



Myth and Trauma

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Myth
and
Trauma:

Higher Self
Ancient Wisdom,
and their Enemies

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Introduction

If you want to oppress people, and take away the natural resources given by nature to those living in a land, it is easier to do so if they are traumatized.

The concept of *psychological trauma* is not new: we can see that this concept was deeply understood well before the very first ancient texts which we can examine were written down. What is newer is the application of the word "trauma" (which typically refers to a physical wound) to psychological and emotional issues and not just to physical injury.

Dr. Gabor Maté, a respected healer and author and speaker on the subject of trauma and its detrimental effect on our lives, says plainly that: "What trauma actually is, fundamentally, is a disconnect from the self."¹

When men and women are disconnected from the self, it is easier to exploit them, and more difficult for them to counteract that exploitation.

The good news, however, is that the world's ancient myths speak very clearly about this subject, and about the way to overcome trauma (and to repair the accompanying disconnection from the self).

Unfortunately, although the world's ancient myths (and ancient scriptures, and sacred traditions) convey this very positive and beneficial message, they have been twisted and even inverted in order *to* traumatize, rather than to heal trauma.

Literalism, and especially literalist interpretations of the scriptures we call the Old and New Testaments of the Bible, have caused and continue to cause enormous trauma and suffering in the lives of men, women, and children around the world.

I do not deny that these scriptures can and do have a positive impact on the lives of many individuals, despite the ways that literalist interpretation twists and inverts their message at many points, but this positive impact only testifies to the positive power inherent in the ancient wisdom *in spite of* the misinterpretation to which these ancient stories have been subjected, and not *because of* that misinterpretation.

The world's ancient myths – to include the stories of the Bible – actually teach us how to recover from trauma, and especially how to repair the most significant byproduct of psychological trauma, which is the *alienation from our essential self*, from our authentic self, our higher self.

This alienation from the self creates a tremendous void, and an ache for reconnection – and leading medical doctors, psychologists, and healers are now realizing and teaching that this alienation lies at the root of virtually all forms of addiction, depression, severe anxiety, and even chronic physical illness.

The incredible ancient wisdom bequeathed to every culture on earth in the form of their original myths, scriptures and sacred stories reveals a clear understanding of the source of the problem, teaching that the authentic self is never lost and is actually always available, even if buried and suppressed by "the ego" or "the mind" (which itself is a defense mechanism that we create as a way of coping with pain and trauma).

When we are taught that the ancient myths (including the stories of the Bible) are historical, literal, and terrestrial, it implies that they are actually about someone else, someone external to us, and this in turn implies that we must seek somewhere outside of ourselves for the remedy to the alienation we feel, when in fact the solution cannot be found outside but only within.

This book will explore the ways in which the world's ancient myths point us towards the reconciliation with our essence, and the repair of the trauma which caused us to become alienated from who we really are. But in order to see how they do that, we

must examine the little-known *system of celestial metaphor* upon which the ancient myths, from virtually every culture on our planet, are constructed.

The ancient myths can be shown to be metaphorical, rather than literal – and they can be proven to be metaphorical rather than literal because the figures and events described in the myths relate directly to specific constellations and heavenly features, and to celestial cycles including the cycles of the earth, moon, sun, visible planets, and even the ages-long cycle of precession.

The evidence which establishes the fact that the world's myths have their foundation in an extremely ancient world-wide system of celestial metaphor is simply overwhelming in its volume. This book will provide irrefutable evidence of their metaphorical nature, which must be established in order to help us to realize that the myths are not pointing us towards external solutions to the alienation we feel within (as literal interpretations always tend to do, because literalizing and historicizing the texts naturally externalizes the characters and events).

Even beyond this important understanding, the fact that the ancient myths are built upon a system of *celestial* metaphor teaches another important truth – because the use of the *stars and heavenly cycles* as the foundation for the metaphor was by no means accidental. The ancient myths employ the celestial realms as a means of picturing the *infinite realm* – and indeed, when we gaze out into the universe on a clear, dark night, we are gazing out into an infinite realm.

As it turns out, the ancient myths tell us that our essential self, our higher self, connects us to the infinite realm, the realm of pure potential: the realm of the gods.

In this book, we will first see abundant and undeniable evidence that the myths of the world are indeed built upon a common foundation of celestial metaphor – and then we will explore how understanding their esoteric language can help us to grasp their

profound message of reconciliation with who we are, at our essence.

The myths point us towards the recovery of that self, from whom we have become alienated. That reconnection is in fact always available to us – because our true self is never lost, and is always there, waiting for our return, ready at a moment's notice.

There are forces in this world who would very much prefer to keep the vast majority of men and women traumatized, alienated, and disconnected from themselves. This book will touch upon some of the ways in which they seek to do that – and once you understand the pattern, you will begin to recognize it in places that are not discussed at length here.

