experience of being human. Being universal images, archetypes are communal descriptions for psychic life, regardless of race, culture or gender. As primal principles of unconscious life and the soul, they are often experienced as numinous, that is possessing a divine quality, often emotionally commanding and possessive. It is as if the human is the bridge between the animal and the divine, the narrator of the interconnecting current between instinctual and celestial energies, the living link between earth and heaven. Telling archetypal stories can re-story our instinctual life to challenge consensus beliefs.

Archetypal presences, having their inception in our instinctual life, can modify our conscious intentions or overwhelm our equilibrium. Before Carl Jung used the word archetype, he referred to these human patterns as ‘primordial images.’ In this way he bridged the notion of instinctual life and archetype. This is the first time he used the word archetype:

we also find in the unconscious qualities that are not individually acquired but are inherited, e.g., instincts as impulses to carry out actions from necessity, without conscious motivation. In this “deeper” stratum we also find the a priori, inborn forms of “intuition” namely the *archetypes* of perception and apprehension, which are the necessary a priori determinants of all psychic processes.<sup>33</sup>

Remember Jung differentiated archetypal representations, that is images and ideas mediated by the unconscious, from archetypes, which were not capable of being made conscious.

In this deeper psychic habitat is the instinctual life, which he often saw as symbolized by an animal: ‘the animals which represent the instincts.’<sup>34</sup> It is as if the instinct and the archetype, the animal and the divine, unconsciousness and spirit are all part of the same system, albeit polar. Archetypes are mediated by images, symbols and patterns of the animal soul within, portraits of instinct. The animal soul is often animated by the presence of spirit. It engages us in mystery and profound unknowingness. Explaining this non-binary system flattens it into a twofold arrangement that breeds separateness, exclusion and judgement.

Archetypes are modes of perception, ways of seeing, not facts or interpretations. Instincts seen through archetypal images are lenses we look through to see the natural world. One image may dominate at any particular time, depending on circumstances, but shapeshift at other times. As archetypes are metaphoric, they do not conform logically nor rationally, being better understood through images, symbols, feelings and senses. Archetypes belong to the wild.



Types are tamed images.

This way of thinking helped me deepen my appreciation of the zodiacal images as being both instinctual and archetypal. The zodiac, or circle of animals, is a mandala which can help us become more conscious of instinctual life. The animal imagery merges archaic impulses with archetypal imagery; in a way, zodiacal images are anthropomorphic, helping instinctual life be clothed in human form through archetype, symbol and story. Similar to Jung's understanding that:

... the contents of the collective unconscious are not only residues of archaic, specifically human modes of functioning, but also the residues of functions from [our] animal ancestry, whose duration in time was infinitely greater than the relatively brief epoch of specifically human existence<sup>35</sup>

But like Jung suggested, our 'animal being', which lives in us as our instinctual psyche, 'may become dangerous if it is not recognized and integrated in life'. While we are the only creatures who possesses the consciousness and will to imagine our instincts, we are also able to suppress, distort, and wound them. And as we know an animal, is never so wild and dangerous as when it is wounded.<sup>36</sup> Suppressed instincts become destructive. The following comment is as ecologically pertinent today as it was when Aniela Jaffe wrote it nearly 60 years ago :

Suppressed and wounded instincts are the dangers threatening civilized man; uninhibited drives are the dangers threatening primitive man. In both cases the "animal" is alienated from its true nature; and for both, the acceptance of the animal soul is the condition for wholeness and a fully lived life. Primitive man must tame the animal in himself and make it his helpful companion; civilized man must heal the animal in himself and make it his friend.<sup>37</sup>

From a psychological perspective Carl Jung suggested that archetypes were the fundamental building blocks of the psyche, structuring and informing the core of any complex. A system of personal associations and experiences gather round the heart of the complex like a skin or crust. Sometimes an identification with our personal stories, judgements and explanations of our experiences are the encrustations that domesticate the wild, prohibiting the liberation of the pattern. Trying to control the outcome or manipulate the environment is like an animal trying to change the seasons, rather than going with it! Hence, like wildebeests, animals migrate! They acclimatise, rather than control.

Amplifying the symbols, participating with the memories and the feelings evoked, letting the emotions bubble up, imagining, all get under the crust of the complex to the core. James Hillman used the phrase 'animal-knowing, an animal sense of essential' which is not only instinctive, 'but a refined skill coming from practice with images'.<sup>38</sup> Exercising our imagination through archetypal representations of instinctual life honours the animal soul and rewilds a deeper stratum of psychic life. This is being in the wildness of imagination, away from reductionism, typologies, predictions and case histories. We enter the wild when we leave the opinions, patterns, 'ologies' and 'isms' behind. Nature awaits us there.

