
THE OBJECT OF DESIRE

Two models of woman have been explored. The first was the woman made over in the image of man. The second was the woman who destroys man. Now we will begin to explore another image of woman which lies between these extremes. This other image is the ultimate vision of woman in the Greek worldview. It is the vision of Helen of Troy. It turns out that there is not much literature about this important archetype of womanhood. But, the crucial bit of evidence is that she is actually Draupadi and is a goddess made into a human form by the epic poet. From this, we see that she embodies the position of fertility within the city, and that her two brothers are the twin gods which are related to that position of fertility. In the epic, these brothers are replaced by her husband and his brother who come to rescue her, playing out the central Indo-European myth of the abducted woman. So the Iliad and the related epics play out a war in order to win back this prize. She had the ceremonial position of the source of fertility within the Greek society, and she was abducted by Paris and taken back to Troy. This set

off the Trojan war fought over the prize of the ultimate archetype of womanhood.

We first see her in the Iliad weaving a scene of the war. The war is the metaphor for her, and she is the metaphor for the war. She weaves the war and is woven into the fabric of the war. Thus, we cannot consider Helen without considering the war she IS. That epic, standing opposite the Odyssey we have already explored, is a long and complex story. Therefore, like the Odyssey, we must skim over its surface to look for the key points which advance our thesis. One point is that most people only read the Iliad and do not go on to read Quintus of Smyrna's completion of the epic. We will treat the whole story as one and also include the relevant parts of the Aeneid. It is all one story which forms the fundamental basis of the poetic foundations of the Western worldview. And we will see in it the fundamental character of the Indo-Europeans surface in this tale. A people cannot help but show who they are in their literature. It is just a matter of taking the right viewpoint on their work to see who they are within it. All through this story, Helen is the pivot, so even though she is not mentioned often, she is present throughout as the underlying cause against which every action within the story is balanced.

The first key point that must be made is that in these

stories the negative fourfold is clearly present. This is important because we see that the story itself frames the relation between Heaven, Earth, Man and Gods in a clearly defined way. The gods are the motive forces that control the fates and fortune of the men. The war takes place upon the earth outside Troy, under the heavens, which we all share. The earth is described in detail in the myriad descriptions of people and things. The heavens are described in terms of the turning of time from day to night as the action of the Battle proceeds. Men make themselves known within the confines of space and time where they fight for glory and revenge. The gods also act upon this stage and interweave their actions in the fates of men. In the process, glory is realized as the lighting of the positive fourfold. This is the surface of the story which we all read as an adventure. The positive fourfold is clearly defined as the confluence of the actions of men and gods on the earth at a particular time. But our thesis is that there is another structure which is opposite the positive fourfold which should also be found in the story if it has any reality. That other structure has been suggested by the parody of the Theogony in Aristophanes' *Birds*. In that theogony, there are four primal archetypal principles related to women instead of men. These are Night, Covering, Chaos and the Abyss. And we see these within the story of the Trojan war. We see Night clearly in terms of the advent of darkness that

causes the hostilities to cease each day. We see Covering in the mists which the Gods use to protect their favorites in the battle. We see Chaos in the confusion of the battle itself. And we see the Abyss in the falling into death of the fighting men who came to win glory. If our hypothesis is correct, these elements of the negative fourfold are the points which represent Helen throughout the story even where she is not mentioned.

The war begins at the wedding of Peleus and Thetis. Eris sets a golden apple between the attending goddesses which says, “for the most beautiful.” Paris chooses Aphrodite, and for that gets Helen as a reward. Hera and Athena are outraged and become bent on the destruction of Troy, the home city of Paris, to which he takes Helen. Out of the marriage of Peleus and Thetis comes the hero Achilles who is the major contender in that war and about whom the Iliad is written. The story itself is a meditation on the meaning of death within the context of the heroic tradition. But that story embodies both the positive and negative fourfolds intertwined with each other. There is not only the manifestation of the Gods, but also their hiding and covering their favorites in mists. There is not only the Heavens of light when most of the action occurs, but also the Night in which raids occur under protection of darkness such as the actual sacking of Troy. There is not only the Earth as it defines that place, but the Chaos

of the battle itself which changes that earth through unbridled destruction that weighs heavily on that earth. There is not just men strutting and posing, but also men meeting death in large numbers. Many people mentioned in the Epic are named only when they die. They appear in the story just as they fall over the threshold into oblivion. The mortality of men is brought to the fore by their dying throughout the story, both namelessly and as named individuals.

The fate expressed in the Iliad and its attendant stories has to do with both fourfolds and their intertwining. In fact, it is clear that if both fourfolds were not present, the story would not be as dynamic. It expresses both light and darkness as it expresses itself in the human condition. The dynamism between these two poles, most likely harkening back to Zoroastrian origins, is subtly presented within the story. The struggle between dark and light are not embodied in the two sides fighting. Both sides fighting are human and inhuman by turns. The struggle of darkness and light occur in the way manifestation occurs within the story. It is not possible to do a complete study of manifestation in the epic here. But manifestation is more than mere showing and hiding. There is something which is always hidden in the story that influences it at every point. That hidden thing is Helen. She occupies the place of the essence of

manifestation, or the immanent. The whole tumult revolves around her in every sense. She is weaving the tapestry of the war at every point. This is because she appears as the elements of Night, Covering, Chaos, and the Abyss within the action of the Battle and its nightly breaks.

The next key point is that the story expresses dynamic clinging. It expresses that in a very clear way. The Trojans and the Achaeans fight a bloody indecisive battle for the city on the plain. It is only when the Achaeans withdraw and resort to trickery that they are able to actually take the city. Their withdrawal is an apparent letting go of the object they wish to control. They move their war to an intellectual plane from the plane of pure strength and physical prowess. This is one of the fundamental lessons of the war. If you want to win a war of attrition, you must be clever like Odysseus and take your fighting to the intellectual level of stratagems and tricks. They withdrew and presented the horse in the same movement. This shows that the ruse has both background and figure. The Trojans took the horse into their citadel themselves. They defeated themselves because they did not rise to the level of stratagem at the same time as their opponents. This message of dynamic clinging by letting go of what you want most to keep is enforced by the story of the conflict between Achilles and