It is my hope that the format of this book will help each reader to see through the lies we have been taught about the world's ancient wisdom, by learning the language that the ancient myths themselves are actually speaking – which is a metaphorical language, an esoteric language, and a celestial language.

As we begin to hear what the ancient treasure of the myths, entrusted to every culture on every continent and island on our planet, are trying to tell us, we will start to see the path they illuminate for our journey to recover our connection to our own essential self. It is a journey that no one else can take for us – but the myths can show us the way, if we dare.

We will begin in a lonely desert, under an open sky, filled with stars . . .

A vision of the Infinite

Join me as we travel to a desolate and rocky wilderness, far from human habitation, part of my multi-year research project pursuing the ancient wisdom given to humanity in remote antiquity.

Night is falling and the sun is setting. A traveler, journeying alone and on foot, has been making his way through a rocky and deserted landscape, from the ancient settlement of Beersheba, a site with evidence of human occupation going back at least as far as the Copper Age, and whose name may be translated "Well of the Oath" or "Well of Seven" (and hence, "Place of Seven Wells").

The lonely traveler is on his way to the distant region of Haran, which according to present scholarship is thought to have been located in the northern region of Mesopotamia and in fact to have been situated in the proximity of the ancient city of Urfa (recently given the more honorific designation of "Sanliurfa"), not far from the incredible stone circles of Göbekli Tepe which only began to come to light in the late 1990s and early 2000s after being deliberately buried under tons of earth not later than the year 8000 BC or BCE.

As the sun begins to set, the weary traveler finds a space to rest for the night, under the open sky. He positions a stone or stones to use for his pillow, and stretches out on the ground and prepares to go to sleep.

As the final glow of the sun fades in the west, a cool desert breeze crosses over the barren landscape moving from the west to the east, and countless stars begin to appear in the velvet-black sky. The young traveler has much to contemplate as he lays his head upon the stone pillow and tries to make himself comfortable on the desert floor. He has set out with his father's blessing to seek out his uncle, the brother of his mother, in distant Haran. His

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father has specifically charged him with taking a wife from among his uncle's daughters, and sent him away with a benediction wishing him many children and the inheritance of the land through which he will sojourn.

As the young man's conscious thoughts begin to give way to the onrush of sleep, the images he sees within his closed eyelids become more and more animated, until he crosses over the boundary into the realm of sleep, and enters the world of dreams.

His dreams have a vividness and power that is impossible to describe to the waking mind. In this realm of dreams, color and motion take on an unworldly reality, one with which we are all familiar because we ourselves go there too, when we sleep. He sees a glorious ladder, set up with its base upon the earth, stretching upwards into the sky, the top reaching all the way to heaven. Holy angels of indescribable beauty can be seen ascending and descending upon this celestial ladder.

And, as the text of Genesis chapter 28 tells us (for that is where we encounter this story of the traveler making his way from Beersheba to Haran), above the ladder, the actual figure of the LORD is standing ("behold, the LORD stood above it," the text declares in verse 13), and says to the dreamer these words:

I am the LORD God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; and thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. And behold, I *am* with thee, and will keep thee in all *places* whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done *that* which I have spoken to thee of.²

When the traveler awakens from his sleep, he exclaims:
"Surely the LORD is in this place; and I knew *it* not" (verse 16).

What has just happened?

Is this ancient record telling us the story of a unique encounter with the divine, given to one privileged individual, specially selected for reasons we cannot begin to fathom, but certainly far

from our own experience, living as we do in our uninspiring quotidian routine of traffic lights, workday frustrations, grocery lines and bills to pay via computer or mobile app?

Or is there more to this story, some hidden clue which will unlock an ancient truth – long forgotten – capable of speaking to us even in this modern day, indeed even in this very present moment?

To answer this question, we must travel to a vantage point where we can behold one of the most distinctive and breathtaking features of our night sky: the glorious column of the Milky Way galaxy itself, which rises up out of the southern horizon³ and arches over our heads like a great pillar of fire – if we can find a place to observe the night sky far enough away from the light pollution created by the streetlamps and city glow that washes out the view of the heavens within and around so many of our modern population centers.

I myself live in an area where the stars are clearly visible from my house and within my neighborhood on most cloudless nights – but in order to really observe the heavens in all their glory, I drive to a secluded pass high among the hills which overlook the Pacific Ocean, where on a moonless night the countless stars are absolutely breathtaking in their splendor.

We venture out into the hills, passing farms and vineyards, leaving behind the lights of the towns and cities, for a singular reason.

For the past ten years, I have been exploring the overwhelming evidence which demonstrates that the world's ancient myths, scriptures and sacred stories are based on the stars – including the stories collected into the scriptures of the so-called Old and New Testaments of the Bible, as well as the myths and sacred traditions of virtually every other culture on our planet, from ancient Egypt to ancient Mesopotamia and ancient India to ancient Greece, ancient China, and ancient Japan, to the cultures of Africa, Australia, North America, Central America, South America, the islands of the vast Pacific, and many more.

