

OEDIPUS AS ECOPSYCHOLOGY
PART TWO:
Flourishing versus Terrorism

Oedipus at Colonus was the final play Sophocles wrote. It was first performed about four years after Sophocles died, at the extraordinary age of 88, three lifespans in the ancient world. In Sophocles' eighties, three things happened that found their way into the drama at Colonus. He fell in love with a beautiful younger woman, renewing his Eros late in life. But around him Greece was starving to death, its hillsides stripped of trees, the olive groves withering, its ecosystem bankrupt from a generation of civil war throughout the Greek Peninsula. As a revered shaman and former senator, when a new temple to the god of medicine, Ascepalus, was being built, Sophocles was entrusted to take care of the sacred snake of the temple, the same snake on the medical symbol today of the caduceus. The snake symbolizes healing because it can shed its skin and, in effect, give birth to a new self.

The Oedipus who steps on stage at Colonus has shed his tragic, Theban skin. Twenty years have passed since the events in Thebes, and Oedipus has spent most of them in exile from civilization, in nature. He has experienced his soul only in the context of nature, removed from the tragic dynamics of Thebes, and emerged out of his old perverse skin into a new one. Colonus was, in reality, the birthplace of Sophocles; he is sending his greatest creation back to the site of his own creation to complete the cycle of his imaginal life. What precisely his 'new skin' is, what he's now made of after this long period in nature, Oedipus only has inklings and intuitions. He has yet to test this new self in action, in civilization.

Oedipus is led onto the stage by his daughter-sister, Antigone, who joined him in the wild when she reached her menses and "came into her power," as Sophocles writes. Barefoot, in rags naked beneath, the scars of his eyes like stars in his face, Oedipus appears more Wounded Walker than king, a blind seer and prophet like Tiresias. Oedipus feels he cannot go another step and must stop; he has reached his ultimate place on Earth. In ecopsychological terms, his psyche is in a condition of fullness, ripened and ready; all that remains for him on Earth is to *act* from the fully ripened psychical space. The drama delineates the struggle in Oedipus to act from the ideal manifestation of the individual human psyche on Earth. Sophocles does not make it easy. Oedipus has but the last hour of his life to restore the precious shamanic balance of human psyche and nature that he, himself, disturbed as war rages all around him.

So do we.

The Site of Flourishing

The first clue about the transformation of Oedipus's psyche comes in the opening moments of the drama when Oedipus and Antigone discover they have stumbled upon, as if by chance, a remarkable grove in which the collective powers of the entire Olympian pantheon are present. Here, the human psyche can integrate all the animate, ensouled energies of the *anima mundi* and manifest the ideal. We also learn that the grove is presided over by *Eumenides*, the Fates.

Whenever we see the prefix, "eu," we are in the ideal, salutary and flourishing aspect of an energy, as in euphoria, eureka, and euphony. The Eumenides is the term used for the three dread sisters, the Fates, when the ideal form a human destiny can take is manifest. A complex Greek concept, *eudaimonia*, is critical to our understanding of the 'space' of the action of *Colonus*. Eudaimonia is typically translated as "happiness," an error, according to classicist Martha Nussbaum. Rather, it should be translated as Flourishing, a complex dynamic exchange of human passions and cosmic energy such that both mutually flourish. Our psyche, our soul, is brought into shamanic balance by our inner guide to Flourishing, our *eudaimon*. The entire drama is about Oedipus' struggle to access his eudaimon and take actions that will

engender Flourishing from the fate he was given without being toppled off balance by the war that is continuously going on, off stage, all around him.

I propose that the deep aim of ecopsychological therapy and the deep aim of education should be to do what Oedipus does at Colonus, access one's eudaimon, one's inner guide and energy that knows what Flourishing is for you – keeping always in mind that “Flourishing” cannot ever be at the cost of the Earth. One's eudaimon guides one in manifesting the ideal Flourishing dynamics of individual human psyche and nature.

