



CDrom #1

Hillman, Pardo, Pantheatre, and *Metaphysics*

A talk by Jay Livernois and Enrique Pardo

Filmed at Château de Malérargues, Roy Hart International Artistic Centre
During Pantheatre's *Annual Residential May Workshop*

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Cdrom content
Introduction
And reference article

IMAGINAL PSYCHOLOGY'S DISABILITY

By **MATTHEW DEL NEVO**

Hillman, Pardo, Pantheatre, and *Metaphysics*

This leaflet presents de marker-contents of the CDrom presentation of the talks by Jay Livernois and Enrique Pardo, as well as an article by Matthew del Nevo published in Spring Journal in 1992, and sent by Amy Rome as reference for a critique of James Hillman's metaphysics.

Jay Livernois was the Editor of Spring Journal before it moved to New Orleans in 2003 (and therefore edited, with James Hillman and Charles Boer the article by del Nevo.).He is now the administrator of the **Roy Hart International Artistic Centre**, Southern France.

Enrique Pardo is the co-director of Pantheatre with Linda Wise.

James Hillman is the honorary president of Pantheatre and of the Myth and Theatre Festival.

This document is available on <http://www.pantheatre.com/pdf/6-archives-forum-2006-metaphysics.pdf>

To consult PANTHEATRE's discussion FORUMS : <http://www.pantheatre.com/6-archives-gb.html>

Letter from Amy Rome

29 April, 2006

Dear Enrique,

I hope this letter finds you well. As for me, the work of the PhD. goes on and I am currently in a period of revision and looking specifically again at the complexity of your praxis. Following a recent meeting with Dr. (Julie) Bokowiec, (who you will recall is supervising my PhD.), I am forwarding this essay entitled 'Imaginal Psychology's Disability'. The research is critiquing the metaphysics of Hillman's paradigm of the imagination. I write to ask if you would be so generous as to make comment in relation to your viewpoint on what this research is exploring, and how it relates or not to your ethics and approach to the creation of the theatrical image.

I will close for now and hope very much to hear your thoughts....

Yours, Amy

Amy Rome - Research Fellow Contemporary Performing Arts University of Central Lancashire Preston, England UK

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Cdrom contents

First Part

Jay Livernois : *The Metaphysics of James Hillman*

CDrom markers (in minutes and seconds)

- 00 00 Introduction
- 03 45 Definitions of metaphysics
- 05 00 Hillman's Jewish background
- 07 20 Hillman and C.G. Jung
- 08 20 Evangelos Christou "The Logos of the Soul"
- 10 00 The Greek philosophical third way
- 10 55 Who are "The Greek"?
- 15 45 Who was Henri Corbin?
- 18 25 Hillman's anti-Christianism
- 21 55 Hillman, soul, spirit
- 25 15 The narcissistic soul
- 26 55 Editing Spring Journal
- 30 40 Del Nevo's critique of Hillman
- 34 40 Del Nevo's critique of Henri Corbin
- 37 40 The question of "elitism"
- 44 30 Questions and answers.
Noah Pikes returns to the question of "elitism" : the function of priests
/ Jesus the democrat / Should theatre be democratic?

Evangelos Christou was raised in Alexandria, Egypt, educated, among others, by Ludwig Wittgenstein at Cambridge University, and trained as a analyst at the C. G. Jung Institute in Zurich. He died tragically in a car accident in the Western Desert in Egypt in 1956. *The Logos of the Soul*, published posthumously in 1965, was his only publication.
www.springpublications.com

Noah Pikes - Singer and voice teacher, author of "Dark Voices, the Genesis of Roy Hart Theatre".