Once we begin to understand this system, and to become familiar with the correspondence between the various characters and events which recur in world myth and the characteristics of specific constellations and their position within the great heavenly cycles (involving the motions of our planet in relation to the other planets, as well as the sun and the moon), we realize that an episode in ancient myth such as the vision of Jacob described in Genesis 28 can best be analyzed by examining the figures in the night sky, as opposed to trying to match the events described with any terrestrial coordinates.

Thus, to analyze the famous story of "Jacob's ladder," we do not need to travel to the arid desert of the northern Negev (or the Naqab, to use its Arabic name) in the Levant: we can instead turn to the sky. As we drive along the two-lane California highway through the deepening gloom, we are in fact situated within the same latitudinal band that encompasses the supposed journey of Jacob from Beersheba (positioned at about 31° north latitude) to Haran (positioned at roughly 37° north latitude), although half a world away if measured by longitude.

By the time we reach our destination, just over the crest of the ranges which separate the inland valleys from the coastal regions and the glimmering Pacific itself, the sky is a deep black. A cold breeze blows off the ocean from the west and sweeps up over the hills, as the denser air hanging above the water rushes in over the land that has been warming in the sun all day, although this situation will reverse by morning, as the land cools down at night.

We turn off onto a wide gravel turnout, facing south and west, with a dazzling view of California's Central Coast stretched out below us. The gravel crunches under the tires of the car as we coast to a stop and turn off the engine and the lights.

I climb out and sit down on the hood of the car. It's warm from the engine. Leaning back against the glass of the windshield, as if on a lounge chair, and facing towards the south, it is perhaps not as comfortable as Jacob's campsite on the desert floor, which

This is a preview: some pages have been omitted.

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like an eagle or other bird of prey on the shoulder of the lunging-forward god in the illustration. Below is the same image, this time with the outlines of what I believe to be the attendant eagle enhanced for greater visibility:



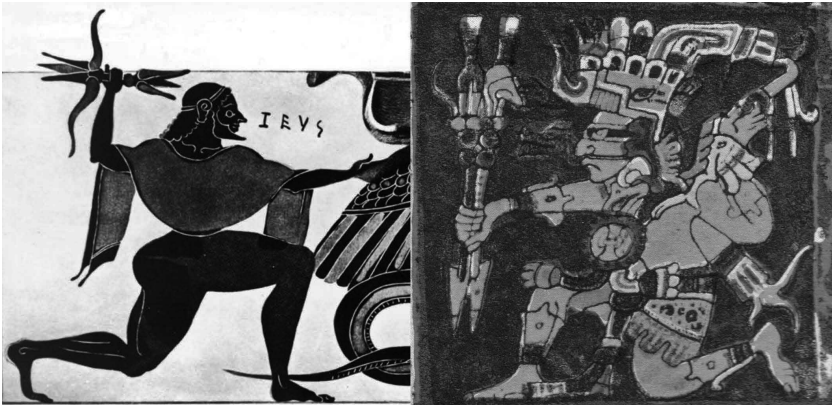
The inclusion of this eagle adds yet another parallel to Hercules-figures in other myth-systems around the world. Certainly it is well-known that the god Zeus is associated with the great eagle in the myths of ancient Greece, as is the god Jove or Jupiter in the myths of ancient Rome.

This association is almost certainly due to the close proximity of the constellation Aquila the Eagle to the constellation Hercules, as we saw in the star-chart illustrating the celestial foundation of the dream of Jacob in the first chapter (see page 19).

Aquila is located adjacent to the extended rear foot of the constellation Hercules, and just above the shoulder of Ophiuchus. Thus deities associated with Hercules, as well as those associated with Ophiuchus, will often have an affiliation with a great eagle. In the myths of ancient India, as discussed in *The Ancient World-*

Wide System, the god Vishnu has as his close companion the great eagle, Garuda. Vishnu can be shown to be identified with the constellation Ophiuchus, rather than with the constellation Hercules. But the presence of the eagle or eagle-like bird in the illustration shown above from the Dresden Codex adds further confirmation to the argument that this figure's Hercules-like posture is intentional, and that he is associated with that constellation in the heavens.

As if all these details are not enough to seal the identification, the final confirming detail in the Maya illustration, of course, is the presence of a thunderbolt – the clear hallmark of a figure who corresponds to the powerful constellation Hercules in the heavens:



When juxtaposed, the similarities between the ancient image of Zeus battling Typhon and the image of the thunderbolt-bearing deity from the Dresden Codex of the Maya are unmistakable. Look at the thunderbolts in the two pieces of artwork above – their shared characteristics are quite remarkable.