At Colonus, as for us, the struggle is to access one's eudaimon no matter what the conditions in the world are. If ever there was a drama of Awe as a “fluid center,” it is the drama of Colonus in which we watch Oedipus try to keep his balance, stay centered not in a yoga or meditation class, but as violence swirls around him, violence comes to get him, and he has to resist every voice within him that doubts he can, despite a lifetime of plague, eco-incest, and exile, heal the Earth of the plague he brought to it. His psyche is wracked by the elements as he tries to hold on and access his eudaimon, like Lear on the heath, battered and tossed. As the Chorus describes it:

Not to be born surpasses thought and speech.
The second best is to have seen the light
And then go back quickly whence we came.

But human beings are born into an elemental world, and holding onto “the light,” the ideal, the wondrous aspect of Awe in the cosmos, takes all we have:

This is the truth, not for me only,
But for this blind and ruined man.
Think of some shore in the north
Concussive waves make stream
This way and that in the gales of winter:
It is like that with him.
The wild wrack breaking over him
From head to foot, coming on forever;
Now from the plunging down of the sun,
Now from the sunrise quarter,
Now from where noonday gleams,
Now from the night and the north.

All the directions in which the Earth spins through its days and nights turn our psyches inside out and around as we try to maintain our balance, keep our center, trying to steer our soul through the currents of Awe toward our eudaimon, the inner voices, intuitions, dreams, and mysterious knowledge we each possess, at the core of our soul, of the unique form that Flourishing takes for us. What is the ideal balance of the individual, unique human being, the particulars of one's character, the life story one has lived, with the cosmos? The Oedipal drama at the grove of Flourishing is about the individual creator self manifesting this ideal balance even though this Oedipal Self has disturbed the balance with plague and war and violence threaten him from every quarter.

We arrive at the threshold of the grove of Flourishing when we have little time left to heal the Earth of plague and when war over the plagued, toxic resources that are left has broken out.

I put that time as precisely *now*.

Much of the work of Ecopsychology so far has been creating the grove of Flourishing, a new idea of psyche, new ideas of the self and cosmology and elemental presences and forms that the ecopsychological site of Flourishing holds, and articulating diverse visions of psychological health and sanity in which human and Earth mutually Flourish. Ecopsychology has done so in the midst of war and plague escalating all around us.

The same process defines the opening scene of the drama. Details are put forth in the drama with a lot of dialogue that, frankly, does not play well to a modern audience, about where the place is, its history, who its human and divine caretakers are, the rituals required to maintain it, the rituals required to enter it, what its unique landscape features are, why it smells as it does, and that, in this place, time is held in “perpetual dawn.” It is both the site in psyche where things are always ‘dawning’ on us and the site of cosmogenesis, the perpetual making of the cosmos as it was first made, as it first ‘dawned’ into existence. I see Ecopsychology as exquisitely following the Oedipal sequence with its first acts as a discipline conforming to the first acts of *Colonus*, to detail all the psychical energies involved in the mutual flourishing of human and nature.

Venus

For the archetypal and Jungian inclined ecopsychologist, the primary divine energy of the grove of Flourishing is Aphrodite-Venus, paired up with Apollo, as we should expect given that he is the playwright of Oedipus’s soul. The distortion of the divine energy of Venus by the early Christian church is well known. What is less known, in part through our ignorance of this play and the shamanic roots of Western civilization, are the connections between Venus, the cosmos, and eudaimonia.

As James Hillman has elucidated, Venus’s unique power was a power of “voice” called *kaleo*. Kaleo was the ‘call’ Venus made to Chaos every single night. Unable to resist, Chaos came in close from the margins of the universe to meet the goddess, and there in the cosmic borderland, Venus and Chaos make love. Because she loves Chaos, Chaos returns the Earth to existence in the cosmos every single morning with the dawn. She is the goddess of cosmogenesis, creating and recreating Creation, repeatedly, loving the beautiful form of life out of Chaos over and over, as only a feminine divine energy can. There is a connection between Venus-Aphrodite and the prophet Tirersias in the first play, whose powers of prophecy came from seeing the superior feminine capacity for erotic bliss.