Agamemnon. Agamemnon took the woman prize of Achilles when his own had to be given up. Achilles let go of his beloved war prize but turned to his mother, and through her, to Zeus to punish the Greeks for the wrong of Agamemnon by making them lose until they begged him to join him and would restore his prize. This again shows a letting go in order to hang onto in the stratagems of Achilles dealing with the leader of the expedition. Achilles becomes idle, and as their best fighter, this severely hampers the Greeks. But within the story, Achilles loses something he values more, his friend Patroclus, as he gets only half his wish from the Gods. This triggers Achilles from passiveness into action, and that action was brutal and inhuman murder upon the battlefield, resulting finally in the death of Hector the defender of Troy. Achilles, in his move from idleness to overreaction, gives a definitive picture of the Indo-European craze for senseless destruction. Achilles becomes the monster which lies dormant in the heart of every Indo-European as determined by the deep structure of Indo-European culture. He does this in reaction to the destruction by Agamemnon of the possibility of heroic action. Agamemnon creates a nihilistic landscape by essentially doing what Paris did to Menelaus within the army attempting to right that wrong. By taking the woman prize of Achilles, who stands in for Helen within the Achean camp, Agamemnon destroys the difference

between the two armies for Achilles. Achilles cannot fight on in the face of such a wrong which destroys all meaning to what they are doing. A fight for glory becomes to him just a bloody brawl instead of an assertion of Right (Rta). Achilles goes into inaction to such an extent he alienates even his own men and best friend, Patroclus. Patroclus begs him to appear to scare the enemy back away from the ships. Patroclus stands in for Achilles when he refuses to do that service, and caught by his own success, does not pay heed to the orders of Achilles and is killed. Achilles enters a deep grief for his friend and enters the fray again in order to seek revenge. He enters a state which is like the rampage of the bezerkers. In that state, he kills without mercy many Trojans until he finally kills Hector who killed his friend. In the epic, he is described as becoming like a lion and like a fire. He is described as becoming simultaneously like a beast and like a god. He passes beyond the human condition and becomes pure destruction in the madness of blood lust, so characteristic of the Indo-European culture. Achilles embodies all the nihilistic opposites. He is the best of the Achaeans. But he is disarmed by their commander who destroys his reason for fighting by destroying the difference between the Achaeans and their enemy. Agamemnon produces a nihilistic landscape of meaninglessness for Achilles out of the battlefield. Achilles goes into the extreme of

idleness, and from that to the overreaction of brutal berserker. In his berserker rampage, he moves to become simultaneously one with the beast (lion) and the gods. He becomes inhuman, embodying at the same time, two nihilistic opposites that define man. Finally, Achilles returns to his humanity as he restores the body of Hector to Priam, and the two weep together. This leaving the realm of the human and the return to humanity is the pinnacle of the story.

In one set of myths surrounding the story of Achilles, he abducts Helen at one point before she becomes the wife of Menelaus. Helen is said to have had five husbands, just like Droupadi. Achilles is one of them. Thus, Helen and Achilles are soul mates, and there is a constant tension between them. Achilles embodies the positive fourfold, and Helen embodies the negative fourfold. As such, Achilles' whole life and work is surrounded and inundated with nihilistic opposites. This is clear because Achilles is the result of the dynamic clinging of Peleus in his subduing of Thetis. In his going beyond the opposites that define humanity, Achilles is expressing the essence of dynamic clinging which causes the man to die and fade into the system to which he is clinging. In the case of Achilles, the system is the Chaos of war. Achilles becomes like Ares, the pure embodiment of war, and thus loses his humanity in that process of identification. But

notice that Chaos is an attribute of the negative fourfold. Achilles has left the positive fourfold defined by Heaven, Earth, Man, and Gods, and instead becomes identified with one of the feminine immanent principles. In this act, Achilles is practicing dynamic clinging and is vanishing into the realm of the feminine like his father did before him. Achilles also confronts death and himself falls into that Abyss after watching his best friend do so and the many others that he killed in revenge. The grief of Achilles and Thetis is a direct response to death. This is again an aspect of the feminine negative fourfold. It is a deep aspect as Thetis is related to Demeter, and Achilles is parallel to Persephone. Both are children who confront death directly and enter into it. Their mothers grieve for them and put on the black robe of anger at fate. Achilles regains his humanity at Night when Piram calls upon him to attempt to gain back the body of Hector. Achilles spends his nights with Birsas, his woman prize, who stands in as a captive woman, like Helen, for her. He draws his humanity from his tenderness toward this woman and toward Priam. He draws his humanity from the night. Achilles is finally killed by Apollo. Apollo is hidden, as are all the gods, and shoots him with his arrows when Paris fails. Paris is the one who fights at a distance, using arrows and who is constantly being protected by mists by Aphrodite. Achilles is the only one who is killed directly by a god. He had to be killed

because he trespassed the bounds of humanity. Apollo destroys him by hitting him in the ankle, his weak spot. The arrows come out of nowhere from an invisible bowman. Thus, death comes at Achilles from under cover of the cloak of invisibility of the gods. Here we see that Achilles confronts the negative fourfold directly as does no other character. He can do that because he has already known Helen and perhaps been one of her husbands. He moves beyond the bounds of the positive fourfold in order to experience what lies beyond it in the feminine realm where the four fundamental principles rule in the interstices between the patterns of light defined by the positive fourfold. Achilles does this at the same moment that he embodies dynamic clinging, letting go of the feminine principle in order to know it all the better as he embodies and meets its underlying components.

The letting go of the city of Troy in an act of dynamic clinging corresponds to that of Achilles. Thus, Odysseus, too, in his own way, as a survivor, confronts the negative fourfold through his stratagem. He covers over his fleet who leaves and hides beyond the headland. It is darkness inside the Horse that he leads the choice men who will hide there until night when all the men of Troy are drunk. That drunkenness of the men of Troy is another kind of Chaos dialectically related to the chaos of war, as we

have seen in Plato's *Laws*. The Achaeans take advantage of the chaos of drunkenness to storm the city and to defeat it from the inside. Of course, the Abyss is the destruction of the city whose death is analogous to the death of men because it entails the death of men and because it destroys the social framework completely. The dynamic clinging to Troy, through a stratagem or trick, participates in the negative fourfold directly and avoids the positive fourfold. The gods do not participate in the sacking. Men do not win glory through it; in fact, they violate the sanctuaries. The relation between heaven and earth, which is predicated on the presence of the city, is disturbed when the city is burned and becomes a ruin. The positive fourfold is violated in the final sacking of Troy, and that only occurs through a dynamic clinging which lets go at one level while gathering more tightly at another intellectual rather than physical level. The utter destruction of the city is in some way inhuman like the berserker experience of Achilles. The destruction of the sacred unity of the city, along with the violation of its sanctuaries, is the prototype for all Indo-European colonialism down to the recent centuries when the West has taken control of the world, destroying many cultures and replacing them with pale images of itself. This destruction is the archetypal fear of defeat and enslavement which causes every city state to continually prepare for war.