Myths offer up primordial images to consciousness. Their reappearance allows reflection, consideration, feeling, affect and hopefully reintegration back into the psychic system. So, let's consult our inner animals on what they intuit, sense, smell, hear, taste and feel .....

*"Though unless one is a trickster or sacred fool, it may be farfetched to attempt to reinhabit an indigenous self while simultaneously participating in the cannibal economy, where it is legitimate and even encouraged to steal from other life forms – including people, redwoods or plankton – on the way to accumulating more stuff and power."*<sup>39</sup>



## **Into the Wild**

Perhaps we must acknowledge, petition and offer votives to the archetypes of the trickster and the sacred fool to consider how to re-story our naturalness. Sacred is certainly an essential aspect of the inquiry as it returns us to a numinous dynamic that affiliates our ego-subjectivity with all nature. In sacred activity we experience inclusivity in a non-dual, wholistic system called nature. Often the sacred is found in the stillness and the silence, the undisturbed.

Let's continue then by asking in respect of Psyche: How might we reintroduce ourselves to the wild? To the sacred? to the animals? Since we are focusing on psychic wildness, what are some ways our primordial sentience might be awakened?

To address the awakening, let's return to a nocturnal landscape, a darkened world not lit by daylight, nor artificial light, but by the starry night sky. And linger long enough there, in some uncertainty and discomfort, so our senses can become accustomed to the dark. We might see unrecognizable shapes, smell sweet fragrance from night-scented plants, feel spirits on the wind as they brush past. Or like Psyche herself, who was befriended by the ants, the reeds in the river, the thorn bushes, the eagle and the tower, we might become more responsive to our animistic Self.

Listen, we might hear Athena's owl, her wise animal self who remembers her primeval past. Before Athena gestated in the belly of her father Zeus, she was an animal embryo in her mother's womb. Athena was absorbed into the God when Zeus devoured Athena's mother whole. Born fully conscious from His forehead, the temples of intellect and mental powers, she was entrenched in this way of knowing. Her primal mother Metis, a Titaness and archetypal personification of elemental feeling and instinctual wisdom, was gobbled up by impatience, control and fear.<sup>40</sup>

So, let's stay here for a moment to reflect on ways our wild wisdom is appropriated, often consumed, by theories and training and principles (and principals) of a daylight Olympian world.

One of the ways that instinctual knowing reappears from underneath the layers of presumptions is through personal dreams and collective myths. While dreams and myths do have similarities in that they can evoke unconscious and wild content, they are different. Dreams illustrate unprocessed and wild images. Mythic images are shaped through the narrative of the times; nonetheless are primordial images formed into story. Both have their ancestries in unconscious depths; therefore,

both celebrate and enunciate unconscious processes to bring them to light. They guide us into the wild. They restore or re-story meaning. And, as Jung said:

The need for mythic statements is satisfied when we frame a view of the world which adequately explains the meaning of human existence in the cosmos, a view which springs from our psychic wholeness, from the co-operation between conscious and unconscious.

No science will ever replace myth, and a myth cannot be made out of any science. For it is not that “god” is a myth, but that the myth is the revelation of a divine life in man. It is not we who invent myth, rather it speaks to us a Word of God.<sup>41</sup>

To most of you this is nothing new. But it does remind us of how important dreams and myths are as portals to our psychic wilderness, which has become covered over by places of worship to economic rationalism and intellectual conclusions. Along with these psychic processes we might include synchronicities, reveries, memories, not as justifications or reasons, but as reconnections to our natural world. While we all succumb in times of difficulty, stress and loss to literality, Psyche functions in mystery and wonder. When lost in the mystery, nature has an opportunity to restore itself.

Returning to our question ‘what are some ways our primordial sentience could be awakened?’, I would consider first and foremost our communion with the natural world and how often we consciously engage with it, rather than imposing ourselves upon it. Our psychic nature is constantly intruded upon by scientific facts, expert opinions, rulebooks, predictions, interpretations and digitized information.

From a psychological perspective the interlinking of psychic habitats is not a coherent nor linear procedure, but a divergent and cyclical process aroused through myth, image, analogy, metaphor, stillness, symbol and story. Stories told that are renewed by each voice that tells the story. It is enhanced by silence, reflection, listening. In the wilderness we lose our custom of direction with unsigned pathways, mysterious turns and inevitable returns that are not mapped by the human creature, but by our primal nature. We backtrack over courses to deepen our familiarity with the landscape.<sup>42</sup> It is an open-ended process, a dis-course in its truest sense.