Cosmos, or more properly *kosmos*, means Beauty (a meaning that baffled Thoreau, by the way). The sacred Beauty embodied in Venus is represented by her astrological glyph, the scales, or balance. Beauty in shamanic wisdom traditions such as in the early Greece of Sophocles and his contemporaries on the other side of the Atlantic, the Navajo, as we find in the Navajo Healing Night Chant, “Walking in Beauty,” means to walk in balance with the earth, to be in ‘cosmic’ harmony. Given Oedipus’s wounded feet, such a walk will be more difficult for his psyche than for others, just as it will be for us who are his cultural and psychological descendants.

In her own creation story, when Aphrodite first steps on land, as she walks up the hill flowers blossom behind her with each step. Here we see her powers as the goddess of earthly Flourishing being mythically announced. In the human psyche, Aphrodite-Venus is the voice within that can call Beauty from Chaos and, in that call, *sustain* Flourishing.

Indigenous women on the forested slopes of the Himalyas practiced kaleo in the most extraordinary way. They could not sustain themselves or their children when a major logging company began to deforest the steep slopes above their villages. They planted themselves in the trees, but the loggers would not give up. They brought military trained, war-elephants to attack the women. As the elephants charged the women in the trees, the women began to sing a sacred love song to elephants. The

elephants stopped their assault, the women came down from the trees, singing, and the elephants bowed to them.

In this light (her light), the archetypal labor of Ecopsychology is to restore Venus. I see some of this work as situating “voice” – *kaleo* – as a critical aspect of the Flourishing human psyche, developing individuals and cultures that can ‘call beauty from chaos.’ I also see *kaleo* as a powerful therapeutic concept, something like Rogerian positive regard extended to the spontaneous, self ordering matrix of nature, working as therapists to develop in one’s self and in clients the marvelous Quaker spiritual attitude of “presuming welcome” to the unexpected.

Take a moment to let yourself imagine how *kaleo* could apply to the global, climate ‘chaos’ we are now in. What is the ‘call’ we must make to manifest Beauty – sacred balance – from the chaos we have put Venus’s grandmother, Gaia, in?

The First Test: Permission to Enter

It is not enough, however, simply to arrive at the threshold of the grove of Flourishing, much as Ecopsychology might wish it were. We have to enter it, and, as it turns out in the drama, this is not a simple step. *Oedipus at Colonus* is a *drama* about Flourishing, and as a drama, its protagonists are carrying through struggle and conflict. The overarching conflict that Oedipus carries through is, simply put, faith in himself and others that he, the former plagued king of Thebes, *can* Flourish. The war around him reflects the war within him between his trust in Apollo – the earthbound sun, the Awe-some ‘fluid center’ of the Earth – that he can heal what he disturbed, and his self-doubt that Flourishing is a possible fate for him.

Immediately after Oedipus and Antigone discover that they are at the threshold of the sacred grove of Flourishing, they are told that they must commit requisite ritual actions before they can enter. But before they can, a Chorus of Elders rushes on stage, alarmed that this monster from Thebes, the most despised and rejected of men, has even set foot near this sacred grove. The Chorus of Elders immediately demands he leave.

Oedipus has to prove to them he will not contaminate the sacred grove. This is no small first step, for unless we can assert, individually, culturally and generationally, that we must not be condemned for eternity for bringing global environmental plague, but can be trusted to take care of the Earth, we can never cross the threshold into the next era of human consciousness and embrace the next great work. We, the generation now on the threshold of Elderhood, must cross the threshold into the Ecozoic era in which nature entrusts itself to us.

Are we to be trusted? Frankly, there is a part of me that sides with the Chorus, here. It is the part of me that reads a label on a jar of face cream from an ecologically irresponsible company that assures me it is ‘all natural’ and that I will never age if I use it. I identify with the Chorus when I read about a spa that will renew my ‘spirit in nature’ only to discover that it does not recycle and carries the notorious Dasanti waters of Coca-Cola that are nothing but tap water. I identify with the Chorus when the part of me that wants to rail against all things corporate and Western takes hold and I lose all my compassion for my own culture, race and tradition.