Indeed, both depictions of the thunderbolt-weapon share clear similarities to the depictions of the Vajra, the thunderbolt-weapon of the Vedic storm-god Indra which serves as a transcendental symbol in many later forms of Hinduism and Buddhism, and which is known as the Dorje in Tibetan sacred tradition.

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Because of their descent from the god Zeus, these famous twins were known as the *Dioscuri* in ancient Greece, meaning "the youths of Zeus" (the word *Dios* itself being a form of the name of the god Zeus, as also in the name of the god Dionysus, whose name literally signifies "Zeus of Nysos," from the name of the mountain where Dionysus was born). They were known as tremendous horsemen, an association which should not surprise us, given the fact that the constellation Sagittarius is associated with the horse (it is also notable that the twins Nakula and Sahadeva in the Mahabharata of ancient India are described as consummate horsemen).

The death of the mortal twin, Castor, over an issue involving two daughters of Leucippas who eloped with Castor and Pollux instead of marrying the sons of Aphareus, and the ensuing theft of some cattle by Castor and Pollux from these two sons of Aphareus to send as a wedding gift to Leucippas, in order to taunt the sons of Aphareus still further, is described in the Tenth Nemean Ode of the ancient poet Pindar of Thebes (thought to have lived from about 518 BC to 438 BC), here translated by Frederick Apthorp Paley (1815 - 1888):

And indeed, Castor and his brother Polydeuces once went to receive hospitality at the house of Pamphäes [Paley here includes a footnote explaining that Pamphäes is an ancestor of the victor of the race whose victory is commemorated in this particular ode], 'tis no wonder if it is inborn in them [i.e., the family of Pamphäes], to be good athletes. For as lords of Sparta's wide plains they [i.e., Castor and Polydeuces], with Hermes and with Hercules, assign success in contests and festivals, showing a great concern for honest men; and trusty indeed is the race of gods. And now, by changing places in turn, they enjoy one day with their loved sire Zeus, and the next they pass under the dark recesses of earth in the vales of Therapnae, and so fulfil one and the same destiny. For after the death of Castor in war, Polydeuces chose this existence rather than the being altogether a god, and living always in heaven. It had chanced that Idas, in a passion about some oxen,

had wounded Castor with the point of a bronze spear; for Lynceus, on the lookout (for the robbers) from Mount Taygetus, had seen them crouching under the stump of an oak; for he of all mortal men had the sharpest eye-sight. So with nimble feet they came [that is, the brothers Lynceus and Idas, who are the sons of Aphareus, as Paley clarifies in his footnote] at once to the spot, and a bold attack they made forthwith. But terrible too was the vengeance the sons of Aphareus suffered by the designs of Zeus; for at once the son of Leda arrived in pursuit; and they stood to face him hard by the tomb of their father (Aphareus). From it they caught up a carved stone that adorned the grave, and threw it at the breast of Polydeuces. Yet they crushed him not, nor even made him step back; but he rushed at Lynceus with his ready dart and drove the brass into his side. Then Zeus hurled at Idas his scorching bolt; and far away from their friends the two brothers were burned on one pyre; for a quarrel with mightier beings is hard for mortal men to engage in. And now quickly to his (wounded) brother returned the son of Tyndareus, and found him not yet dead, but gasping hard for breath [literally, "with hard gasping roughly-sounding in his breathing," Paley informs us]. Whereupon, shedding hot tears, he cried aloud, "Father, son of Cronus, what then is to be the end of our griefs? Bid me too to die with him, O king; for his honour hath departed from a man when he is bereft of his friends. Few mortals in a time of trouble can be trusted to take part in one's toil." So he spoke; and Zeus came at once before him and uttered these words: "You are my son [thus, Paley explains, cannot die along with Castor]; but your brother here was begotten afterwards by mortal seed in the union of the hero her husband with your mother. But come, I nevertheless offer you a choice of this or that; if you wish to escape death and hateful old age, and to dwell in Olympus with me and Athena and Ares with the sable spear, you have the chance even of this: but if you make a stand for your brother, and have a mind to take an equal share with him in everything, why, then you may live half your time

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remaining beneath the earth, and half in the golden abodes of heaven." When he had said thus, Polydeuces doubted not in his mind which counsel he should follow [literally, Paley tells us, the text says that the immortal twin "did not set in his mind a double resolve" or "propose to himself in his mind a two-fold plan"]. So Zeus unclosed the sealed eye, and next loosed the tongue, of the brazen-mailed Castor.⁷¹

Thus, Polydeuces chose to join his brother in death, and the two spend alternating days, one day lying in the tomb beneath the earth under the folds of the hills and valleys of Therapnae (and sojourning on that day in the realm of the dead, the vale of Hades), and the other day enjoying the halls of Olympus as immortal gods.