Similarly, when James Hillman speaks of dreams, he says:

By spreading the dream out, disclosing connections all over the place, an image takes on weight and can even make me feel that I am walking on its ground, that I am everywhere in the dream rather than it in me.<sup>43</sup>

In the wild, the wisdom of inferior functioning comes to the fore. In astronomy, inferior is used for when Mercury and Venus are orbiting between the Earth and the Sun, not on the other side of the Sun. In this phase they are closest to the Earth and are backtracking from our perspective. The root of the word inferior refers to low, like the lower regions, the inferno. It is not a judgement – inferior here places us close to the Earth, and moving in another direction. Jung used the image of the inferior function, which like Mercury and Venus is also an archetypal image, closest to earth and backward in movement. Psychic inhabitants of the inferior function can be numinous by nature and when on its landscape, in the lower regions, an ‘ontological shift, an initiation’<sup>44</sup> is possible. Being in these low lands is where we reencounter the spirits of our indigenous self. Again, when stressed, feeling lost or anxious, we often rationalize the times by reverting to type or other systems to explain the confusion. But psychic wilderness is more available when we turn away from type towards archetype and honour the plurality of nature in all its forms. While Jung’s work on psychological types honoured the diversity of human temperament, ‘he so rarely turned there again as he deepened his work from types to archetypes’.<sup>45</sup> As Hillman suggests, Jung found the psychological wildness in the shapeshifting archetypal world, not in a world of typologies.

Let's consider language, as it is an integral factor in our discussion. Unreflective use of language reinforces bias, judgement and control. It is in the untold psychic stories of Self where we find language to reorientate, integrate, even reshape conscious agendas. This language is not learnt nor transposed with linear words, but is psychically resonant in the images and symbols of our animistic stories told in the dialect of the place. The soul speaks to us in these ways.

Imagination helps unblock psychic impasses by heightening our sensual awareness to be able to hear and feel and smell and taste and see through the density of the concrete world into other worlds, natural ecospheres, unconscious realms. Jung described his wildness or other worldly encounters as the 'fund of unconscious images which fatally confuse the mental patient. But is also the matrix of a mythopoetic imagination which has vanished for our rational age. Though such imagination is present everywhere, it is both tabooed and dreaded ...'<sup>46</sup> Of interest to me is that the lack of imagination in our rational age actually fosters ill health. What passes for logic, reason and science are no longer tools that engage nature, but have become forms that explain the natural world, as if these forms were reality.

Like any wilderness expedition we must backtrack, leave behind the flat world, speak in a tongue that engages us with our environment, petition our indigenous self to guide us, honour the stories of our ancestors. Telling and listening to the primeval stories of how our world was born, or how the gods came into being, how the animals wounded and healed us, myths of the natural world, tales of wars, wonderings and wanderings engage our animal selves, our many-storied selves, our natural selves.

If we attend to our natural world within our selves, in all its mystery and majesty, I suspect nature without our selves will rewild the dried-out river beds...

## ENDNOTES

**MDR** Carl Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, edited by Aniela Jaffe, Pantheon Books, New York, NY: 1973.

**CW** The Collected Works of C.G. Jung, translated by R. F. C. Hull, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London.

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph Campbell, *The Power of Myth*, Kindle Edition, p.28

<sup>2</sup> MDR, p. 335

<sup>3</sup> CW, Volume 8: 87

<sup>4</sup> Henry David Thoreau, "Walking," *The Works of Thoreau*, ed. Henry S. Canby (Boston, Massachusetts: Houghton Mifflin, 1937), p. 672

<sup>5</sup> Wildness may have become endangered in our domestic lives, but not in nature. Through devastating wildfires, ravaging floods, mass extinctions etc., Nature reminds us of wildness. But is this a reactive wildness induced by the desacralization of both outer and inner ecosystems; a wildness cut off from its natural habitats.

<sup>6</sup> CW, Volume 7: 35

<sup>7</sup> Carl Jung, Zarathustra Seminar, p. 1277 – accessed 6.05.2022 from <https://quozio.com/quote/deea55a0/1025/do-you-think-that-somewhere-we-are-not-in-nature-that-we>

<sup>8</sup> David Abram, *Becoming Animal*, Vintage Books (New York, NY: 2011) pp. 131-158.