What does Oedipus have to say for himself? What do we say to this voice *within us* that suspects, rejects, and doubts that any, *including ourselves*, who have ‘lived in Thebes’ can Flourish? The part of ourselves that believes that ‘living in Thebes’ denies one the right, as a person, a culture, a corporation, a nation, a ‘red’ state, an educational institution, a gender, a race – you name it, if you’ve even been in Thebes – ‘made a killing’ that leads to plague and ecopsychological incest – there is a part of us that denies *that other part of us* the right even to *try* to cross the threshold into the psychical space of Flourishing.

It is also the voice of self-doubt in the individual, the educator, the leader, the psychologist, the parent and in my generation of Baby Boomers on the threshold of Elderhood who question their capacity and right – and ability – to ‘perform the rites of Flourishing,’ to do the ecologically responsible actions that are required.

Oedipus does not give up, beginning to emerge for us as a hero of Flourishing. Heroes, recall, are defined as those who have been touched by the divine, and Oedipus is the child of the divine sun. So are we all, even when we are in anguish in Thebes. Oedipus refuses to give the Chorus, the voice that denies *anyone* access to Flourishing, including our own voice denying ourselves, the power to decide his fate. What a powerful, if subtle, act it is to deny that voice power! One could spend many ecopsychodramatic hours in this one tiny moment of the drama helping people disempower all the inner voices that deny them access to Flourishing.

What Oedipus does is both very simple and very difficult. He says to the Chorus, You do not know me. He then embarks on trying to reason and argue the prohibitive Chorus to accept him. But reason and argument fail. Into their debate bursts Antigone, crying out from her heart for compassion.

Antigone has a play of her own, the first one written but the last one in the dramatic chronology. She is known for her eloquence and as being the inheritor of her father’s passion and intensity. She is also known as a symbol of justice. It is Antigone who finally *demand*s of the Chorus that they use their *imaginings*, engage their Empathy, and see Oedipus’s story as it is for them to have to live it. It is an outburst of *kaleo*, a call to the Chorus to love the chaotic, ruined figure of Oedipus out of his plagued past and into a possible Beautiful future.

When Antigone bursts with her kaleo-call for Empathy, I see and hear Julia Butterfly Hill, Vandana Shiva, Joanna Macy, Wangari Maathi, Arundhati Roy and others, the global chorus of women who are on the frontlines of environmental justice. What the drama tells us is that environmental justice is part of the ecopsychological archetypal task of restoring Venus, and these women are speaking with her voice.

Creating New Rites

The Chorus relents; they hear Antigone. They agree that it was Oedipus’s *fate*, rather than his *choice*, to have lived in Theban consciousness. The rites for Flourishing are then revealed.

But the dramatic structure of *Oedipus at Colonus* is a series of interruptions of rituals, rituals that allow one to enter the grove, rituals to honor the deities in the grove, rituals to propitiate the Eumenides, an elaborate ritual to honor Venus that is, interestingly, given to Ismene, Oedipus’s other sister-daughter, who arrives on the scene, to perform in an actual grove in nature explicitly stated as outside of the theatre. (The line from the Chorus reads, “Speak to the attendant over there by the exit; he will show you where to go.”) Finally, there is an off-stage ritual to Poseidon at the Temple of Neptune that is interrupted that leads to the climax of the drama. In a bit of irony that one cannot help but note, Freud was at the Temple of Neptune when he developed his theory of the unconscious based on the first play. (He was also under a Neptune transit, according to psychological astrologer Caroline Casey.)

This dramatic structure tells us that Flourishing does not come from imitating or performing old, conserved rites, but requires a measure of spontaneity and uniqueness, something from the self in the moment. In a way, Sophocles is saying, If we’re going to do this individual-creator-self great work, then we are going to have to allow spontaneity, novelty, uniqueness into the ‘repertoire’ of rituals for Flourishing that are all part of the history and power of the grove.

From an ecopsychological perspective, the struggle here seems to be one of identity and evolution. Are we who we were in Thebes, still, and how can Flourishing – the balance of human and nature – evolve after tragedy and plague? It is one thing to live in a culture attuned to the Earth that has never brought plague to it and perform the ancient ceremonies as they always have been performed. It is

quite another to be giving birth to a new culture – as Sophocles was and we are – that has seen its horrific, monstrous, plagued psyche and must now figure out how *that* psyche can be trusted, first, and then, determine what this new human who has survived Thebes and lived to tell the tale *does*, how do we *act*. The dramatic structure of *Colonus* points to the necessity to create a new idea of “sacred action.”