Second Part

Enrique Pardo: *James Hillman, Pantheatre and Metaphysics*

CDrom markers (in minutes and seconds)

- 00 00 Myths and imagination
- 02 50 Figuring out the gods
- 04 02 Cultural 'materialism'
- 08 20 Hillman's influence on Pantheatre
- 08 45 "Where are the ideas?" (in theatre)
- 11 25 The model of tragedy
- 13 20 Religion is the enemy
- 14 20 Corbin and 9/11
- 16 20 Scientism
- 17 30 Islam and Enlightenment
- 20 40 Merleau-Ponty
- 26 00 Phantomology
- 28 00 Ethics, elitism and cultural effort
- 34 30 Hillman's take on *anima*
- 42 20 End and questions (Sharon Feder, Nick Hobbs)

Nick Hobbs - Singer, actor, writer and music organizer. He has been musical advisor and performer in various Pantheatre productions as well as the "Bel Canto and Hell Canto" Pantheatre lecture series. He is based in Istanbul. <http://www.voiceofshade.net>

Sharon Feder – Actress and multi-media artist, assistant director of Enrique Pardo who directed her solo: "Nostalgia Trip Tic" 2004.

From **Spring 53** – A Journal of Archetype and Culture - 1992

Senior Editor : James Hillman // Editor : Charles Boer // Managing Editor : Jay Livernois

IMAGINAL PSYCHOLOGY'S DISABILITY

MATTHEW DEL NEVO

Matthew Del Nevo, B.D. (Hons), works in the Department of Studies of Religion at the University of Sydney, Australia.

We assume that imaginal psychology puts the image and the imagination first with respect to the notion of the human person. There is, however, inherent in imaginal psychologizing, a blindness. As imaginal psychologists, as imaginative people, it is necessary, I believe, to become aware of this disability. It arises at the *a priori* level of metaphysics: specifically, from the metaphysic which has had such a great influence on the genesis of imaginal psychology, the work of Henry Corbin. It was Corbin who coined the term "imaginal."

The metaphysic of Henry Corbin is derived from forms of Islamic gnosis he encountered in Iran —Shi'ism—and through this, various earlier traditions — Mazdaism, Manicheanism, Ebionitism, Ismailism, Avicennism — as filtered through Persian culture. A single metaphysic may be traced through all these (at least according to Corbin), and we may call it a theophanic way of thinking and seeing. It is this that has influenced imaginal psychology so deeply.

First, let us recall what a theophanic way of thinking and seeing is. To see a theophany (revelation and communication of the divine) is to see theophanically, and that is to see a "real apparition." This sounds like a contradiction in terms; it is, but it is not therefore meaningless. In fact the reverse is true.

Corbin explains:

*The theophany is in every case proportionate to the theophanic dimension of the soul, that is, its aptitude for being shown a divine Figure...The dominant intuition is that the soul is not the witness of an external event but the medium in which the event takes place.*¹

This experience depends on a view of the image where the image is neither "here" nor "there" but "mid-world." In this space "between" the apparition is real, not imaginary, but "imaginal." This fantastic claim, that individually and collectively we partake of an imaginal realm (our soul's natural habitat), we celebrate and teach as imaginal psychologists.² And in this Hillman is our mentor, as Corbin was his.

An imaginal understanding of the soul is personally liberating (from subjective egoism), and intellectually liberating (because the imagination is freed by "seeing through"). Once more, the soul of the world becomes visible to our eyes.³ What I want to argue in this article, however, is that the imagination, therefore the soul, is also disabled by this very liberation.

To substantiate my claim, which is not merely a negative criticism but (I hope) a way of extending imagination and imagining, of being truer to the opus of soul work, I do not want to state my case in general terms. Any instance of Hillman's thought is paradigmatic as far as what I have to say is concerned, and I have chosen an instance which illustrates it particularly clearly.

In his discussion of imagism and iconoclasm in *Healing Fiction*,⁴ Hillman is making a point which he thinks is in defense of the image and the imaginal, and to some extent that is certainly the case, but to some extent also, it is certainly not the case, and from this point of view Hillman's perspective cuts short the lengths of imagining that are archetypally possible. This other point of view reflects a Christian (as opposed to a theophanic) metaphysic, and one which profoundly, and archetypally extends the imaginal conception. This discussion in *Healing Fiction* is particularly symbolic for Hillman's view of the imagination as expounded elsewhere in his essays and books, and in the works of imaginal psychologists who have followed him.