The destruction of the sacred city transforms it from the embodiment of the positive fourfold for which it is the nexus into an embodiment of the negative fourfold. The city is destroyed when its social patterns are made chaotic through the action of anti-production. When the city is turned into a ruin, its autopoietic unity is dissolved, and it falls into the abyss of oblivion until it is brought to light by archeologists. The city becomes literally covered by dust and dirt, and becomes indistinguishable from the earth itself. When that occurs, the light of the positive fourfold is eclipsed, and darkness falls over human society which has been dissolved. Without the synergy and protection of the city, it is impossible for the humans to maintain the same level of culture. The ruined city represents the negative fourfold manifest. But that potential lies dormant in every city. Helen embodies that potential for Troy. She is its ruin, living within it and eating away at it every day, and she recognizes that herself. That is why she compares herself to a dog. Over and over the threat is that the dogs will eat the flesh of the hero. Helen is the dog that eats the flesh of the city, making it vulnerable from within. She is a monster because she is the essence of desire, the object of desire that men will cross the seas and fight ten years to possess. But with her what they possess is the negative fourfold. Attaining her means coming to terms with the negative fourfold and encountering it genuinely and completely as

Achilles did.

A telling incident is one that does not appear in the Iliad where Achilles meets and falls in love with the Amazon in battle as he kills. This scene is very poignant because it is the point at which Achilles meets the embodiment of the negative fourfold on the battlefield. As Hector is the embodiment of the positive fourfold, so the Amazon is the embodiment of the negative fourfold. She is the anti-type to Helen who is a different type of monster. Helen and the Amazon are two nihilistic presentations of the same monstrosity inherent in woman from the point of view of the Greek male.

But what makes Helen the object of desire? What is desire? Anne Carson in Eros: The Bittersweet comes closest to answering this question as anyone I have seen. She starts by studying the poetry of Sappho and finds within it a definition of Eros as the Bittersweet. Bittersweet means that it has two opposing qualities at the same time. Eros is, in fact, a quality experiencing nihilistic opposites simultaneously with intensity. It is summed up by the saying you sometime hear about women: “You can’t live with them and you can’t live without them.” It is the definition Alkibaedies gives in his description of his relation with Socrates in the Symposium. The definition that Socrates gives of Eros as

lack is not good enough. It is lack and overabundance at the same time. It is being too near when the lover is with the beloved and being too far away when they are apart. It is acerbated in the case of Alkibaedes by the lack of response by Socrates. Here the lover has become the beloved, and Alkibaedes thinks he can win Socrates with his body alone without training his mind. Alkibaedes is sorely disappointed. But the erotic attraction goes on unabated. This is the experience of eros which goes beyond all the intellectual definitions of it given by the other speakers in the symposium. It is this picture that both Sappho and Alkibaedes capture. But they live in a world where homosexual love is seen as the height of human relations because of the dramatic split between the male and female worlds. This is the worlds of Athena, the dike, and Dionysus, the queen, who come out of the head and thigh of Zeus. This is the world where Yang splendor and closed Yin predominate. Where things are too bright or too dark. In this case, the male portion of the female consciousness, Athena, which appeals to the male, represents too much light, and the female portion of the male consciousness, Dionysus, represents too much darkness. This is the realm of dissatisfaction in eros. In these homosexual relations, there is too much Yin or too much Yang, and life is out of balance. Eros, as paradox, comes out of these unsatisfactory sexual relations. It is infinite arousal without release. This kind of eros is a

very subtle form of self torture. We can compare it to the Taoists who seek to conserve their vital fluids by experiencing arousal but not the release of orgasm which they believed led to immortality. Homosexual relations from a perspective of Chinese medicine is similar. When Yin and Yang do not mix, but Yin is increased in Yin, or Yang is increased with Yang then one gets an imbalance which builds and builds without end. The natural rolling over into opposites which occurs with yin and yang is prevented. Mere sexual gratification of one sex by the same sex is only part of the picture. The relationship as a whole must be taken into account. We notice that in homosexual relations, one partner will mimic the excluded sex. This is an attempt to achieve Yin/Yang balance within the relation. That balance cannot be achieved when the passage between Yin and Yang have been blocked by the action of Yin on Yin or Yang on Yang. The fact that this natural harmony is not clearly seen in our culture is a symptom of its great sickness.

The hypothesis here is that the form of eros elucidated by Alkibaedes and Sappho is an outgrowth of the extremities of homosexual relations which we have applied in our culture to heterosexual relations. Love itself is a perversion which comes out of the patriarchal relation between man and wife where the man is the only ally of the woman in the household of the husband. The unequal

power relation means that the woman must work hard to keep her only ally, and so there is, in love, a natural dominance of the man who does not have to reciprocate. Love is the natural province of the woman due to her dependence in the patriarchal home situation. Eros means arousal. It is the intensification of love which actually causes bonding, usually sexual bonding. But when arousal is exacerbated and made ecstatic, then it becomes the type of Eros that is defined as bittersweet. That is the paradoxical eros that is an emotional and bodily singularity of infinite arousal without any possibility of satisfaction. When this is projected back on the heterosexual relation, it becomes romantic love of the type that appears in the Greek novel.

This form of eros, which is bittersweet, can only exist as long as there is a lack. When it is fulfilled, it vanishes. But it is, of course, defined so it cannot be fulfilled. It is by definition unsatisfiable. It is the opposite end of the spectrum from normal sexual relations between men and women which appears as an urge, and is satisfied by mutual consent and then allows the partners to get on with other things without their entire lives being colored by sexuality. The bittersweet eros is sexual addiction, a bane of our culture that leads to pornography and other types of exacerbating insidious commodities. If the lack is ever filled, then through satisfaction this eros self

destructs. Thus, the situation must be created where the lack will never be filled and self-destructive consumerism goes on forever. This is the essence of the consumer society that consumes itself. In the case of pornography, it kills girl children and destroys lives through prostitution. Like alcohol, drugs, and cigarettes, this is one of the self-destroying pits one can fall into in one's life on which capitalists make the largest profits (we could also mention gun running).

Socrates would have us believe that in the state of erotic arousal we can orient ourselves toward the source form of the beautiful, and perhaps even the good. Helen is this source form. She is the image of the archetypal beautiful woman. Here beauty is seen as *terrible* like that of a goddess by the men who see her passing on the walls of Troy. She is the incarnation of the beauty of Aphrodite. But Aphrodite is a goddess, whereas Helen, in the case of the Iliad, is seen to be just a woman. So here we are talking about the source form of human female beauty incarnated. We know of that beauty by its effect on the world. It causes a great war. It is the beauty of Droupadi in the Mahabharata. In fact, Helen is identified as being the same as Droupadi. But the relation to this source form of human female beauty invokes eros, and this is what gives it its power. Eros is a relationship. The source form of human female beauty itself has no power.