I imagine that the original Greek audience was shocked, their jaws dropping, as Sophocles interrupted *actual sacred rites* on stage repeatedly. In the present-day efflorescence of art as spirituality, Swimme’s cosmology, Matthew Fox’s Creation Spirituality, I see the drama of *Colonus* being enacted, new sacred actions and new cosmologies and spiritualities being developed. The point here is not to repeat what we already know, but to say that Sophocles already knew it.

Terrorism

What interrupts the rituals is Terrorism. It is the best word to describe the essential nature of the force that interrupts the sacred acts of Flourishing, but we need to unpack its etymology to understand why Terrorism is the force that has the power to disrupt Flourishing.

“Territory” does not derive from the Latin word for Earth, *terra*, as I thought it did. The etymology is both more disturbing and ecopsychologically rich. *Terroir* from which territory derives means “to infuse a part of the Earth with fear.” Terrorism is indivisible from territory, whether we mean the literal territorializing of the Earth, or we mean the mind of the separate knower that is trained to separate and isolate all the parts in creation from each other (a legacy from Aristotle), or we mean the sense of Self as an island, a territory, that exists apart from all others in Descartes and Cartesian consciousness that we must vigilantly defend. It is pre-eminently in Ecopsychology poisoning the Earth with unconscious fear, with the ‘toxic waste’ of our own personal terrors.

In the play, there are two acts of terrorism as we understand the word, violent ambush and something akin to a suicide-bomber strategy, sacrificial warfare, and there is a lot of dramatic struggle over the question of whose territory the sacred grove of Flourishing lies in and whose military has power over it. This nexus of territorial issues infused with violence is what repeatedly disrupts Oedipus’s attempts, with the help of his feminine offspring, to perform the requisite rites of honoring the divine energies of the grove and manifest Flourishing.

One act of terrorism is the abduction of Ismene in the wild as she is performing the sacred rite to honor Venus by soldiers followed by an attack on Antigone and Oedipus. This ambush and attack is committed Creon and his soldiers. Creon is Oedipus’s brother-in-law, and, at the same time Creon’s soldiers are, off stage, attacking Ismene, on stage Creon is trying to trick Oedipus into believing that he, Creon, owns the grove and has the right and the power to banish Oedipus from it. Again, as with the arrival of the Chorus, the struggle for Oedipus, which is the struggle of the psyche, is to remain centered, to assert his own power and right to Flourish.

Recall from the first article that Cleverness is the opposite of Wisdom. Creon’s clever talk in which he tries to deceive Oedipus that the grove of Flourishing lies in his territory is no match for Oedipus’s newfound wisdom from his long period of time in nature.

Creon’s bluff – the grove is not in his territory and his soldiers have no right even to be here – is exposed when the ‘real’ owner of the grove arrives on stage, Theseus.

Theseus has a weird history in myth and drama. He’s like a great character actor who is always asked to play the part of The Hero, whatever the drama, the story, the time or place. He bounces around through periods in ancient Greek history and all around, appearing here and there whenever a playwright or a storyteller needs him.

--Not that Theseus isn’t a real hero. But his conventional heroism blinds us to the ecopsychological role he plays in the drama. To understand what “Theseus” is in the psyche in a crisis

between Terrorism and Flourishing, we need to retrace our dramatic steps. Upon his arrival in the grove, Oedipus learns that Theseus rules the grove “from afar.” He lets this sacred site on Earth alone, offering protection but not ownership, so that the grove can continue to live “in the hearts, more than the history” of the people who come to it. This is not ownership and territorial consciousness that infuses a place with fear or claims it as one’s own, part of one’s cultural or personal history. This is something else, hard to name, but the ecopsychological tenet of ‘bonding with place’ comes as close as anything does. Theseus is bonded with the place of Flourishing.