Hillman discusses the ecumenical Council of Nicea in 787 C.E., and his account of it goes as follows: although history says the imagists won and the iconoclasts lost, a closer look leads one to the conclusion that, in a crucial way, the imagists lost and the iconoclasts won.⁵ In other words, Christianity once again failed the anima. The crux of this closer look is that although the imagists held that the image was itself full of power "containing in itself the person who is imaged," according to John of Damascus,⁶ when it came to the crunch they said that the image merely represented the power and/or person and did not contain it.

For instance, the image of Christ was not Christ but only his representation. This, Hillman thinks, is a move away from the previous idea held by the imagists, that the image contains in itself the person who is imaged. It is a move away which locates the power of the image elsewhere than the image, thus denigrating it.

Hillman's explanation for this compromise on the part of the imagists is that a literalistic theology of spirit was battling with an imaginal psychology of image; it then moved away from the position cited by John of Damascus. It was, at a level the imagists were not conscious of, an encroachment upon and victory over soul by spirit. Furthermore, symbolically, the two camps, imagists and iconoclasts, were drawn up along gender lines, with the Empress Irene heading the imagists.

Before we go on, let us recall what a theophanic view of the image is. It says that the divine manifests by the image in the image. The image does not merely correspond, as in allegory or analogy with its divine archetype, rather, it leads back to it (Corbin's *ta'wil*).⁷ This leading-back is also a process of soul-making, in Hillman's sense.⁸ The connection between image and archetype is qualitative, and the nearer, as it were, the image stands to its Origin, the greater the (qualitative) likeness is to be found, and the more archetypal it is.

The distance between image and Origin is not simple or logical, it is rather an abyss in which birds fly.⁹ When John of Damascus says the image contains in itself the person who is imaged, as Hillman quotes him saying, this is precisely the theophanic view — or so Hillman thinks — for, qualitatively speaking, it does. To say, as the Council then went on to say, that the image is a representation, is to move away from theophanic thinking in which the image is a symbol, to another literalist way of thinking where it is merely an allegory. For the theophanic view of the image sees that a symbol symbolises with that which it symbolises, whereas an allegory merely attempts to picture something external to itself. The theophanic view of the image is symbolic and never allegorical. In this metaphysic of the image Hillman is deeply indebted to Corbin, as is all imaginal psychology.

But — and here is the disabling move that is typical of imaginal psychology — when Hillman brings this theophanic view of the image to Nicea in 787, he measures against it what he reads there. Hillman quotes with approval John of Damascus that the image contains in itself the person who is imaged, because he reads it as a theophanic statement. As such, he sees it in distinction, even in opposition to the Council's final decision, which called the image representational. Hillman's theophanic metaphysic leads him into imaginative over-sight, exposing the disability of imaginal psychology. For John of Damascus, as an Orthodox Christian,¹⁰ did not think theophanically in the same sense.

Under a Christian metaphysic, theophany is slightly and some-what different. In this type of thinking the image may both contain in itself the person who is imaged (as John says) *and* confess to represent the person (as the Council decided). Far from there being an unconscious conspiracy here by spirit against soul, as Hillman suggests, there is a certain homology. Thus John's imagism comprehends both an equivalent to a *ta'wil*, and what Hillman would criticize as literalistic "substantive" thinking. How can this be so?

The answer involves distinguishing Hillman's imaginative over-sight, which is just this: the icon is an *historic* picture. As an historic picture, the icon is both representative *and* actual. In this sense it represents things seen and testified (Christ as a man in Galilee and Jerusalem), but the icon is actual as well, in the sense that the community of faith whose expression this

is and who have stabilised this expression over time, see the person imaged actually (theophanically) present. Christ, for instance, is seen in His actuality and in the faithful believers'.

John of Damascus is not speaking theophanically in Hillman's sense. In fact, he would regard Hillman as an image-destroyer, an iconoclast, rather than as the imagist Hillman believes himself to be. The reason for this is that under John's metaphysic a theophany is not something merely embodied in the image in the imaginal realm (*mundus imaginalis*), but it is something down-to-earth embodied *in the flesh*.

