

LIVING MYTH PODCAST

Episode 376 – A Divided World, A Hidden Unity

At critical moments in the life of individuals and societies, the basic elements and energies of existence polarize. While the two poles of a polarity seem to be irreconcilable opposites, they are secretly one. In a true polarity, one side cannot exist without the other. And existence itself is an essential unity appearing as a duality. When life becomes stuck and we feel crucified on the cross of oppositions, what is being called for is not simple change, but a genuine transformation, and a tension of ambivalent opposites is the structural precondition for any meaningful change.

Genuine change and meaningful transformation are the secret aims of the tension inside each person, inside each society and inside life itself. Creation myths offer different perspectives on the inherent issues of unity and division. An ancient tale from the Upanishads of 3000 or more years ago, tells a unique tale of the creation of the world and the origin of the first people. There was nothing at the beginning but the great self in the form of the original one, the only one from which all unity and oneness derives. That one that was there at the beginning looked all around and made the first sound by shouting "it is I" right into the void that was there before the beginning.

No sooner did this first one speak the first word of creation than the one who made the world felt fear and a sense of emptiness inside. And to this day, a person can suddenly become filled with fear when they feel all alone. Then the first one considered if there is no one here but I, why should I be afraid, where upon the fear departed. And to this day, anytime someone can recall their innate connection to the deeper self, or the original unity of being, they will also cease to feel isolated, and will become unafraid.

At that point, fear was gone. But the original one felt that something else was missing. There was no sense of delight, even though creation was underway. And so the first one conceived the desire to share the adventure of the existence with another. And to this day, a person can lack a sense of delight if they feel isolated and alone and disconnected from all others. It happened that the original one was equal in size to a man and a woman embracing together, so the original one divided itself into two. Some say that was the original split in this world, where things are so often divided, and where each soul born longs to embrace another. And to this day, each person born seeks for something only vaguely sensed like a missing part, a missing partner, or a better half.

At this point, a pattern had been established. And in order for creation to continue, the male and the female parts had to find ways to unite together again. Having solved the issue of being alone by dividing in two, the new issue involved reuniting the separated male and female parts. And at that point, the original female considered the dilemma. How can he unite with me who came from the same substance to begin with? It then occurred to her to hide in another shape. She became an elegant cow and he became a searching bull. And when those united together all forms of cattle in the world were

born. Then she became mare and he became a stallion, and soon horses ran across the face of the world. Then, the two that were also secretly one became goats and became sheep and all the possible animal forms down to the tiniest ant walking the earth with fragile legs.

At that point, the original one realized, I am actually creation, for I have poured forth all of this. And to this day, anyone who understands the innate connection to creation, and how things in this world divide, in order to unite also becomes a creative force in the world. In this ancient creation story, the deity divides and becomes both man and woman. And from these archetypes come all created beings. The original one or the creator is imminent in this world, and intimately involved in all manifestations of the divine energy. And humans are imaged in the original split, but also in the healing of that split by creating more life.

The biblical creation story also involves an original deity who speaks the word that sets creation in motion, and also includes an episode when the first humans are made. In that tale, the original one, the God of creation, fashions Adam as the archetypal being from the mud of Earth, and then shapes Eve from a rib taken from that first man. In this case, the first humans come after all the animals and other living things have been created. Then, instead of the deity self-dividing to produce the first archetypal pair, the first human prototype, in a sense divides to produce the second part of the pair. Adam and Eve share a rib and soon share a forbidden apple.

At that point, fear enters as the God of Creation seems to fear that humans will come to know what the God knows. In this story, the original pair commits the original sin of desiring to know things divine, desiring to know what the gods know. As a result, they are exiled from paradise and forced to wander in a fallen world while the Creator recedes from his own creation, amidst echoing questions about good and evil. Side by side and essentially joined at the rib, the original couple precipitates and represents a fall from grace that ends the paradisaal unity at the beginning, and also predicts the destruction of all at the end. All of their descendants inherit their sin and their punishment and are doomed to suffer and wander in spiritual exile on this God forsaken Earth.

This tale of creation includes a radical fall from grace and a literal separation from the source of life for the entire course of one's life. The god of creation remains separate from his creatures who don't seem to know that they are part of an ongoing creation. Instead of participating in the substance of the Divine, humans are in a fallen state, bereft of the Divine touch and this theological gap requires an exacting atonement, without which the divine cannot be reached again.

On this side of the tree of life, the earth becomes a place of exile and endless toil, as the original pair of humans epitomize the fallen state of the world. On the east side of the tree of life, the Upanishad version of creation depicts the first couple as the source of all the begotten forms that continue to embody and express the divine substance of creation itself. On this side of the tree of life, creation carries a metaphysical, symbolic and psychological meaning, while the view from the west side of the original tree tends towards a literal and historical interpretation of the original split that continues to be part of the realm of created things.

Immanence is the term used for the sense of the divine existing within the created world as opposed to transcendence, where the divine is seen to be separate from and beyond the material realm. In the West, immanence comes at the end when history was destroyed and when the divine and God returns to the created world. In the east, immanence remains part of this world, remains present in every part of this world. Of course, there are mystical traditions within each of the religions that are connected to the biblical creation story. And those mystical traditions carry more esoteric understandings of how the Divine is intimately involved in this world.