We could appreciate it aesthetically. But only if we enter into an erotic relation with it, especially one of the type that is bittersweet, that we become fascinated and obsessed by that beauty. Thus, eros itself is the key factor and not the nature of Helen herself. Helen is, in fact, a variable. We know she is a source form because in the Odyssey she takes on the voices of all the wives of the men in the Trojan horse and tempts them to betray themselves. We know she is a drug which causes forgetfulness because she gives Menelaus and the son of Odysseus “nepenthe,” a drug which makes them turn their minds away from the horrors and losses of the great war. Helen describes her self as a bitch dog several times. She is self deprecating before the Trojans. But it is the dog which is always seen as eating the corpses of the heroes after the battle. Thus, Helen sees herself as the destroyer of heroes because they are perhaps fighting over an empty illusion. Helen is the epitome of the empty, illusory nature of the world and its myriad goals and effort which come to naught. She is like the grapes that tempt Tantalus. She is the one always slightly out of reach. She is like the vision of the Beautiful that Diotima holds before Socrates. It is a vision that can never be grasped and held. Thus, it epitomizes the object of clinging within the world which always eludes us.

In many ways, Helen is the essence of woman as

projected by the Greeks. She is not the woman that the Greek men feared, nor the one they thought they could make in their own image. Instead, she is the one who all men wanted but could not ever have, but who made them go to untimely deaths for her sake. She weaves the scenes of war against a death-like black background. Like the eros of Diotima which is a diamond half-way between the men and the gods, Helen is half-way between the image men have of themselves that they sometimes project on women, and the woman as radically other Husband and Child killer. Of course, we know that Clytemnestra's first husband and child were killed by Agamemnon who forced her to marry him. He then went on to sacrifice their daughter. So the emotions what drove Clytemnestra to kill her second forced husband were called up by Agamemnon. They are clear motives that are in reaction to the destructiveness of the male who takes the woman he wants as Agamemnon took the woman prize of Achilles when he was deprived of another woman prize of his own. The motives of Helen are not so clear. She has her defenders and detractors. It is unclear whether she was kidnapped or went willingly with Paris. Her ambiguity is somewhat like the indecisiveness of Penelope.

Helen is the one who embodies the source form of all feminine beauty and with whom we set up, if we are not

careful an erotic, bittersweet, relation from which we cannot escape. It is like a spider's web that once you are caught in it is almost impossible to get out again. That erotic relation must be compared to the relation of the true marriage which Odysseus risks all to regain. The difference between the kidnapped woman and the lawful wife as to faces of the source of woman's beauty runs deep in the Greek worldview as they represent the split in the feminine psyche forged by men.

We would expect this embodiment of the female source form of beauty to also embody the negative fourfold. We can see this is the case because Helen is the cause of war or Chaos in the world. She is an embodiment of a source form. In fact the immortal source is Aphrodite which Helen, like Pandora, acts as a gate of troubles into this world. The source itself that she represents is an Abyss, but she, as the representation or gate to the abyss, is a Covering which hides the Abyss. And night comes into play because men die and go to perpetual night over this one woman. She is the perfect example for whom others are sacrificed. The darkness is manifest all around the bright illusion of her form with which men set up erotic relations and which brings them to their destruction. Helen is the very embodiment of the negative fourfold as a singularity within the positive fourfold which draws men to their deaths, extinguishing the light. As a perfect

example, she herself is ripe for sacrifice. So that if she does not cause death around her, then more than likely she will be slated for death herself.

Helen and Droupadi are the epitome of outward female unity idealized by Indo-European society since time immemorial. The death of men around such a female occurs because they exhibit inward male separation. That alienation and anomie of men from society manifests itself as a social structure which cannot but fragment and split over the control of the female. These are women whose beauty will launch a thousand ships, but only because of men falling into the trap of erotic, bittersweet, relations with the embodiments of the source of beauty. That is only possible because of the contamination of heterosexual relations with the infinite arousal without satisfaction of homosexual relations. It is only because too yin or too yang relations can exist that the possibility of infinite clinging without attainment is seen as a possible mode of existence.

The question I would like to consider at this point is why the negative fourfold takes the form it does. Why is it defined as Night, Covering, Chaos and Abyss? This form is different from that of the positive fourfold which is Heaven, Earth, Mortals, and Immortals. In fact, the negative fourfold gives us more insight into the structure

of manifestation than the positive fourfold. Manifestation is the opposite of Night in that it assumes light of day as the essential place of Manifestation. The sun, of course, is part of the heavens. Manifestation is an uncovering. Aleithia assumes that there is something to be uncovered, something buried and a place for it to be buried, i.e. the earth. Manifestation is an ordering which struggles against the disorder. This ordering is known to flow out of nature as physis and out as man as logos. Ordering and patterning is an essential nature of man as tool maker who orders his universe as a specialization of the ordering of nature itself. Man is a meta-ordering creature. It goes beyond what other creatures who impose patterns on their environment do, because man can learn and create new patterns. Manifestation assumes the ordering of nature and the meta-ordering of man as an essential way of revealing. Chaos blocks the revelation of the inner nature of things that appear though showing of intrinsic ordering in terms of structure and relationship. Manifestation also assumes what goes beyond man. The gods are just one aspect of what goes beyond man. Angels are another aspect. The One God is another aspect of what goes beyond man. Man is a center of an open horizon which reveals what goes beyond that center. Through his death, man contrasts with what does not die, and we get the concept of immortality, the essential lie of the Greek Jinn. But we can see Helen's

beauty contrast with the beauty of Aphrodite. By naming Aphrodite the most beautiful of the goddesses, he won the most beautiful of the human women. The beauty of goddesses is an open horizon that escapes from the beauty of mortal women by way of our imaginations and our ability to abstract. The Abyss is a negative escape as opposed to a positive one. The abyss escapes but without leading us anywhere positive. It is the opposite of the positive escape toward openness.

The clearing-in-Being is the place where the daylight shines, unlike the dark within the surrounding forest. The clearing-in-Being is the place which is uncovered and revealed where no underbrush or trees obscure our view of what is within the clearing. The clearing-in-Being is open and clear for ordering to appear unhindered. The clearing-in-Being escapes toward the heavens and is not like a gorge or crevasse which escapes downward, giving us no ground. The clearing-in-Being allows Being to provide our ground in a natural way without our being aware of the fall toward groundlessness. The clearing-in-Being allows clear differentiation of heaven from earth. It is lighted by the sun in the sky. It shows us in that light the content and variety of the myriad things of earth, each having space to reveal itself fully. The clearing-in-Being is a place where man stands as one thing among others, and as the one who projects the clearing at the same time.

The clearing-in-Being is the place where the positive openness and escapes beyond man can occur unhindered, escapes to jinn, or angels, or even toward God.