Now we can begin to see the blindness of imaginal psychology. Where the image is the incarnation of the theophany (its embodiment, so that the gods come to us via images, and we to them as in imaginal psychology), there is nothing to stop a theophany occurring at any time, or perhaps, unconsciously, *all* the time, and one person's theophany will be as good as another's, for all theophanies alike, by definition, bespeak divine self-revelation and presence

The Christian metaphysic of a John of Damascus claims to see further than this. The image by which and in which the gods come to us, if it is not merely embodied in the *mundus imaginalis* but "in the flesh", allows an historic literal imagination which the former can never (metaphysically) allow.

Moreover, a theophany "in the flesh" does not happen wherever and whenever those attuned to the concept happen to perceive such an event. It happens at a certain time, in a certain place. Thus the enfleshed theophany is tied up with history in a concrete sense. A theophany which happens "in the flesh" can never be repeated and is irreversible, unlike a theophany in the *mundus imaginalis*, which need pay no court to the historical sphere. Rather, the historical sphere is made to pay court to it.¹¹

The imaginal theophany is hierophantic. It relies on a certain ability and level of perception and consciousness in the first place in the beholding subject. It produces an elite who see and recite theophanies, and those for whom it is all quite beyond; those who realise life is actually imaginal, and those who live in ignorance of this (and therefore in unreality and "literalism"). A theophany "in the flesh" brings the theophanic manifestation down to earth down below the intellectualist and elitist level of what it calls "docetism" to the level of the senses.

At this level, those who attest theophany - in our example of the icon of Christ, the Apostles - pass the memory on. A community of faith, of believers in the efficacy of this revelation, continue it, in the linear manner associated with time and place, down the generations. The believers believe that the divine manifestation was literally real, for example, that Christ walked among them "in the flesh", but also, as witness the icons on the walls of the believer's Church and home, that this person is still real, and that, in the

words of John of Damascus, "the icon contains in itself the person who is imaged."

The theophanic (divine) reality of the figure in the icon, according to the Christian metaphysic, does not float around in a world of lofty perceptions visible only to those "with eyes to see" or in Hillman's language, with eyes to "see through".¹² Rather, the theophany is visible at the level of sense-perception to every member of the community of faith, regardless of education or intelligence. Such a grossly unsophisticated idea has always been a stumbling block to "the Greek", that is, to the academic, as St. Paul first said. For imaginal thinking the sense-world is in a concrete sense unreal. For reality is really imaginal, as in the thought of Corbin's Iranian theosophists.

Hillman, by following such a metaphysic of the image, and imaginal psychology in his train, suffers the same imaginative blindness. We notice it wherever Hillman equates literalism or concretism, Christianity or materialism, with loss of soul. The truth is, from the point of view of this other metaphysic, imaginal psychology is incapable of incorporating these modes, all of which operate below (or outside) the sacrosanct sphere of soul as imaginal psychology is forced to conceive it. This is imaginal psychology's disability.

Imaginal psychology can bear its disability insofar as it remains strategic, that is, insofar as it only borrows theophanic metaphysics to teach about soul and its concomitant, imagination, both of which have been radically thought out of existence by modern culture. Yet its disability returns to endanger its way of soul (ostensibly the soul's own way).

For in pre-Iranian culture, according to Corbin, the phenomenon of the imaginal realm was restricted to and mediated by the Elders who were capable of distinguishing a theophany (vision of the divine) from other levels of vision. Yet in imaginal psychology today the distinction between types and levels of image is either absent or smudged. Yet if the imaginal is the soul's own realm, the soul's showing of itself, these levels of real apparition need to be studied because the soul itself demands it.

While imaginal psychology may appropriate theophanic metaphysics as a strategic place outside Western culture from which to critique such psychological malaises as now threaten this culture (materialism, literalism, Christianity, etc.), the appropriation of a metaphysics carries a responsibility with it. This is a responsibility that in pre-Iranian culture the Elders upheld. It is responsibility to and for what is sacred, what is divine. It is not a responsibility to and for the image *qua* image, but to that which the image leads back (*ta'wil*), to that which in other words orients the image and to which the image is oriented. Again, this is a question of the levels at which the image may be apparent; and of what "that" is beyond the imaginal and out of which the appearance comes (*epiphany*).