Translator Frederick A. Paley, in his 1868 English edition of this ancient poem by Pindar, includes his gloss in a footnote to this story about the Dioscuri: "As elemental gods, they typified the alternate appearance and obscuration of the heavenly bodies,"⁷² and this interpretation is accurate, as far as it goes.

The statement is perceptive in that Paley here discerns the truth that the world's ancient myths are based on celestial metaphor, encoding the great heavenly cycles and the movement of the celestial bodies, including the sun, moon and visible planets but also the stars and constellations. The daily cycle of our earth's turning upon its axis does indeed cause all of these heavenly bodies to appear at one horizon, cross the sky above, and then sink down into the opposite horizon: the "alternate appearance and obscuration of the heavenly bodies" described in Paley's footnote.

For example, we are all familiar with the sun's apparent motion through the sky each day. As our earth turns upon its axis, the spin of the globe is towards the east. If you were to look "down" upon the spinning earth from a point above the north pole, the motion of the planet would be counterclockwise from this observation point: thus, the east coast of the North American

continent would be seen to be leading the body of the continent, with the west coast of the same continent trailing behind it (which is why the time zone on the east coast is three hours ahead of the time zone on the west coast, in the United States).

Because the earth is spinning in that direction, the rotation of our globe towards the east will cause the sun to “rise” each morning above the eastern horizon. The sun, in fact, is not actually “rising,” but rather the globe upon which we are standing is spinning inexorably towards the east, which eventually brings the sun into view as the eastern horizon continues to plunge forward, and then causes the sun to cross the sky (appearing to move from the east to the west) as the globe continues its daily rotation. Eventually, the same turning of the earth will cause the sun to sink down behind the western horizon, as the part of the globe upon which we are standing turns away from the sun, such that our view of our sun is obscured due to the fact that we are now facing out into space, while the other side of the earth is turned towards the sun.

In identical fashion, this same daily rotation causes the rising and setting of the other heavenly bodies as well: the rising and setting of the moon, as well as all the visible planets, and the stars and constellations. Note that those stars and constellations closest to the north celestial pole (for observers in the northern hemisphere, and closest to the south celestial pole for viewers in the southern) will not actually “set” behind the western horizon, but instead will turn in a constant circle around the central axis-point of the night sky (these are the so-called “undying stars” discussed in the texts of ancient Egypt).

So, the daily turning of the earth causes the sun, moon, visible planets and stars to be obscured from our view for about half of each rotation, and visible for the other half – which is why the interpretation offered by Frederick A. Paley in his 1868 translation, that the myth of the Dioscuri spending half their time below the earth and half their time among the glorious immortals in Olympus, makes sense at a basic level.

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But the question remains: why this exercise of personifying the motions of the heavenly bodies, and the cycles of the celestial mechanics, in the first place? Academics are fond of asserting that myths evincing some connection to the annual cycle, such as the disappearance of the goddess Persephone for some portion of the year during which she must make her abode in the realm of the dead and during which nothing can grow upon the surface of the earth, must have had something to do with the knowledge of when to plant crops in early agrarian societies (a somewhat ludicrous assertion but one that has been repeated so often it is rarely examined critically: it is inane to suggest that people would not have known when it was favorable to plant crops and when conditions were unfavorable for planting them). But to suggest that the ancients needed myths to help them know the difference between night and day is even more ridiculous.

There must be some deeper purpose. The great cycles, even the familiar cycle of day and night, are ripe with spiritual symbolism: when we hear of a goddess of night, for instance, we can be fairly certain that she is associated with far more than the phenomenon of the world being plunged into darkness each evening, as the sun disappears below the horizon and the temperature drops, and mortal men and women must seek the shelter of their homes or at least of a fire if outside. Night and its accompanying darkness carry with them symbolic meanings which go far beyond the physical, often having connotations related to the realms of death and the underworld, for example.

Additionally, we know that the Dioscuri were in fact extremely important gods in the ancient world, even though they have not received the level of popular awareness which is accorded to the other gods and goddesses of ancient Greece. As discussed at some length in my 2014 book *The Undying Stars*, the ancient *mysteria* celebrated at Eleusis each year honored the goddess Demeter and her search for (and eventual recovery of) her daughter Persephone (who is also known, especially in

conjunction with the ancient *mysteria*, as Kore or “the Maiden”). But there were also *mysteria* held in other parts of the ancient world, associated with other deities, including the Mysteries of Samothrace, of Lemnos, and of Boeotia, dedicated to “the Nameless Gods” or *Kabeiroi*. Some scholars point to evidence suggesting that these Nameless Gods can in fact be identified with the Dioscuri.