In this way, we can see that together the positive and negative fourfold give a more robust definition of Manifestation than the positive fourfold alone. The inverse of the negative fourfold tells us as much, or more, about manifestation as the positive fourfold does. The positive fourfold shows us the concern of men who are actively dominating the earth and aspiring to storm heaven; who rather than accepting mortality, attempt to make themselves immortal in glory to rival the gods who they believe are given that distinction naturally. The negative fourfold shows us the concern of women, the dominated. The dominated wish to hide from the harsh light and escape scrutiny by the dangerous dominators. The negative fourfold, by reversing manifestation, shows us how to avoid scrutiny -- by seeking darkness and night instead of daylight, by being covered instead of naked, by producing disorder to block the showing of order, and by making escapes and openness negative instead of positive. These four anti-manifestation tactics, taken together, provide the place for the dominated to hide from those who are so hostile and dangerous in their production of the world where women have only the narrow confines of their prison within the household for

safety. But more important than these aspects of anti-manifestation is the concept of immanence. This means the non-crossing of the boundary between these categories of anti-manifestation. It is this crossing of the boundary that produces eros according to Aristophanes. Each of the four features of anti-manifestation stand alone and are not compared or mixed with each other. When they are mixed, then the egg of eros arises, and then the birds and finally the elements of the positive fourfold. Thus, the elements of anti-manifestation form a minimal system in which there is no relation between the elements. It is exactly this lack of relation which is the essential element of the negative fourfold and which stands opposite the transcendence of the positive fourfold of Heaven over Earth and Immortals over Mortals. So even though the elements of the negative fourfold are merely the reversal of the elements of manifestation, the essential message of non-transcendence and Ontological Dualism is unique to the negative fourfold as the utter opposite of Ontological monism and dualistic dominating transcendence. Thus, we can say that the positive and negative fourfolds both define manifestation. The negative fourfold by defining it negatively as the opposite of manifestation gives us an image of pure immanence.

In this way, too, we can see Helen as a projection of the negative of the world of men. She stands as a woman

reduced to the category of prostitute, but who has dishonored the Greeks, and so they are willing to fight and die to get her back in order to restore their honor. Her tarnished reputation is equal to the dishonor of the Greeks, and so, in a way, represents that reputation. She is contrast to Andromache and Penelope who are the dutiful wives of Hector and Odysseus, as well as the Prize of Achilles, Briseis. These women acted correctly, and are either sought after or defended as a part of that same honor. Odysseus attempts to return to his wife and rejects all the goddesses that try to detain him. Odysseus prefers the beauty of a woman to whom he is wed to the beauty of goddesses offering immortality. Hector prefers the woman who bore him a son as all good women do. Achilles prefers a woman who is the prize awarded as a special honor by the troops as a mark of recognition of his glory. Each of these men prefer real women with whom they can have a deeper relationship than that offered by Helen to Paris. Helen produces no son. Helen does not stay true to her man when he is present, less well when he is away. As soon as Paris is killed, she marries again. Helen is a prize given by Aphrodite, not won in war by acts of glory, but for a judgement of a beauty contest among the goddesses.

Glory is illusory, fading quickly and lost in the mists of time like Helen's beauty. Glory, in fact, is presented as

the most positive of things within the world of Homer. However, glory has the same aspects as the negative fourfold. We speak of glory covering the person who has attained it. It is seen as an intensification of light within the clearing-in-Being, but that intensification is equivalent to the taking away of light. One man's glory is another man's degradation. A man is known as the killer of another famous person. Thus, Glory is a darkness that falls from the winner on the loser. Glory can be gotten only in war which is chaotic to the extreme. Glory sends other men into the Abyss, and may as in the case of Achilles, send the hero into the abyss of death as well. Glory is an intensification of the light in the clearing-in-Being which is equivalent to anti-manifestation and has the same illusory nature as Helen's beauty. What beauty is to women, glory is to men. Glory is, in fact, inglorious to the extreme. It is the reveling in anti-production or destruction. Through glory, Achilles gains his beautiful prize. Through glory Hector protects his malechild-producing dutiful wife. Through glory, Odysseus returns to his human wife for whom he longs as if for his other half after many trials. In each case, glory is in effect a trail of destruction which only one of these heroes survives. Glory actively negates life.

The fact that Glory has the nature of the negative fourfold tells us something very important. Above and below the

clearing-in-Being are the nihilistic opposites of immanence and overachieving glory. These are the two poles of manifestation where it turns into its opposite. These are the too dark and too light extremes of the clearing-in-Being. The epitome of woman's beauty, and the epitome of man's achievement, both destroy the clearing-in-Being, negating it in an essential way. Overachieving transcendence turns into immanence as heroes meet the barrier of death that can only be crossed one way.

The Greeks are continuously attempting to rescue the reputation of Helen. Euripides whisks her off to Egypt and sends a phantom to Troy. Gorgias makes every excuse for her in his speech in praise of her. They must be in love with her because she is the object of desire who makes possible their glory as they pursue that object of desire. The desire is an embodiment of simultaneous nihilistic states. The juxtaposition of Helen as object with glory as ultimate end is an intoxicating erotic relation. Helen is the sign of fecundity within the city which is stolen by another city. Glory is the retrieval of the prize representing source of fecundity within the city. The city is destroyed without that controlled source of fecundity, i.e. male offspring. But the very act necessary to retrieve the source of fecundity invokes the same destiny as the source of fecundity itself. In other words,

the negative fourfold as represented by Helen, is invoked also by glory. Thus, glory is merely the outward manifestation of the opposite of the negative fourfold by the men in order to retrieve the source of the negative fourfold. In the city, where the source of fecundity has not escaped, or been kidnapped, the negative fourfold remains hidden and glory is not necessary. So in the appearance of the negative fourfold and glory, we are seeing the inner structure of manifestation appearing for the first time as the city undergoes stress.