Oedipus tells the messenger to tell Theseus that Oedipus bears a “gift” and he needs Theseus in order to manifest it. Theseus, then, symbolizes in the psyche the ego that finally realizes the transformation of the wound of Incest and Terrorism into the gift of Flourishing. When Theseus does appear, his primary quality of character is his Empathy – not his military might. In fact, he arrives when *his* ritual acts in the midst of a military campaign have also been interrupted. “I am sorry for you,” he says, directly, empathically. “I, too, was an exile,” and therefore will not leave Oedipus “comfortless.” He is an empathic individual who has traveled in the same ecopsychological space of ‘exile’ from civilization as Oedipus has, and, while he has not had to endure the sense of being a monster that incest incurs, Theseus has gone down into the labyrinth of psyche and confronted the monster of the minotaur. Like Oedipus, who must depend on his female offspring to guide him, Theseus depended on the silver thread of Ariadne and married the queen of the Amazons, and so his relationship with the feminine and the wild is unusual for a hero.

These qualities, then, of eschewing territory in favor of bonding-with-place, of Empathy, living in the shamanic borderlands, facing monsters in one’s depths and a capacity in the masculine to bond with and depend upon the wild feminine are the qualities of the masculine ego that can ‘rule over,’ govern in the sense of guide and protect the psychological site of Flourishing. Men who have these qualities ‘own Flourishing,’ while those who use clever speech and violence to trick others into believing they ‘own Flourishing’ are in this drama denounced and defeated.

Theseus is also the near-victim of the other act of terrorism. As he explains upon his arrival on stage, while making sacrifices at the Temple of Neptune to Poseidon, a man hurtled himself onto the altar demanding to be taken to Oedipus. We have to use our dramatic imaginations, here. Hurling your body spread eagle onto an altar at which sacrifices of bulls are being made is to put yourself in the line of an axe to be sacrificed. The man in question is none other than Oedipus’s son-brother, Polyneices, who wants to recruit Oedipus in the war against his brother for the remaining resources of Thebes. Polyneices presents the ultimate test of Flourishing for Oedipus: Is he willing to go to war, to succumb to violent, fearful territorial consciousness, for the sake of his own kin?

The Awe of Flourishing

We may wish to conceive of Flourishing as a benign, calm state of peace. Perhaps it is; but getting there requires tapping into the Awe at our center and manifesting tremendous power – at least, this is what Sophocles believed it takes when Terrorism threatens human Flourishing on Earth.

Polyneices, Oedipus’s firstborn and therefore rightful heir to the throne of Thebes, pleads with Oedipus to sanction his battle against his younger brother who has stolen the throne of Thebes from him. He uses the same empathic line as Theseus, that he has been exiled, too, and in the name of their mutual exiled and banished state begs Oedipus to bless him in securing the “fatherland” that is his right. For the sake of the continuance of his own patriarchal line of power, will Oedipus sanction war?

Oedipus denounces his masculine offspring in harrowing, horrifying terms. He pronounces a curse upon both his sons that they will die at each other’s hands. “I cry out to the hated underworld that it

may take you home; cry out to those Powers indwelling here and to that Power of furious War that filled your hearts with hate” that you die, my son, the both of you.

As a symbol, or dramatic icon, for an aspect of psyche, Oedipus’s masculine offspring – the product of ecological incest, remember – represent the violent, shadow of Terrorism that lies deep within us all, the part of psyche that poisons the Earth with our own fear, rage and hate. In the ecopsychological view of the unconscious, Terrorism is the nexus of pathological disorders that have the power to kill our eudaimon, the inner guide to Flourishing (in an individual and in a culture). In prophesying that his sons will kill each other in Thebes, from the perspective of psyche Oedipus is proclaiming that the inner, terrorist threat to his eudaimon will destroy itself. The ego aspect that desires to secure for itself a part of the Earth forever, what we might call territorial psychical energy, is *denied continuance*, denied life, denied psychical energy; his ego will not fuel this aspect of himself that came out of, was produced by, the eco-incest of self-infatuation in Thebes.

