

Advanced Exam 2012:

Question 6 - Mythology

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QUESTION:

The decision to demote Pluto to dwarf planet in 2006 left in its wake a large proportion of disgruntled scientists (and astrologers). Of the International Astronomical Unions 10,000 membership, less than 5% were at the meeting which voted for its downgrading. Astrologers still consider it to be a powerful force on a collective and individual level. Pluto is no stranger to controversy. **Using your own words and giving the reasons why, which myth/s do you think best reflects and exemplifies Pluto in the 21st century? AND**

How does mythology broaden your understanding and deepen your knowledge of astrological symbolism?

ANSWER:

*The soul of the planet speaks to us through the mythic imagination*¹

In 1948 Joseph Campbell published his book "The Hero with a Thousand Faces" in which he demonstrated how the mythological stories from many different cultures were all constructed around the same key narrative points. The examination of mythology as a clue to the elements of the psyche that are common to all people was taken out of the halls of academia and started its journey into the light of populist understanding. The lists of characters, Archetypes that inhabit myths have always been stock in trade for story tellers: the hero, villain, victim, magician etc. They entertain us, advise us, provide us with a cathartic, emotional outlet and sometimes stir something deep and ancient within us. Myths and mythological archetypes are the messengers that connect our conscious individual selves with the universal Collective Consciousness. They connect us to the greater drama of family, nation and world! In turn, our journeys add new threads of understanding to our myths. Both mythology and astrology are systems for tracking and articulating the human condition and the journey that we are taking towards a greater state of grace and compassion. A natal chart is an archetypal imprint that one receives upon birth. The planets represent Archetypes. The myths that we tell are our way of unravelling the meaning of each Archetype. Although Archetypes are essential building blocks from which we make meaning, our understanding of them can develop and evolve. Meditating into the layers of meaning in a myth gives us insight into the possibilities inherent in an individual's chart.

When Pluto was discovered in 1930 the atom was about to be split unleashing the truly hellish Hiroshima and proving that intensity and energy cannot be judged by size. Depth psychology was being developed and we started to develop a vocabulary for mining our psyches; digging through the dirt of our wounds and fears to find the lost gold that makes our spirit shine. Perhaps the myth that

¹ www.folkstory.com/resources.html Jonathan Young

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has best exemplified the Plutonian experience is that of Inanna: a Sumerian Goddess known as the Queen of Heaven. Inanna was a battle Goddess and in this sense is more aligned to the planet Mars than Venus. (Pluto is a higher octave of Mars). Inanna endowed the people of Sumer with the seven Me: wisdoms and gifts that inspired and ensured their growth. She descended into the underworld to meet her sister Ereshkigal, Queen of the Underworld. To ensure her safety she wrapped herself in the Me, transformed into garments, jewelry and a sceptre; symbols of her Queenly power and authority. Ereshkigal demanded that Inanna give up her earthly trappings before meeting her. As she descends she sheds her jewelry and clothing. Devoid of her title, reputation, authority, skills and wisdoms she would normally use to get by in life Inanna stands naked, open and vulnerable in front of her sister who immediately seizes her and hangs her on a peg to die. For three days Inanna's lifeless corpse hangs there. So great was the earthly mourning for her that for the first time Ereshkigal felt compassion in her heart and restored her to life.

Inanna's journey maps out our own plutonian voyages. Inanna, who has gained so much skill, wisdom and status in her life, has a dark sister. Jungians would say the 'shadow self' who lies hidden within the recesses of the subconscious. Before Inanna's journey there is no communication between them. They each have their own world and their own agendas. Inanna is a warrior queen and it is this active, seeking element within us that gives us the impetus and the courage to take our own subterranean voyages. The skills, wisdom and status we have acquired in our life must by necessity be abandoned to go there. The earthly attributes that serve us so well also prevent us from seeing deeper, seeing afresh who we really are. Ereshkigal also undergoes a transformation. She experiences compassion for the first time. At this point we have redeemed some lost part of ourselves. The conscious and the unconscious become united and a new self is born.