Meanwhile, on the east side of the tree of life, a covenant exists with the creator, in the sense that each being born remained secretly connected to the divine source of life by virtue of an invisible, indelible, spiritual umbilical cord. In that way of imagining life, each person born and each living thing is God connected. Then the issue becomes not a matter of avoiding certain sins in order to reconnect to the Divine at the end of life, but rather the matter becomes the need to awaken to the spiritual fact that the Divine is present at the core of each life.

In this ancient imagination, there is nothing to correct about the world except one's own ignorance about it. The Earth is not a fallen world, but a realm where divinity hides within the veils of existence. In this spiritual tradition, the sense that things are divided and separate is termed Maya, an illusion that can be penetrated, a veil of unknowing that can be lifted to reveal one's inner connection with the source of life. In this ongoing story, the two are still one, and the original one is still creating the world which is unfinished. And because the world remains unfinished, it can be understood that each time a great division occurs, it doesn't mean the end of everything, but rather, each division becomes a potential source of creation continuing.

As the old mystical saying goes, "as above, so below", and that means that the split that was there at the beginning exists inside each person born. The sense of being split from genuine knowledge and from the divine presence becomes symbolized, but also experienced by the troubling division between the little self or the ego that grows in the gap of unknowing that forms early in life, and continues until a person awakens to the sense of a deeper self within that is secretly connected to the original great self, that was the source of everything back at the beginning.

In a strange way, our inner divisions and our own original wounds seek a healing that is connected to the original unity, each symptom secretly aiming at something timeless and beyond the personal, not just a turning back to childhood, but a turning further back, a descent that would take us back to the origins of life itself. The wound and its healing, the mind and its thought, hiding and revealing the original split at the beginning of time. No healing they used to say, unless the original split is touched, and the break in time is nullified. On the level of presystemic thought, the mystery of totality underlies all the conflicts and divisions in life, both personal and collective. We suffer what divides us in order to find ways back to the wholeness before all the dividing began.

Something ancient in us bends us towards the origins of the whole thing, so that what troubles us takes us down, and in the psyche down also means back down to the bottom of what troubles us and back to the beginning before the original unity was divided. The word healing means to make whole again. Healing, health, wealth, wholeness, all hail from the same etymological roots. To heal is to make whole.

And what continually requires healing is the original split. No healing without a return to origins, no healing that does not in some way touch the original split.

Without stories that remind us of the hidden wholeness and the hidden holiness of the world, all that is left are the pressing problems, and threatening divisions that seem increasingly impossible to solve. Creation myths are not intended to simply explain the making or the shaping of the world. Rather, they serve to intone and to invoke a re-creation from the origins of life itself. Creation myths offer ways of understanding that wisdom and potentials of life are trying to awaken in the present moment, and trying to reveal visions of a more unified future. Through creation myths, we return to the origins, to the original time when everything that exists first came into being. If we allow a myth to enter us and work within us, we can free our imagination to begin again. And in doing so we recreate and we rebalance ourselves in relation to nature, and to the living cosmos.

At critical times like those in which we now live, awakening to the deep self connection becomes increasingly important for each individual, but also for collective human society. Knowledge of a deep self center existing within each of us has always existed. All sense of human creativity, as well as most religious practices, depend upon some sense of an inner life spirit that can become conscious, and that can become a source of inner truths and genuine healing. The deep self has been seen as the atman, as the eternal self in contrast to the ego. Indigenous people call it the great spirit that animates the world, that permeates all things, including each human soul.

And just as the path of each individual is a process of becoming, the Soul of the World is not a completion, but rather a coming to be. Creation is continuing and we are part of it. And we are not alone, but can be inspired and empowered from within and from below by the archetypes that remain present and have always been present since the very beginning of time. Any meaningful change involves an archetypal shift that arises from the origins of life. We are in such an archetypal shift. In that sense, we are in creation times again. The unity of life must be found again, and be found by the efforts of individual souls to awaken and to become conscious of the continuous presence of the original unity that exists as the deep self and soul within each of us. That also exists as a connection between the depth of the individual soul and the soul of the living world.

As things around us divide and polarize and fall apart, the knowing self within us moves closer to the surface, and openings can occur at deeper levels of understanding. In this old way of imagining the living world with ongoing creation, eternal energies keep trying to enter this world, and can only do so through the souls of those who are alive at this time. Many ancient images of the deep self portray an inner wholeness that is both immanent and transcendent, that is, therefore self-centering, and at the same time, the ineffable source of how we each might contribute to the ongoing creation of the world.

This secret of the divine seed inside each person that is connected to creation ongoing has been known by poets from the west and the east, and all other directions. One of them was the ancient seer and poet Rumi, who left us with this expression of the divine Word.

"Listen, friends, do not go away, do not hide, but come near, find the antidote to all the pain in the venom itself, come to the root of the root of yourself, molded of clay yet needed from the original

substance of unity. Each soul is secretly a guard at the holy treasury of light. So, return to the root of the root of yourself. Once you find this inner root of selflessness, you will be separated from your ego and freed from many traps. So come, return to the root of the root of yourself. For you were born from a ray of divine majesty, and have inside you the blessings of a star of destiny. Ultimately, we suffer at the hands of things that do not completely exist. So return to the root of the root of yourself. Others may not see it, and yet you are secretly a ruby embedded in granite. And the question becomes, how long will you pretend that this is not true? In the meantime, we can see it in your eyes. And that's why we call out to you come to the root of the root of yourself."