Oedipus makes it all too clear that he has chosen, instead, to give to his feminine offspring his blessing and not his sons. Were it not for Antigone and Ismene, he would have died in the wild; they have been “men in faithfulness.” I should say that the text involves itself with Greek ideals of respect for parents and ideas of ‘masculine faithfulness’ that obscure the depth ecopsychological drama going on. Oedipus is saying that the compassionate, empathic ‘feminine’ products of incest should be given the privileged status of the masculine, given *power over* the terrorist, vengeful, hateful products in his psyche. As Sophocles did in the first drama in Thebes, he is again demanding awareness regarding the relation of the masculine individual creator self and the Earth, stating in his characteristic bold, merciless, stark dramatic way that the warring masculine, territorial psychic energy that seeks always to *exile*, to separate, deny, exclude, reject, and ultimately kill, is a grave and lethal threat to Flourishing. The kingly male must choose the feminine and confer upon it the same status as the masculine if this new individualistic, patriarchal system is not to destroy mother Earth.

As Polyneices departs, the Chorus expresses the unease and ambivalence some of us may feel about the Awe-full emotional violence Oedipus has, indeed, committed in the name of Flourishing: “So in this new event we see new forms of terror working through the blind, or else inscrutable destiny.” ‘New forms of terror working through the blind’ is, again, a shamanic diagnostic, unconscious, ecopsychological Terrorism. Did Oedipus just release more of that toxic energy into the *anima mundi*, or was what just happened what Apollo had in mind for Oedipus when he spoke from within him to remain alive on Earth?

With those words, Zeus’s thunder cracks the sky. Anger? Divine confirmation? It is inscrutable; “in the end,” Antigone will soon say, “all we have seen and done is bewildering mystery,” the mystery of wildness, the ultimately unfathomable wild of this Awe-filled cosmos it is our fate, as humans, to try to Flourish in and with.

Gift Exchange

Oedipus performs one final act that may ease our ambivalence and help us, protagonists as we are in this same struggle between Terrorism and Flourishing that defines this precise moment in the human drama, to carry our anguish all the way through to its final, beautiful, wondrous end. The drama passes through the horror of Awe and then *and only then*, when Terrorism has been denied psychical energy, when infusing the Earth with the toxic products of our fear and hate has been exiled from us, do we again move through our fluid center of Awe to its Wondrous and miraculous manifestation.

Recall that Theseus was summoned a long time ago to help Oedipus manifest a “gift;” the Empathic ego of Flourishing must now assist the plagued psyche in manifesting Flourishing. Immediately following Zeus’ thunder crack, Oedipus calls Theseus to him so that the manifestation can now happen, for now is the time.

Now *is* the time, in the midst of Terrorism, when it most matters that we find the stamina and courage and wisdom to move through all the challenges and threats within and around us to access our eudaimon and give to the *anima mundi* the unique gift we each have to give, for the sake of the continuance of the *anima mundi*, the ensouled, sentient, dreaming Earth. For the sake of Kosmic Beauty, the regeneration and return of the cosmos into beautiful form every day, every second, we give what we have to give, and do the hard, psychological labor of transforming the wounded and wounding Terrorist, incestuous, and Autistic psyche into the gifted, Flourishing, Empathic psyche that can restore the balance its incestuous self-making in Thebes caused.

Earlier in the play, when Ismene arrives, she comes bearing the news that the oracle of Apollo has spoken again, finally revealing the rest of Oedipus's destiny. He has become an oracle himself, and is now empowered by the divine sun to heal the Earth of the plague he has brought to it *because* he has been through all he has been through. The gift Oedipus has to give the Earth is the gift of his own story. As he puts it, "My gift is my own beaten self: no feast for the eyes, yet in me there is more lasting grace than beauty," in me there is Flourishing, not physical loveliness. What Oedipus alone can do is end the war that is threatening to destroy the entire world as Sophocles knew it. We arrive at the grove of Flourishing when war escalates for the remaining plagued resources, because that is when the *anima mundi*, the dream of the Earth, the wisdom in nature, the sun and the cosmos *needs us most*.