In his 2010 book *Mystery Cults of the Ancient World*, for example, author Hugh Bowden (a professor of ancient history at King’s College London) points to an inscription in an ancient sanctuary on the island of Delos, a building which in ancient times was known both as the Kabeireion and the Samothrakeion, calling the priests of that place: “priests of the Great Gods of Samothrace, the Dioscuri, the Kabeiroi.”⁷³ He also notes the inscription on an ancient coin, from the island of Syros in the Aegean Sea, bearing the image of two young men, each with a star on his head (typical iconography when depicting the twins Castor and Polydeuces, as Professor Bowden points out), which declares: “The Divine Kabeiroi of Syros.”⁷⁴

Clearly, then, the Dioscuri were figures of profound importance in the ancient world. Further evidence to support this contention is found in a fragment of the poet Alcman, who lived and wrote during the period we call the seventh century BC. In one of his surviving poems, he calls the Dioscuri “most worthy of reverence from all gods and men.”⁷⁵

Why are the Dioscuri so worthy of reverence? Perhaps it is because their story symbolizes more than simply the daily obscuration and revelation of the heavenly bodies caused by the turning of the earth upon its axis – or, to put it more precisely, *because their story points us towards the deeper meaning with which the myths imbue the turning of the heavens throughout the daily cycle and all the other great celestial cycles.*

The great sacrifice of Polydeuces, recounted above in Pindar’s Tenth Nemean Ode, is to choose to descend into the underworld

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for half of his time in order to be alongside his mortal brother, whom he loves, and from whom he refuses to be separated – and in doing so, sharing his divine nature with Castor, who otherwise would have been doomed to spend eternity in the realm of Hades. The meaning and significance of this great myth-pattern becomes most clearly understood when we consider the singular insight of Alvin Boyd Kuhn (1880 – 1963), who perceived that when the ancient myths talk about “death” and the “underworld,” they are not describing the world that comes after this life: rather, the ancient myths around the globe describe *this very incarnate existence*, when the soul is plunged down into the material realm and encased in a body of flesh and blood, as the realm of death and darkness, and as the veritable “underworld”!

Kuhn establishes this radical new and extremely helpful perspective in his 1940 masterpiece, *Lost Light: An Interpretation of Ancient Scriptures*, weighing in at over 600 pages and filled with supporting evidence to advance his case beyond and reasonable doubt. There, he declares:

For everywhere throughout antiquity *earthly life was depicted as our death!* [. . .] The fact stands that they did call our life here death, and that when they spoke of “the dead” in sacred books, it is indubitable that they meant the living humans. The words “death” and “the dead” are used in the old scriptures to refer to living humanity in earthly embodiment. [. . .] The astonishing point, of revolutionary significance for all religion, will receive textual treatment in the present chapter, and a later one will further vindicate the correctness of the thesis. It is perhaps the cardinal item of the whole theological corpus, the real “lost key” to a correct reading of subterranean meaning in esoteric literature. In ancient theology “death” means our life here on earth. [. . .]

To be sure, it is death in a sense to be understood as dramatic and relative only. And it pertains to the soul in man, not to the body. Life and death are ever as two end seats on a “see-saw.” As the one end goes to death the other rises to life. The death

of the body releases the soul to a higher life; conversely the “death” of the soul as it sinks in body opens the day of life to that body. The theological death of the soul in incarnation is a death that does not kill it in any final sense. It is a death from which it rises again at the cycle’s end into a grander rebirth. It is a death that ends in resurrection.⁷⁶

In other words, Kuhn is arguing that when the ancient myths picture this incarnate life as “death and the underworld,” they mean “from the perspective of the soul, buried alive within a physical body.” He later makes this argument explicitly clear, saying:

The incarnation, for the soul, was its death and burial. But it was a living death and a burial alive. It was an entombment that carried life on, but under conditions that could be poetically dramatized as “death.”⁷⁷

Having grasped this essential point of Kuhn’s argument, we are in better position to understand the deep message of the Dioscuri. The sacrifice of Polydeuces, who cries aloud to his father Zeus at the death of his mortal counterpart Castor that he would rather join his brother in death than to live without him, involves *the descent of the soul into this mortal life*, this incarnate existence. Castor the mortal twin is doomed to go down into the underworld – this life we are each of us now experiencing, as perceived by Alvin Boyd Kuhn and articulated in *Lost Light* – but he is not abandoned to undergo this fate all alone: his divine twin will go with him!

The divine twin, filled with love, voluntarily goes down to the underworld (this mortal life) to accompany his brother – and in doing so, also lifts him up to enjoy the heights of Olympus. We now begin to perceive the outlines of the truly profound message of the Dioscuri myth (and its many, many counterparts in Star Myths around the world). For we ourselves are *both* twins: condemned to dwell for a time in this underworld of the incarnate life – but (as the ancient myths show us, through one powerful

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esoteric metaphor after another) we are not alone during this earthly sojourn: there is one who has pledged to “take an equal share with us in everything,” to paraphrase the words of Zeus when hearing the request of Polydeuces.