In spite of its distance from the Sun and its miniscule size there was never any doubt that Pluto packed a punch. Then in 2006 the world was shocked! Pluto was demoted. Actually it was more complex than that. In 2005 the discovery of a 10th planet was announced. To officially name it agreement had to first be reached on what constituted a planet. The result was a new category called 'dwarf planets' that not only enabled Eris official categorisation but also demoted Pluto. Under the same criteria Ceres was promoted from an asteroid and joined them. It isn't that Pluto has really shifted his place in the cosmos; it is that our perception of him has shifted. Jung postulated that *the collective unconscious would constellate new symbols or archetypes whenever humanity needed them*². Should we surmise that our perceptions of Pluto need some re-ordering? Tellingly, Pluto's story has always been the story of three: Pluto, Persephone and Ceres. Pluto's family drama usually takes centre stage in our tales. Interestingly the astronomers had wanted Eris to be called Persephone but the name had been taken already by an asteroid.³ Eris, the Goddess of Strife, could easily be Persephone's sister. By stirring things up Eris is able to reveal the true heart of someone. When she rolled the golden apple towards the goddesses with the inscription: "to the fairest" the pretensions and attributes of each was soon on display. Who Paris chose as the fairest was also very telling of *his* true priorities.

Perhaps it is time for us to take a deeper look at the relationship between Ceres, Pluto and Persephone? Ceres, Goddess of the grain, has an idyllic family life until Pluto abducts and rapes her daughter Persephone. Overcome with grief and rage she refuses to do her agricultural Goddess duties, leaving the earth barren until Zeus agrees to release her daughter back to her. Before leaving, Persephone eats a pomegranate seed (a metaphor for sexual union with her husband, Pluto) and therefore must return for 1/3rd of each year to Hades. Somehow Pluto has ended up with a bad

² *Mythic Astrology: Archetypal Powers in the Horoscope*. Ariel Guttman and Kenneth Johnston.

³ *Eris Stirs Up Trouble*. Zane Stein. Mountain Astrologer.

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rap. He is the abuser who rapes and manipulates his victim into staying. If however one reads other Pluto myths one finds many tales of their rulership of Hades where they are very much equals in intelligence and power. An alternate reading of Persephone could be that she happily chose to be with her husband as well as spend time with her mother. Maturing into a wife did not preclude her still owning the innocent girl within. Like her husband, Persephone is able to give either boons or curses to those who come with requests to her realm. She was more than willing to help Psyche when she came to her with the task Aphrodite had set her in order to be re-united with her true love Eros. Persephone supports relationships. Not just with her husband but also her mother. She bridges the divide between maiden and wife.

Both Persephone and Pluto were deeply involved with justice. When the souls of the dead were being judged unfairly Pluto, donning his cape of invisibility, travelled to Zeus' realm to intercede on their behalf. . Due to his intervention it was decreed that both the judged and the judges be naked so that no cultural or class bias could affect the verdict on who deserved heaven or hell. Although Hades has been depicted as being Hell it was actually where *all* souls went to be judged. More of a neutral zone: Switzerland! Pluto, travelling between worlds tells us that in the final count all aspects of our being must come together: the underworld of our hidden intentions and the upper realms of Higher Mind and aspirations.

But what of Ceres and her new status as Pluto's equal? Ceres is an earth Goddess who brings the seasons and the harvest to humankind. Climate Change is the most urgent problem of our time. If we don't find a way to live more sustainably then ...It is the thing that none of us have wanted to contemplate. Perhaps we have shoved the knowledge that we are destroying our home, and therefore ourselves, into some deep cave in Hades realm. Just as we in the West tend to do with the fact that our life-style lives off the misery of Nike factory workers in Asia and so on. And these things are related. It is Persephone who travels between the earth, and the underworld. On a personal level it is the feminine, intuitive aspects of our nature that knows how to find the hidden nooks and crannies that lead us down the path to stand naked before our wounds and fears that have stopped us from living in harmony with ourselves. It is these personal fears that collectively have made our society out of balance as it is today. Perhaps our new 21st Century mythology for Pluto is the relationship between Pluto (our subconscious) Ceres (the earth) and Persephone: she who can bring the fertile rich earth up from the underworld to create a new springtime.

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