It is important to note the difference between Achilles and the other heroes of the Iliad. He is the son of a goddess. Particularly, he is the son of the goddess who symbolizes dynamic clinging and who his father, Peleus, subdued. Achilles was fated to be greater than his father, and for this reason Zeus and Poseidon gave up their rights to Thetis and sanctified the marriage. Achilles is more than human, and thus goes beyond what is human in both his inaction and his action. When he loses his war prize, he goes into seclusion and refuses to help his friends. For Agamemnon's taking away Briseis from Achilles destroyed the purpose of the war for Achilles because those who were attacking Troy became no better than those whom they were attacked. Achilles is forced to confront the nihilistic aspect of the situation, which he does, by withdrawal from battle and by questioning the

ethic which makes human beings destroy each other within the nihilistic situation for no real reason. The first loss, of his war prize, a woman slave, is what drove Achilles into inaction. The second loss was the lover of Achilles, Patroclus. Patroclus was the elder and surely was the lover, while Achilles was the beloved in a homosexual relationship¹. When the lover of Achilles is killed, he goes berserk with rage and becomes both sub-human (like a lion or fire) and supra-human, like a god. At that point, he embodies glory in its purist form. His lethargy is converted into pure action in which words leave him. This simultaneously sub- and supra-human glory can only be achieved by Achilles because he is the son of a goddess. The height of his ascent into brilliant glory is balanced by the depth of the grief of his supposedly immortal mother in the depths of the sea. This glory is not the same as the normal glory to which humans may aspire. Normally, humans cannot leave their humanity. They cannot convert into pure action without words. There is always some residue of words which keep them from becoming gods, animals, and natural forces like fire. Humans may be like these non-human limits, but not identical with them. The nothingness at the center of consciousness which Sartre identifies is always there to some extent taking us beyond our grief into humor despite ourselves or into words

1. This theory appears in Plato's Symposium.

beyond action preventing us from dwelling completely in any state. We are always in ecstasy beyond ourselves -- this marks us as human. Achilles becomes metaphorically related to these limits rather than related just by analogy. Achilles *is* a lion. Achilles *is* fire. Achilles *is* immortal. Through metaphor, Achilles identifies with the unity which we know as Conceptual Being which mere humans may approach but never become completely one with in life. So where we see the negative fourfold as equivalent to the glory that humans can aspire to, we see its opposite as equivalent to the glory Achilles achieves. The brilliant glory of Achilles is the opposite of Night in that it is a pure and brilliant light. It is the opposite of covering in that it uncovers and reveals. It is the opposite of Chaos in that it reveals order arising out of chaos. It is the opposite of an Abyss in that it appears to give a firm foundation to action beyond words. The brilliant glory of Achilles is identical to Conceptual Being. It is a truth forged out of the reality of war and destruction by pure action. In that action Achilles' self is forged into a unity which will allow him to remain immortal. Thus, they say in death he was taken to the Isles of the Blessed. His death merely sealed the unity of his glorious self. He had defined the limits of Glory by forging the illusory continuity of pure glory as the limit of all human glory. Human glory tends toward that defined limit but never can reach it. What prevents

human glory from reaching that limit is the nature of the negative fourfold that informs human glory. Human glory is shot through with purely negative aspects of the Greek experience of the feminine. Achille's glory manages to purge itself of the aspects of the negative fourfold. Ironically in this purge glory comes to be just like what has been purged from it. It is a glory that is purely positive and masculine, perfectly exemplifying the positive fourfold in the aspects which are usually only described negatively, i.e. Light, Uncovering, Order, and Foundation. For Achilles, the fear his corpse being eaten by "dogs" vanishes. For all human heroes, this fear, directly related to the bitch Helen, is always present as the possibility of glory being robbed of them after death. When Achilles becomes a "dog" in his berserk episode, he assures that he will not be vexed by dogs in death. He will have a proper burial and games in his honor. Becoming an animal/god wards off the feminine animal and allows the transformation from human glory to supra/sub-human glory. But this warding off is accomplished by glory taking on all the attributes of the feminine fourfold itself.

Understanding the nature of the limits of Glory defined by Achilles and human glory, allows us some insight into the relation of the positive and negative fourfold. These two aspects of manifestation are intimately related. They

are, in fact, views of the same thing. The negative fourfold merely takes aspects of the positive fourfold not emphasized by the positive fourfold and treated their opposites. Women as Other are seen as the embodiment of the opposite of manifestation. But that opposite can only be defined as the opposite of manifestation itself. It has no positive attributes of its own. All that it can claim of its own is the immanence that is opposite transcendence. It defines the four aspects of the negative fourfold only as a means of stating the principle of non-transgression. Thus, the true opposite of transcendence is posited by taking aspects of transcendence, stating them negatively, and saying that these categories may not transgress against each other in order to define immanence purely and precisely. Of course, the purely immanent cannot be distinguished into parts. So we know that the distinguishing of the parts of the negative fourfold must, in truth, be from the description of transcendence. Transcendence dominates even the definition of the negative fourfold by lending it the pieces which distinguish it. But what this tells us is that manifestation is completely structured around non-manifestation. The structure of manifestation is governed completely by the hiding and guarding of pure immanence. So it is with the males of Greek society. They are completely defined by their relation with women who they imprison and protect. Their going out

for glory is directly related to the inglorious females that they are either trying to rape or trying to protect from rape. Thus, in the structure of manifestation when we see it right there, is laid out for us the non-structure of anti-manifestation which is just the other side of the coin.

Achilles has four losses. He loses his war prize, he loses his male lover, he loses his father who he cries over with Paris, the father of Hector, who he has slain in revenge. But he also loses the Amazon who is his last major killing before he dies. Achilles falls in love with the Amazon at the moment he kills her, and he grieves for her. She was a woman worthy of him, the total antithesis to all other women. He had to meet her because in killing her, he completely rids his glory of the negative fourfold to produce the equivalent of Conceptual Being, the pure continuity of Glory forever. The four losses -- War Prize, Lover, Amazon, and Father -- represent the field of Achilles' eros. Achilles does not grieve over the loss of his mother. Instead, she grieves for him. He does not grieve over the loss of his wife who has produced a son to take his place when he is killed in battle. The eros of Achilles is directed toward his war prize who is a woman slave who represents his prowess in war. It is toward his male lover, Petrocles, of whom he is the beloved. Thus, the rage of Achilles is produced when he is no longer adored because the one who adores him is taken away.

Both of these are narcissistic aspects of the self of Achilles which is the field of his eros -- the one who signifies his prowess in battle, and the one who from male society adores him. His slave woman loves him because he is kind to her. His kindness to her and his honesty show the purity of his nature. On the other hand, the love of the Amazon whom he has killed, and the father whom he will not be able to care for in old age, are loves where Achilles goes outside himself. He recognizes that in order to win pure glory, he has had to kill the feminine aspects in his own nature. In order to win pure glory, he has had to break the lineage of the father which will be carried on by his son, but he will not be able to fulfill his duty to take care of his father or will he be taken care of by his son. The continuity of lineage is broken, and his father will grieve and die if he is not already dead. The field of Achille's eros and grief is balanced between men and women. It shows us a balance between the negative and positive fourfold. Woman as slave and war prize is balanced by the wild untamed woman. The male lover is balanced by the father. Thus, the pleasure of male society is balanced by the responsibilities to the father and lineage. It is a field of loss and eros which gives a microcosm of Greek society. It embodies the split between the two sides of the house that Eva Kuel shows us in The Reign Of The Phallus which will be analyzed in depth in a later essay. But

against this field of eros and loss, the figure is the pure glory of Achilles won by action in his rage. That pure glory is forged immortality, like the unity of Conceptual Being. In the *Odyssey* we see Achilles in Hades, saying he would rather be a slave than dead. The glory that he has produced in life has not helped him in death by this account. By another account he is taken to the Isles of the Blessed. Regardless of the relation of his glory to the ultimate outcome in death, Achilles managed to define the limits of glory for the Greeks. All glory is compared to his gory feats at the gates of Troy that led to its destruction through the killing of Hector. In the forging of that pure glory, the nature of manifestation and anti-manifestation are defined in the starkest possible terms. Human glory is shot through and through with anti-manifestation. In the midst of battle, Achilles manages to forge the limits of inhuman glory by purging it of anti-manifestation. But the setting up of these never attained limits only serve to define human glory more perfectly as the appearance of anti-manifestation within manifestation.