This is the one “who sticketh closer than a brother,” to quote the words of Proverbs 18: 24 – the divine twin, the higher self, seen in so many of the world’s ancient myths and scriptures.

Now we begin to understand why this ancient system, which underlies the sacred traditions of virtually every culture on our planet, employs this system of celestial allegory, in which the figures of the “elemental gods” can be seen to “typify the alternate appearance and obscuration of the heavenly bodies,” in the words of Frederick A. Paley in his footnote to the story of the Dioscuri. The awesome cycles of the celestial machinery, which alternately raise up and cast down the heavenly actors through the successive motions of the daily rotation, the annual orbit, and the even longer motions of the precessional clockwork, can be seen to exemplify *our own condition* and our own soul’s journey, being plunged down into the living burial within a human body (like Castor and Pollux when they must go down to the tomb beneath the hills and valleys of Therapnae’s landscape) and then raised up again to the undying realm, perhaps doing so over and over and over again (just as the celestial bodies themselves repeat the cycle over and over, rising up into the clear heavenly sphere above only to plunge back down into the western horizon to “toil below” for a time during their earthly sojourn).

And, as we have already noted, the pattern of the Dioscuri twins is a myth-pattern or oicotype which is extremely widespread throughout the world’s myths. We see it other times within the Greek myths, as well as in other cultures. As we have already briefly noted when visiting the battle against the Lernaean Hydra during the Twelve Labors of Heracles (Hercules), that hero is also a “divine twin” with a mortal twin brother, in a pattern very similar to that of the Dioscuri.

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Gabor Maté asserts that, "What trauma actually is, fundamentally, is a disconnect from the self: a disconnect from the body and a disconnect from the essential self. Why do people disconnect? Because it's too painful to be connected. So the disconnection is not a mistake – it's not an accident: it's actually a coping mechanism."

What does Dr. Maté mean when he says "the essential self"? The *essence* of something means what it really is at the deepest level. Our essential self is who we really are, at the deepest level. How could we become disconnected from that? As Dr. Levine and Dr. Maté explain, we disconnect from who we truly are, from our essential self, as a *defense mechanism*, because it's *too painful* to be connected.

In his 2011 book, *When the Body Says No: Exploring the Stress-Disease Connection*, Dr. Maté explains this defense mechanism, which typically arises from trauma experienced in childhood, even when we are too young to consciously understand the source of the distress. Speaking of a child (Ronald Reagan) whose father was routinely arrested for public drunkenness, Dr. Maté writes:

While a young child may not be *cognitively* aware of family disgrace, *emotionally* he is absorbing all the negative psychic vibrations of the stressed family system. An emotional shutdown, a tuning-out of reality, is his brain's most readily available defence.⁹³

This "emotional shutdown" and "tuning-out of reality" includes the tuning-out of the full spectrum of information we receive from our body's incredibly rich array of sensors, including our gut, and from the wider awareness beyond our conscious mind. It also includes a disconnection from aspects of who we really are but which make us feel vulnerable, and the creation of a "second self," a *persona*, which will shield us from being hurt again.

The word *persona* actually comes from an ancient Etruscan word which means a "mask" – putting on an outward face which the world sees, which is a helpful image to enable us to understand

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what is going on: we create a persona, an outward-facing mask, in order to shield ourselves from being hurt. And this process is how we become alienated from our essential self, and create instead a persona, a mask, a kind of "mechanism" that will protect us and help get us through this threatening and traumatic world.

It is as if we are driving along a dangerous road, perhaps a cliff-side road with a sheer drop onto sharp rocks hundreds of feet below, and this *persona* we create takes over the wheel in order to "get us through" this dangerous stretch of road – thinking that it is the only thing between us and terrible pain and even destruction.

The problem is that this persona never wants to let go of the steering wheel. We identify with it so completely that we lose touch with our essential self – who we really are, in our core – with the very essence that this persona, this defense mechanism, this "ego," was constructed to protect and shield in the first place!

For this reason, we have a tendency to think that our egoic mind, the "ego" we create in order to navigate the complex maze of rules and social norms and power structures we encounter as we are indoctrinated into society, is actually who we are – to the point that we become ignorant of our true self, our authentic self, our essential self.

This is why the figure of Jesus in the Book of Thomas tells Thomas, "it is not fitting for you to be ignorant of yourself." This line informs us that, although it is not a desirable condition, we are typically so disconnected from our essential self that we are actually in ignorance (or even in denial) of its very presence, of its very existence.

Having examined the ancient passage in the Book of Thomas which illuminates for us the identity of the twin of Thomas Didymus, and which at the same time indicates quite overtly that this twin relationship has everything to do with revealing our alienation from our essential self, and also with the repairing of that broken relationship with our essential self, let us now return

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and it will absolutely resist any attempt to take the steering wheel away from the egoic self and let the essential self take over.