Unless imaginal psychology is just a secular replication of a theophanic way of thinking, it must carry responsibility for the kind of reality it presupposes. But does it? I have argued that it is blind to (uncomprehending of) certain so-called "-isms" which lie outside the sphere of soul (at least as soul is conceived by the theophanic way of thinking). However, it would seem that imaginal psychology's disability is matched in the sphere of its own self-image: it is blind to what its experience of soul presupposes, to its metaphysical responsibilities, its responsibility as a metaphysic. First and foremost this would be upholding the veracity of the *ta'wil*, meaning the theophany's return to its Origin.

The imaginal realm (and the image accordingly) has lost the veracity it had in its pre-Iranian ethos in which the Elders — Corbin's *fideli d'amore* — had authority over the saying of types and levels of image. Yet in imaginal psychology today the question of authority lies neglected, and as far as I can see, confused with secular norms such as popularity, academic seniority and notoriety. With respect to theophanic thinking, I am deeply suspicious of this. It seems like a waiving of the responsibility to and for the metaphysical principles—once divinely inspired—which imaginal psychology supports and which supports *it*. Oddly, only by virtue of the blindness I have described can imaginal psychology sustain the belief that it "sees through," and that such an envisioning is in fact a deeper re-visioning. However, I have argued that imaginal psychology's disability is not just a blindness in extent of vision, due to metaphysical limitation, but is a blind-spot in the very vision itself and the vision *of* itself.

Notes

¹ Henry Corbin, *Cyclical Time & Ismaili Gnosis (Islamic Texts & Contexts)* tr. Ralph Manheim (London: Kegan Paul, 1983), 62. Also: "The soul cannot be explained; it is the soul itself which is the principle of every explanation and the key to it." *Spiritual Body & Celestial Earth*, tr. Nancy Pearson, (Princeton New Jersey: PUP, 1977), Bollingen Series XCI:2, 5-6.

² James Hillman, «I take this psychologizing activity to be the primary work of my field." *Revisioning Psychology* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), 127. "...the major task now confronting psychology: the differentiation of the imaginal, discovering its laws, its configurations and moods of discourse, its psychological necessities." *Ibid.*, 37.

³ On which, see Part Three of *Revisioning Psychology*.

⁴ See James Hillman, "Anima Mundi: The Return of the Soul to the World " *Spring* 1982, 71-93.

⁵ James Hillman, *Healing Fiction* (New York: Station Hill Press, 1983), 70f.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 71.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 139, n.40.

⁸ For an account of which, see H. Corbin, *Avicenna & the Visionary Recital* tr Willard R. Trask (Dallas: Spring Publications, 1980), 28f.

- ⁹ James Hillman, "Epistrophe, reversion, return, the recall of phenomena to their imaginal background. This principle-regarding phenomena in terms of their likeness...is a primary principle for the archetypal approach to all psychic events. Reversion is a bridge too, a method which connects an event to its image, a psychic process to its myth, a suffering of the soul to the imaginal mystery expressed therein." *The Dream & The Underworld* (New York- Harper & Row, 1975), 4.
- ¹⁰ See H. Corbin, *Avicenna & The Visionary Recital*, "The Bird as a Symbol," 178f; "Translation of the 'Recital Of The Bird,'" 188f.
- ¹¹ John of Damascus was the author of *De fide orthodoxa* (before 743 C E) P.G. 94,517-1228.
- ¹² Thus, for Hillman, the Council of Nicea in 787 C.E. is not about people and politics, flesh and blood bishops, but these merely epitomise, "...the attack of spirit on soul,..." (*Healing Fiction*, 70), and the alleged male versus female split symbolizes, according to this, with, "...my suggestion that the issue between iconoclasm and imagism is one between spirit and soul." (*Healing Fiction*, 71). 13. James Hillman, *Revisioning Psychology* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), 140f.