<sup>9</sup> For an excellent reflection on wildness and wilderness, see William Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature", from William Cronon, ed., *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, W.W. Norton & Co. (New York, NY: 1995), pp. 69 – 90

<sup>10</sup> CW, Volume 7: 17

<sup>11</sup> CW, Volume 8: 87

<sup>12</sup> CW, Volume 7: 374

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<sup>13</sup> Job 12:7-8

<sup>14</sup> I have borrowed this phrase from Peter Michael Bauer – see <https://www.petermichaelbauer.com/the-rewilding-podcast/>

<sup>15</sup> See Richard Flanagan, *Toxic*. Penguin (Sydney: 2021)

<sup>16</sup> Martin Lee Mueller, *Being Salmon Being Human*, Chelsea Green Publishing (White River, VT: 2017), p. xiii.

<sup>17</sup> C. G. Jung, *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*, translated by W. S. Dell and Cary F. Baynes, Routledge & Kegan Paul. Ltd. (London:1953), p. 144

<sup>18</sup> CW, Volume 5:336, Jung says: “It is necessary today as it ever was to lead the libido away from the cult of rationalism and realism – not, indeed, because these things have gained the upper hand (quite the contrary), but because the guardians and custodians of symbolic truth, namely the religions, have been robbed of their efficacy by science.”

<sup>19</sup> CW, Volume 7: 76

<sup>20</sup> CW, Volume 5: 337

<sup>21</sup> This quote has been attributed to CG Jung. See David W. Kidner, *Nature and Psyche*, State University of New York Press, Albany, NY: 2000, p.237. Kidner references this quote as: “Carl, Jung, quoted by Delores LaChapelle, *Sacred Land, Sacred Sex* (Durango: Kivaki Press), p.74”. LaChapelle’s book is subtitled *Rapture of the Deep: Concerning Deep Ecology and Celebrating Life*.

<sup>22</sup> C.A. Meier defined wilderness as ‘nature in her original condition, undisturbed, unadulterated by man.’ C.A. Meier, *Wilderness and the Search for the Soul of Modern Man*, Lapis Press (Santa Monica, CA: 1984), p. 1 - he suggests that when we become lost in the outer world, we become estranged from our inner nature and soul, from our wildness

<sup>23</sup> CW, Volume 14: 190

<sup>24</sup> James Hillman, *Animal Presences*, Spring Publications (Putman, CT: 2008), p. 153

<sup>25</sup> James Hillman, *Animal Presences*, p. 160

<sup>26</sup> MDR, p. 264

<sup>27</sup> John Muir, *John of the Mountains: The unpublished journals of John Muir*, edited by Linnie March Wolff, University of Wisconsin Press (Madison, WI: 1938)

<sup>28</sup> Marion Woodman, *The Crown of Age: The Rewards of Conscious Aging*. CO: Sounds True, 2004, Disc 2

<sup>29</sup> CW, Volume 8: 265.

<sup>30</sup> CW, Volume 8: 246

<sup>31</sup> CW, Volume 8: 245

<sup>32</sup> CW, Volume 8: 270

<sup>33</sup> CW, Volume 8: 270

<sup>34</sup> CW, Volume 5: 263

<sup>35</sup> CW, Volume 7: 159

<sup>36</sup> Aniela Jaffe, “Symbolism in the Visual Arts”, from Carl Jung, *Man and his Symbols*, Aldus Books, (London: 1964), p.239

<sup>37</sup> Aniela Jaffe, from *Man and his Symbols*, p.239

<sup>38</sup> James Hillman, *From Types to Images*, edited by Klaus Ottmann, Spring Publication (Thompson, CT 2021) p. 117

<sup>39</sup> Wild Imagination, by Geneen Marie Haugen, Parabola: <https://parabola.org/2019/05/16/wild-imagination-by-geneen-marie-haugen/> [accessed March 24, 2022]

<sup>40</sup> One of Zeus’ epithets was also Chthonius (of the Lower World) – an image often equated with Hades. Nonetheless we have extant images of Zeus in an indigenous and chthonic layer as part of the earth.

<sup>41</sup> CGJ, MDR, p.340. part of this quote includes: “Meaninglessness inhibits the fullness of life and is therefore equivalent to illness. Meaning makes a great many things enduring – perhaps everything.”

<sup>42</sup> See Kelly Bulkeley, *The Wilderness of Dreams*, State University of New York Press (Albany, NY: 1994)

<sup>43</sup> James Hillman, *From Types to Images*, edited by Klaus Ottmann, Spring Publication (Thompson, CT 2021) p. 115

<sup>44</sup> James Hillman, *From Types to Images*, p. 35

<sup>45</sup> James Hillman, *From Types to Images*, p. 34

<sup>46</sup> MDR, p. 188