As part of a different talk, given in 2015 at the California Institute of Integral Studies in San Francisco, Dr. Gabor Maté said some very enlightening things about this relationship between the egoic mind and our essential self. Although he was not citing the episode of Doubting Thomas, the words he says in the passage below sound as though they could be describing the reaction of Thomas in the New Testament story.

Part of the quotation discusses psychedelics, because Dr. Maté's talk involved the role that psychedelic plant medicines can play in relaxing that artificial coping mechanism of the mind in order to reveal the authentic self – the authentic self that our egoic mind wants to bury and hide. Dr. Maté says:

We live in a world that rewards us for being inauthentic, and punishes us for being authentic. And we live in a world, and a culture, that seduces us from our true selves with every possible blandishment, reward, and promise of fulfillment through artificial means. [. . .] The other problem, as Alma says, is that your mind, your egoic mind, always wants to invalidate your essence. Because the egoic mind develops as a replacement for the essence. When essence shows up, the mind is threatened: the ego is threatened. So it wants to fight back. When the psychedelic substance really reveals the mind – what's underneath the mind – and puts the ego onto the sidelines, as soon as the effect is gone, the mind wants to come in and reclaim its territory. And it does that by making nonsense of the experience you just had.⁹⁴

Look how closely dramatizations in ancient myth match the experience and teachings of some of today's most respected voices in the field of dealing with psychological trauma, such as Dr. Gabor Maté and Dr. Peter Levine! The episode of Doubting Thomas illustrates, very powerfully, the attempt to invalidate the revelation of the essential self, the higher self that Dr. Maté

describes above – seen in this story of Thomas trying to invalidate the accounts of the return of the risen Lord.

But the ancient myths also dramatize the path we can take towards reconciliation between egoic mind and essential self.

At first, Thomas is estranged from the risen Christ – kept apart by his doubt, and by his instinctual desire to invalidate the essential self (the essential self for whom, as Dr. Maté tells us in the quotation above, the egoic mind attempts to substitute and whose role the egoic mind attempts to usurp).

If we look closely at this text, and at other ancient myths which follow a similar pattern, we will see that these esoteric stories are showing us how to recover the right relationship with our essential self.

We will explore the ways that the world's ancient Star Myths can point us towards recovering our own self in the next chapter, but before moving on we should pause to consider the fact that if the myths can be shown to be guiding us towards such a recovery, as they clearly can be shown to be doing, then we have gone a long way towards establishing that they seem to have been intended to serve a very positive purpose indeed.

This ache for the recovery of our own self can be said to be at the center of our deepest longings, and the disconnection from our own self at the heart of our greatest sufferings – even if we generally don't realize that this reconnection is what we are longing for, and that this disconnection is what is causing our suffering (we typically don't even realize that the essential self even exists, let alone that we have become alienated from who we are). Remember that Dr. Peter Levine declared, in a quotation cited above, that "Trauma is the most avoided, ignored, denied, misunderstood and untreated cause of human suffering." If the myths exist in part to remedy *the most untreated* (and the most overlooked, and even the most denied) cause of human suffering, then their purpose is positive indeed. Let's look at how they help us with this very ancient, but very modern, affliction.

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Concluding Thoughts

In the ancient Sumerian myth of the descent of the goddess Inanna into the underworld, we encounter a myth-pattern which surfaces in many other myths in other cultures around the world.

The goddess Inanna is the Sumerian goddess of love and beauty and sexual desire. The later Mesopotamian cultures of Akkad and Babylon would call her by the name Ishtar.

In preparing to undertake the harrowing journey to the underworld, the goddess puts on her most alluring garments, and lines her eyes with mascara that inflames desire, mascara which is called, "Let a man come, let him come," according to the ancient texts.³¹⁷

She wore a turban on her head, and a necklace of finely-shaped beads of lapis lazuli around her neck. She wore twin egg-shaped beads upon her breast, and a glorious pectoral as well. Upon one finger she wore a golden ring, and in her hand she carried a measuring rod, also made of lapis lazuli, with a measuring line. Finally, over her body the goddess wore the *pala* dress, which the texts refer to as "the garment of ladyship."³¹⁸

Then, clothed in her glorious power, Inanna "set her mind on the great below" – the underworld. But before descending, Inanna gives specific instructions to her minister or handmaiden, Ninshubur, telling her:

Come my faithful minister of E-ana, my minister who speaks fair words, my escort who speaks trustworthy words: I am going to give you instructions: my instructions must be followed; I am going to say something to you: it must be observed. On this day I will descend to the underworld. When I have arrived in the underworld, make a lament for me in the ruin mounds. Beat the drum for me in the sanctuary. Make the rounds of the houses of the gods for me. Lacerate your eyes for me, lacerate your nose for me: lacerate your ears for me, in public. In private, lacerate your buttocks for me. Like a pauper,

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