Understanding the relation between the clearing-in-Being, anti-manifestation, human glory, and inhuman pure glory, allows us to wonder if there is any myth that perfectly summarizes these relationships which give depth to the positive fourfold by articulating its opposite -

- the negative fourfold. Indeed, there is such a myth although it is not attested in the Greek myths in its complete form. This is the myth of the Phoenix. It is a significant myth for our argument because it displays all the elements we have been attempting to understand in a single narrative. We will note that Odysseus mentions a palm tree named Phoenix when he meets Nasucha, which he says he saw rising when he visited Delphi, and he says it was one of the most amazing things he ever saw. Also, the old man who accompanies Achilles to continue his education is called Phoenix. These two references are very peripheral and might be very subtle hints for the initiates only. Our hypothesis is that the myth of the Phoenix is a subtle allusion to the secret of the mysteries of Eleusis. These hints in the Iliad and Odyssey point to a strata of the story that is not made explicit in any way. All that occurs is the dropping of a name. This strata is purely immanent to the narration of the stories. However, what Odysseus sees at Delphi is related to what Achilles is being taught by his mentor. What it is remains completely hidden. It is purely immanent in the stories. Thus, it assumes the position of the negative fourfold when the transgression of transcendence does not occur. When we turn to the later myth of the Phoenix as related by Lactantius, we see an image of the negative fourfold which bears amazing resemblance to what was discovered in the theogony of Aristophanes. This image

of the negative fourfold, and the emanation of the positive fourfold through stages which manifest the windegg, eros, and the birds that has been laid out in prior essays, finds amazing confirmation in this myth and allows us to push even deeper our understanding of the relation between the negative and positive fourfold which has been enhanced by an understanding of the object of desire and the forging of pure glory.

Reading the translation by Sister Mary Francis McDonald of Lactantius: The Minor Works², we can only touch upon the most significant aspects of the myth as related by Lactantius, an early church father. We are assuming that this is a very old myth which only finds full expression very late. Also, the imposition of Christian elements into the exposition seems to be only at minor points. For the most part, this appears to be a purely pagan mythology, taken up and reexpressed by an early church father because the essence of the myth and mystical Christian teaching appear to him to be in harmony.

The Phoenix is a special bird which lives in a paradise on earth. In that paradise, there is a Well and a Tree. The bird bathes and sips of the well, and sits in the upper branches of the tree waiting for the sunlight. When the

2. (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press;1965)

sunlight appears, the bird sings and then keeps the time of the day with variations in its song. This bird lives for a thousand years. Of interest, is what occurs when it reaches the end of its life of a thousand years. The bird flies to Syria through trackless deserts to a hidden and secret place. At that place is a very high palm (Phoenix) tree. The tree rises so high it reaches through the heavens to a pure place. In that tree the Phoenix bird builds a nest or sepulchre. And that nest is filled with aromatic spices. When the nest is built, the bird dies. The body of the bird is destroyed by a spontaneous fire which reduces the bird's body to ashes. The ashes then form into a worm that curls up into a ball like an egg. The egg goes through metamorphosis into a new Phoenix which is nourished on ambrosia from a star-bearing pole (the north pole star). When the bird becomes big enough, it gathers up its own remains and takes them to the city of the Sun. Then it flies with a flock of birds back to its original tree and well in paradise.

The important thing about this strange and exotic bird is that it is self-producing. It gives rise to itself. The writings of Lactantius are very explicit on this point.

This grove, these woods, are haunted by a unique bird, the Phoenix. She is unique, inasmuch as she lives renewed by her own death.³

3. page 214

Then she builds for herself either a nest or a sepulchre for she dies that she may live; in fact, she produces herself.⁴

In the meantime, her body, destroyed by a producing death, grows warm, and the heat itself gives birth to a flame, and from the aetheiral light afar off it conceives fire; it blazes, and when scorched, it dissolves into ashes.⁵

Ah, thou bird of happy lot and purpose, to whom God Himself has granted the power of being born from herself!⁶

Happy indeed is that bird, whether male or female or neither; she fosters no pacts with Venus. Death for her is Venus; her sole pleasure is in death. In order that she may be born, she desires first to die.⁷

She is offspring of herself. She is her own father and also her heir. She is nurse of herself and ever a nursling for herself.⁸

She is herself, indeed, but still not the same, and neither is the same herself, for she has acquired life eternal by the good of death.⁹