What I do with this moment in the drama is think of the extraordinary fate of my very beaten generation, the Baby Boomers, who have yet to accomplish all we set our hearts on when we were young. I see us arriving at the sacred grove of Flourishing in the midst of global Terrorism with the rest of our remaining destiny as a generation waiting for us to fulfill it, and I feel the gift of having lived this long, survived this much, so that we can. I see the old Viet Nam veterans and peace veterans and feminists and civil rights leaders who are left among us gathering together to call a new, possible world out of this violent, besieged, chaotic one we are in. I see and feel the wounds to individual psyches from not only our culture of violence, but the violent, interruptive rhythms of virtual life, the violence done to seasons, the violence done to spaces, the violence that is our habitual, cultural 'solution.' Even more deeply, as an educator and mother, I feel the violence done to the souls of children by Terrorism, by those complex, diverse forces that infuse parts of the Earth with fear, hate and rage.

Then I tell myself that in all this violence and wounding lies a gift, the gift *of knowing* the cost of all this violence and wounding to ourselves and the Earth. What the drama at Colonus urges us to do is to transform our wounds into our gifts, and offer *the wounds* as our gift, what we know about 'life in Thebes,' about the terrible perversion of human creativity when it serves only the end of incestuous cultural, racial, and regional self-making to the exclusion of all others. I dare to imagine a Colonus Summit when kaleo bursts from our hearts and we call Beauty out of Chaos, Flourishing from Terrorism.

The urgent, pressing and sacred task of Ecopsychology is to end Terrorism. Oedipus shows us how in his final, and I dare say blessed, act. He returns to the Earth in death, but he does so without anyone knowing *where*. There will be no knowledge of the location of his tomb, no marker, nothing that can *turn his reunion with the Earth into territory*. He explicitly states that in the unknown location of his return to the Earth he will make war impossible. The reward for this gift of his "beaten self" returning to the Earth in a way that can deny war its territorial, terrorist fuel and nurture peace, instead, is that he dies "wondrously," without pain, "as any mortal would wish." As Antigone describes it, "Neither war nor the deep sea took him, but something invisible and strange caught him up – or down – into a space unseen."

When we do what Oedipus does, deny territory its fuel of rage, we will find our souls Awed by something invisible and strange. We will not rise up or fall down, for this is the direction of tragedy, when we place ourselves above the ensouled, divine Earth that must then create a plot for us in which we crash and burn. Rather, when we can do this, dissolve Terrorism, we will enter a middle place, a place of perfect

balance and beauty, wild and mysterious, a space unseen for it is the sacrosanct, unseeable Awe-filled Flourishing unconscious, the human psyche restored and re-storied to wholeness.

Flourishing will at last arrive, the legacy of my generation's and my culture's toxic, violent Earth walk will shift when some mysterious, elusive measure of "enough" individual psyches have lived through all the ecopsychological stations of the Oedipal Journey to Flourishing and passed the ultimate test of territorial consciousness, to cease infusing parts of the Earth with fear. And then, and only then, does plague end and the balance of human and nature is restored.

This, I believe, is the destiny and destination of our era and our generation. I also believe it is the destiny and ultimate destination of Ecopsychology, the seed planted inside psychology's creation myth that now takes root and begins to flourish when the sun, whose plot this all is, most needs us.

Exeunt

I close by sharing with you what I recently said to my seventeen-year-old son. He asked me if there was one thing that I believed in every cell of my body about which I had no doubt. He expected the answer to take me a while, but I knew it instantly, for it is with me all the time. I told him that in the hours immediately following his birth, after I had experienced the awe of doing what creation itself does, a voice spoke to me from within. The voice told me that my son would live to see a flourishing of humanity on Earth the likes of which we have never seen in human history.

"Are you sure, Mom? In *every* cell of your body?"

"I don't understand it," I told him. "It's a mystery and it is not at all reasonable. But, yes, it is what I knew, in every cell of my body at the moment of your birth, and nothing has changed that deep knowing inside me." I then fell silent as I felt welling up inside me the astonishing revelation that it was my son's birth that gave birth to my eudaimon.

Oedipus reversed the tragedy of plague in the last hour of his life by making the difficult choice to empower and manifest his *eudaimon* in the midst of terrorism. If he could do it, the wounded, tragic, unconscious icon and ancestor of modern psychology, so can we.

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