4. pate 216

5. page 217

6. pate 219

7. page 219

8. pate 219

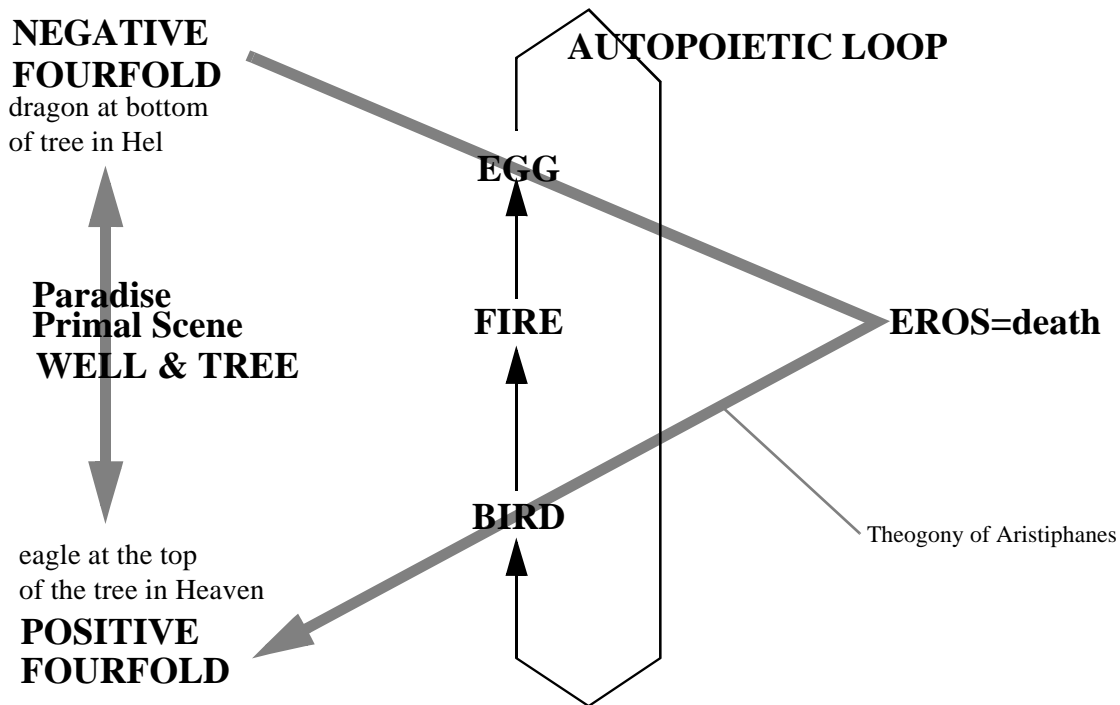
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Are these not poetic descriptions of autopoiesis? Certainly the Phoenix is seen as a self-producing bird. That act of self-production occurs after an epoch of one thousand years. It certainly has all the signs of an emergent event. We know from our own studies that the autopoietic system has the structure of an emergent event. Here we get a view of a very special narrative that relates the bird to the egg which is transformed by fire and produces itself by the Eros of death.

Here we see self-production or autopoiesis specifically called out. And the stages of autopoiesis relates directly to the stages of the theogony of Aristophanes which made us first aware of the negative fourfold and its relation to the positive fourfold. In the theogony, there is an emanation in which first there is an egg formed by transgression of night against covering. Then Eros is born, which uses chaos and the abyss to produce the primal bird, who then gives rise to the other elements of the positive fourfold such as Heaven, Earth, Gods, Men and Ocean. What is added to this picture by the myth of the Phoenix is a connection between the positive and negative fourfolds and the primal scene of Well and Tree. It appears here that the paradise in which the bird dwells is in some sense the point of reversibility between the positive and negative fourfold. We note that the Phoenix sounds much like the eagle that lives in the top of

Yaggdrasil which is opposite the serpent or dragon who lives in Hel. Also added by the Phoenix myth is the reversibility between the egg and the bird which is fire. The Phoenix is famous for arising out of fire. The bird goes from the paradise of the primal scene to Syria, a place of trackless deserts. The trackless desert reminds us of nihilism, the situation where one cannot make distinctions or discern tracks. In the midst of the trackless desert is a secret place with a special tree which reaches to heaven. There the bird burns and arises from its own ashes. It is said that the bird does not know Venus in the sense that it does not need sex to produce offspring. It is its own offspring. For it, death is Venus or eros. Thus, here eros appears as the resolution of nihilistic opposites of normal eros, the bittersweet by the opposite of life, i.e. death. Eros appears as Thantos. This is in keeping with the distinction between super/sub-human glory in relation to human glory. Eros transforms into Thantos at the point where it becomes more than human.

FIGURE 67



This image is what we would expect from Dionysus, as the kind of immortality associated with the species. It is the immortality within the lifeforce itself. The other kind of immortality is that which is associated with Apollo. It is the immortality of the law, of order within the city. When Dionysus, king of the underworld, unites with Persephone, these two orders are mixed and the result is a golden child who represents the autopoietic unity. The Phoenix is red like the pomegranate. It is the pomegranate that is contrast to the ear of corn in the myths of Demeter and Persephone. Demeter is the goddess of agriculture which is dependent on the order of the seasons. Persephone's spending one third of the year in Hades, i.e. winter, shows that she is the embodiment

of this seasonal order. Dionysus represents disorder and chaos of life which eventually leads to death. But there is, in the species, a kind of immortality that comes straight out of the nature of life that triumphs over death. Hades is the king of the dead who does not know this triumph of life over death. Dionysus is the king of the dead who does know this triumph, who knows that life arises out of its own ashes. Later, we will see that in the myth of Demeter and Persephone, it is Dionysus not Hades that is the secret abductor of the maiden. This understanding of life arising out of death is exactly the same as the understanding that ultimately eros is Thantos. The drive to eros that produces the generations of the species is what allows life to triumph over death at the very moment of its own defeat. This is symbolized by the substitution of the ear of corn for the pomegranate in the Eleusian mysteries. The order of the corn and its yellowness for the redness and disorder of the seed's pomegranate. The Phoenix bird is both red and yellow as described by Lactantius. The fire that brings death and the fire of lust have an inner relation. Achilles stood in this place. He became the fire that brings death completely, and he defined himself through the field of his lusts, or eros toward the slave woman, male lover, wild woman, and human father. The fire is the inhuman glory that runs within life. All human glory seeks to attain that inhuman glory. Just the same, the autopoietic

ring has its whole being in relation to Conceptual Being, its limit. It is continually forming the ring and dispersing right at the threshold where the collapse into Conceptual Being occurs. It is a differentiation just this side of that threshold between closure and fragmentation into separate nodes of the autopoietic network. The birds represent the separate fragmented nodes, and the egg represents the closed autopoietic system. The autopoietic system is continually oscillating between these two poles through its process of self-production. In that process, Eros as Thantos manifests out of the closed ring as the means of producing the nodes of the autopoietic ring. Eros as Thantos unifies the two immortalities: the one within the species and the one which exists as law and order within the community. The bittersweetness of nihilistic Eros cancels as Thantos (cosmic indifference). Here the positive and negative fourfolds cancel. Here we do not care which came first, the chicken or the egg. The ultimate object of desire is the self. Achilles in Hades wants back his self. He has acted out the play of opposites within the positive and negative fourfold and taken them to their limits, thus defining the Western worldview in definitive terms. But Achilles cannot achieve autopoietic unity, and thus live forever. Only a community can even attempt that and aspire to the thousand year life of the Phoenix. Plato attempts to show us how it is done in his lower utopia in the Laws. The

entire universe of discourse of the ancient Greeks was set up to articulate this possibility of the articulated autopoietic unity prior to the collapse into the identity of Conceptual Being. This is the vision of the Phoenix hinted at in the Iliad and Odyssey. It is the essence of the vision in the Eleusian mysteries, though how it was achieved we do not know. It is the axis around which the Greek version of the Indo-European worldview spun, and we hypothesize that it has been the axis of that worldview from the very beginning because it is a knot which summarizes the structure of the whole worldview as a flawed perception of existence.

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